

Over 100 days on and still going

Since the outbreak of Covid 19 and lockdown in the UK, many new volunteers have helped to keep the Food Bank going and under the guidance of Major Dawn McGarvey has grown in many ways. At the peak we were giving out 50 large weekly food parcels. The number of food parcels fluctuates now as people are going back to work, receiving universal credit or being made redundant and running out of savings.



Large donors like the Salvation Army, Morrisons, Chippenham Borough Lands Charity, Chippenham Rotary Club and local firms and people made it possible for the volunteers to fulfil all the needs of those requesting it. At week 15 we were well stocked in some produce but low on others and the initial large monetary donations were running low. We contacted the town council, county council and local MPs, many of whom responded with offers of help and an appeal for help was launched with an article in the local newspaper.



This coincides with the departure of Major Dawn as she moves to a new posting in Lincolnshire. Dawn leaves the Food Bank in the strongest position it has ever been and can be confident that she has trained up a great team of Volunteers from teenagers to pensioners, from Schools Churches and the Rotary Club. With local authority and local charity help there is some money in the bank and the largest stock levels the Chippenham Food Bank has ever seen.

When we started as volunteers, we were working out of three cupboards and on two tables. We now use the whole building at Froghamshire Salvation Army and operate on over 20 tables. But not only has the group increased the number of food parcels it packages it has also produced over 1,200 meals to feed the homeless and those in need.

With the help of The Salvation Army, Morrisons and Nestle we have kept up our stock of essential items like, tea, cereals, pasta, baked beans and tinned vegetables. But some commodities like, tinned meat, tinned fruit, jam, nappies and cleaning products we have had to buy in large quantities each week. This has been achieved by searching the shelves of many supermarkets and wholesalers and seeking permission to buy more than 3 of any one item.



We now wait and see what the rest of the year brings for our community. Let's hope and pray that as the volunteers go back to work, school and take a break that the numbers will be sufficient to maintain the high level of service we have provided to date and that food donations will once again match the number parcels being dispatched each week.