

Foodbanks – Abigail Catton

The foodbank was a life saver for Alwyn, when both he and his wife couldn't find any work and they were left without any food or money. For a week and a half, he could only give his children sugar and water as that was all they had in the cupboard to eat. At this low point they were forced to reach out for help. Their Citizens Advice centre referred them to their local foodbank. He said 'The lady gave us a red ticket, I'd never forget it, it was like a kiss from God. She told us if we hand this in, they will pack us food.' He burst into tears, overwhelmed with gratefulness. For people like Alwyn, this red ticket was so much more than just a piece of paper, it gave them the chance to start re-building a better future for his family- he was tremendously grateful.

Let me tell you why I chose to talk about foodbanks today. At the start of lockdown back in March, my mum volunteered at a local foodbank and I often went along with her to help. In addition to this, when I took part in NCS (the National Citizenship Scheme) back in October, our social action project was also focused on helping foodbanks. Through both these experiences I have learnt that a foodbank isn't just giving out food to those who need it, it is so much more than that. Foodbanks play a crucial role for those who are struggling to make ends meet and without them many individuals and families would be left starving.

Think of a foodbank a bit like a supermarket, but everything is free.

- It provides a lifeline to those who have no-one or nowhere else to turn to in times of crises
- It helps families who are drowning in poverty as well as those who are temporarily in difficult circumstances
- Many foodbanks even offer support services and advice to people trying to get back on their feet- by helping them fill out forms and helping with access to services such as benefits guidance and the ever-increasing need for mental health support. Even more simply they just provide people with someone to talk to.

One of the most well-known food charities is the Trussell Trust who have been working since 1997 to eventually end food poverty and the need for foodbanks- full stop. The Trussell Trust support more than 1,200 foodbank centres across the UK in providing emergency food parcels and have distributed 1.9 million in the last year. There are also other independent foodbanks and charities operating locally such as the Daily Bread Café at St Peters in Hutton, where no referral is necessary.

As many of you already know, Marcus Rashford, the premier league footballer has been working closely with the food charity Fareshare to help tackle the issue of food poverty. He has now raised enough money for Fareshare to distribute over 12.4 million meals for children and families who otherwise may go to bed hungry.

It's not just people like him that can get involved and make a difference- every single one of us in this room can do something to help- no matter how big or how small.

It could be a donation, a like or share of a post, volunteering, a prayer, or even more simply, just spreading the word. What will you do to make a difference?