



## WORKING TOGETHER

In 2022 we became one of sixty foodbanks across the UK working together on a project called 'Pathfinder'. This scheme was designed for charities within the Trussell Trust Network to explore ways of reducing the number of food parcels that are given out and, thus, reduce the need for foodbanks.

We started the project at a difficult time. As we came out of the pandemic, we entered the war in Ukraine and then a cost-of-living crisis which saw food prices, interest rates and energy prices rising significantly and relentlessly. As we considered the aim of reducing the need for foodbanks – faced with all of these factors – it looked daunting. However, we have been learning from/with many other projects and trying to benefit from their experiences and experiments in reducing the need for emergency food parcels. You will see some interesting changes over the coming months as we begin new initiatives to challenge hardship.

The reason that we do not feel overwhelmed by what is a very big task is that we feel the weight of support from the local community and from local agencies behind us. We are not alone in the battle against poverty. We benefit from wonderful support from the general public. Not only in terms of their amazing generosity but also in terms of their passion for tackling this increasing problem. People in Exeter have tirelessly and faithfully supported our work and every single donation continues to make a difference.

We have also begun deeper collaborative work with some of the amazing agencies and charities across Exeter. We have intentionally deepened our relationships with Exeter City Council, Citizen's Advice, Job Centre Plus, Employment Plus, Christians Against Poverty (CAP) and Exeter Community Energy (ECOE) – amongst others. This multi-agency approach has already helped many clients to access the support they have needed to end their need for donated food. Our motto is 'restoring dignity, reviving hope' and seeing clients make their way from us, with sufficient money, confidence and resources, is what we aspire to.

It is this approach of working together – with local people, various agencies, and through the work of our own volunteers – that is making a difference and will remain the way that we forge our path. We cannot do this on our own. But together, we can make a difference and create positive outcomes for many people so that they can have the essentials they need to flourish rather than simply exist.

Mark Richardson, Strategic Director, Exeter Foodbank

### What a Star!

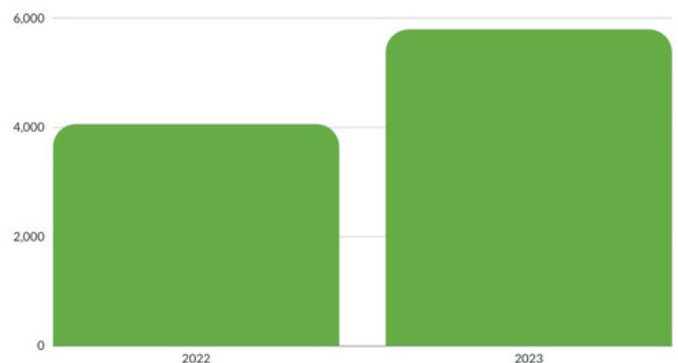
Steve Godbeer has been fundraising for us all year and for some time before that. His efforts have included a virtual marathon and the Great North Run, and his latest challenge has seen him take on a 25-hour bike ride. Steve has raised nearly £26,000 which is an amazing achievement attracting national attention: Steve was recently profiled – and thanked – by the Trussell Trust in its weekly bulletin.



## Visitors to Exeter Foodbank

### 1st Jan- 30th June

2022 vs 2023



Exeter Foodbank has seen a sustained month-on-month increase in the number of people needing support, as increasing living costs and inflation begin to bite.

Between March - June 2023, we provided **3034** emergency food parcels and served an average of **178** people per week.

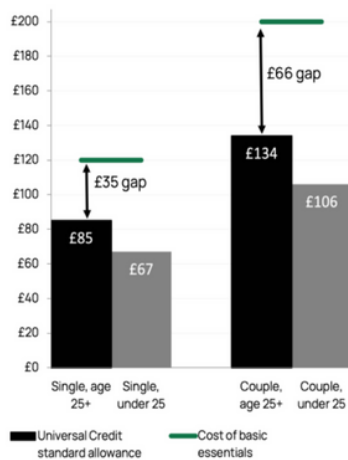
## GUARANTEE OUR ESSENTIALS

### Reforming Universal Credit to ensure we can all afford the essentials in hard times

Helping people to manage their money well is important and something Exeter Foodbank is increasingly trying to do through our collaborative work. However, if you're on an inadequate income, budgeting only goes so far. Sometimes, nothing can make the sums add up.

This is the reality faced by the majority of people who turn to foodbanks for help. When unexpected circumstances strike – losing a job, falling ill, having to care for a sick family member, breaking up with a partner – most people expect that social security will support them with essentials. And it's reasonable to assume that this support is based on some objective calculation of how much things cost. However, this just isn't the case. Today's benefit levels are simply the product of successive rate changes, inflation, and political assessments of affordability, without any external reference to what people actually need.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there is a significant shortfall between many people's living costs and their incomes. Foodbanks should not have to plug this gap.

#### THE CURRENT SHORTFALL<sup>1</sup>



#### THE REAL COST<sup>1</sup>

##### Amount needed to afford essentials for the adults in a household (for 2023/24)

Essential	Single £ per week	Couple £ per week
Food and non-alcoholic drinks	£37	£67
Electricity and gas	£35	£44
Water	£6	£7
Clothes and shoes	£6	£13
Communications, including phones, internet and postage	£8	£11
Travel	£6	£32
Sundries - for example toiletries, haircuts, cleaning materials, bank charges	£13	£23
<b>Total (rounded)</b>	<b>£120</b>	<b>£200</b>

Analysis suggests that the minimum amount a single adult needs is **£120 per week** to cover essential costs (excluding housing and council tax).<sup>1</sup>

The Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance for a single adult over 25 years is **£85**. Moreover, almost half of households see their UC payments reduced further due to deductions or caps.<sup>3</sup>

Research by the Trussell Trust & Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has found that:

- **90%** of low-income households on UC are currently going without essentials, such as food, a warm home, functioning essential appliances, or toiletries.<sup>1</sup>
- Support has eroded over decades and the basic rate ('standard allowance') of UC is now at its **lowest ever level** as a proportion of average earnings.<sup>1</sup>
- **66%** of the public think the basic rate of UC is too low.<sup>1</sup>

Without an adequate safety net, an individual's temporary setback can quickly lead to spiralling debt, and deteriorating mental and physical health. In turn, these pressures reduce people's capacity to 'bounce-back', placing greater pressures on social security, the NHS and other support services. Short-term savings in the benefits system often come at significant long-term, avoidable cost to the individual, to the wider economy, and to society as a whole.

#### From Food Bank User to Volunteer

*I first accessed the food bank after noticing they would put signs up outside the Mint Methodist church every day. At the time I was going to coffee mornings at the church – as a way to chat to people and enjoy a hot drink. I was receiving Universal Credit and I had found it difficult to afford food shopping beyond items such as tinned beans, pasta and soup, some veggies and fruits. I couldn't afford luxurious items as there are all those unpredictable costs which you don't see coming, with the higher costs of living, and so I'd have to prioritise my money for that. I found the volunteers to be extremely helpful and welcoming, encouraging me to collect food without feeling judged. When I first went to the Living Room upstairs, I found people to be friendly, and willing to listen over a coffee to my problems around unemployment and money worries. I was amazed at how much extra support was on offer, like housing support, money advice, and help with employment from qualified advisors. After this experience, I signed up as a volunteer and have been able to build my confidence and sense of ability to work again, as well as feeling good about helping others who are going through their own struggles. Soon I was helping in the Living Room myself. I've also done more at distribution recently, and had the chance to help at a food collection day at Tesco. It was truly incredible to see the generosity of the public donating so much to help towards the cause, and to be part of that with other volunteers. **From James***

## THE ESSENTIALS GUARANTEE<sup>1</sup>

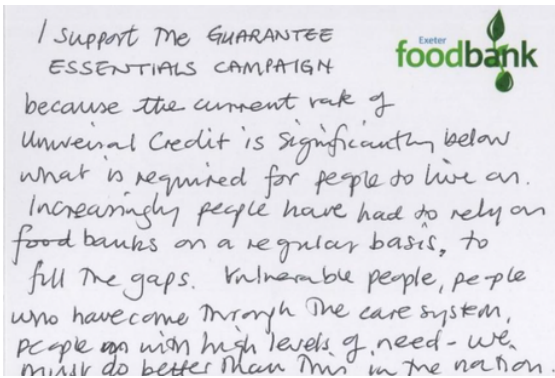
The Trussell Trust, the JRF and supporters are calling on the UK government to make sure that the basic rate of Universal Credit is at least enough to afford the essentials we all need. This policy would enshrine in legislation:

1. An **independent process** to regularly determine the Essentials Guarantee level, based on the **cost of essentials** (such as food, utilities and vital household goods) for the adults in a household (excluding rent and council tax);
2. That **Universal Credit's standard allowance** must at least meet this level; and
3. That **deductions** (such as debt repayments to government) can never pull support below this level.

Such a policy would directly address material hardship by embedding a protected, minimum level of support based on an objective assessment of essential costs. It would alleviate in-work poverty for those receiving UC, without altering existing financial incentives to work. And it would directly benefit 8.8 million low-income families, including 3.9 million families with children, by ensuring no one has to go without essentials to make ends meet.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please take action now and [join our Guarantee the Essentials Campaign](#). Together we can send a clear message to all MPs that the basic rate of Universal Credit must at least be enough to afford the essentials we all need to get by.



- Find out more here: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/campaigns/guarantee-our-essentials/>
- Contact your MP directly online in a few minutes via the link above
- Fill in one of Exeter Foodbank's 'Guarantee the Essentials' postcards (available at our central distribution point at the Mint Methodist Centre and Exeter Central Library). The foodbank will deliver them to our MP on your behalf.

Thank you for your support.

## Meet the EFB Staff Team (left to right)

**Summer (Operations Manager)** makes sure that everything runs smoothly and that volunteers know what they are doing.

**Mark (Strategic Director)** I talk to, and work with, agencies, the council or referrers and make sure that we are working together as well as possible to help the people of Exeter.

**Phil (Logistics Worker)** Cheerful Phil gets things done – pumping up van tyres, collecting shoppers' donations, lugging crates about...

**Ali (Advice Worker)** If I had to say one thing about Ali it is that there are people living happily in their homes today because of her advice and support.

As our administrator, **Fiona** holds it all together. Because of her, volunteers collect, sort, and distribute food!

**John (JR) is our Store Manager** At busy times of the year we have four or five tonnes of food coming in and going out each week. John makes all of this happen smoothly. I have no idea how he does it.

This team has grown this year as demand for support is high and we are very busy. I inherited my role from a lady called Joy, who was also amazing and we stand on the work done by her, Laura and Sophie, and all the volunteers who have been part of our story.



<sup>1</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation; The Trussell Trust (2023). An Essentials Guarantee: Reforming Universal Credit to ensure we can all afford the essentials in hard times. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/guarantee-our-essentials>

<sup>2</sup> Polling carried out by the YDS on behalf of Thinks Insight and Strategy for JRF (2022).

<sup>3</sup> Trussell Trust (2022). Debt to Government, deductions and destitution

## WAYS TO HELP

### Donate

EFB receives no statutory funding and relies on the generosity of local people to meet our ongoing running costs.

#### You can help by:

- Making regular donations
  - Visit [www.exeterfoodbank.co.uk](http://www.exeterfoodbank.co.uk) to download a standing order form. Or contact us at 07818226524 to request a form in the post.
- Making a one-off gift
  - By debit/credit card at [www.exeterfoodbank.co.uk](http://www.exeterfoodbank.co.uk)
  - By sending cheques (payable to Exeter Foodbank) to PO Box 661, Exeter, EX2 5PS
- By online bank transfer
  - Sort code: 08-92-99
  - Account no: 65314566
- You can also donate food using the BanktheFood app. You can find out more and download the app here: <https://www.bankthefood.org/>

### Talks

If you would like someone to come and talk about our work to your church, club, organisation or group, please get in touch.

[info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk) / 07818 226 524

### Donate Food

You can donate in-date, non-perishable food from our Priority Shopping List in our Foodbank boxes which are located at:

- Sainsburys
- Tesco & Tesco Express
- The Co-op
- Waitrose
- Morrisons
- Poundland

We update our **Priority Shopping List** once a month and it can be found on our website and social media channels.

Alternatively you can sign up to our mailing list by contacting us at: [admin@exeterfoodbank.org.uk](mailto:admin@exeterfoodbank.org.uk)

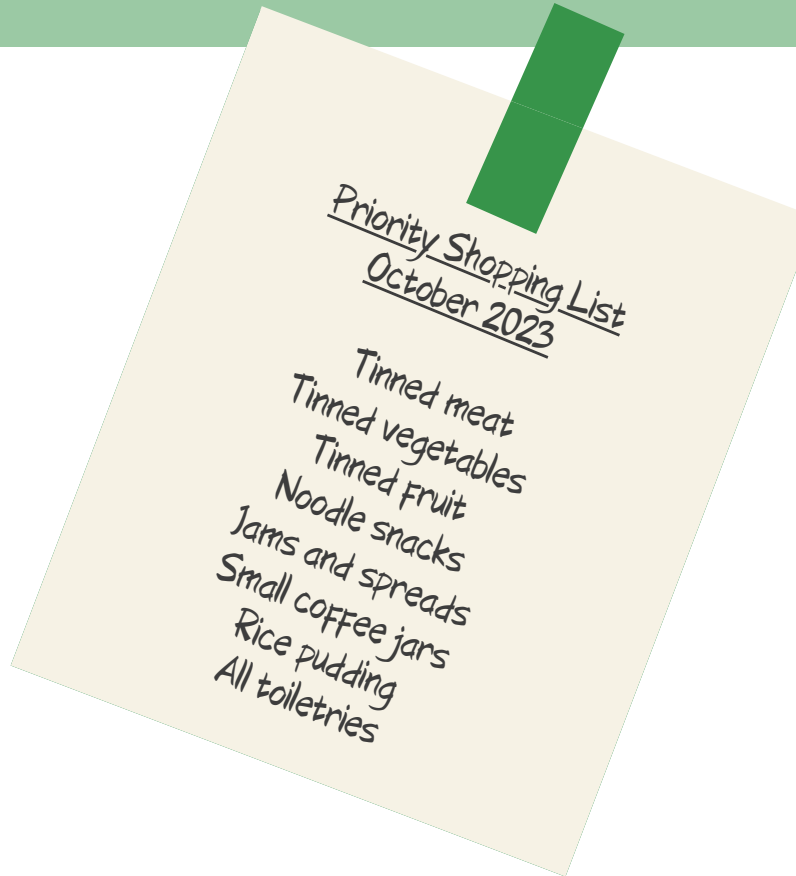
Please note that our Priority Shopping List only shows the items we are short of - not the whole range of food we give out.

Non-perishable food donations are also supplemented by fresh fruit, vegetables and bread, which the foodbank purchases and supplies directly to ensure it stays fresh.

*Please note, we cannot take any donations containing alcohol (including steak & ale pies / wine-based sauces).*

### Harvest

Let us know if you're organising a collection and would like us to pick it up from you.



### Thanks Sarah

Earlier this year, Sarah Hornblower stepped down after ten years as a Trustee and nine as Chair. During this time we have had to face the challenges of changes to the benefit system, a pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Through all of this, Sarah's steady hand has enabled us to be robust enough to face the challenges but flexible enough to be able to respond to changing circumstances. We are so grateful to Sarah but recognise that after a decade of extremely hard work, it may be time to lend her back to her family! She leaves us in good shape to face new challenges. Our deepest thanks to her and her family. At a future date, we will introduce you to our new **Chair of Trustees - Gary.**