

## **Things are looking up at the Food Bank**

I thought it might be useful to give people an update on how things are going with Bishop's Stortford Food Bank, following on from the article in last week's Independent, 'Food Bank demand trebles in lockdown'.

These have been difficult times for all those living with the effects of the Corona virus (COVID 19), and it would have been easy for people to focus on their own needs, and those of their families, rather on those less fortunate than themselves. It says a lot for the people of our town that we in the Food Bank have experienced a veritable explosion of generosity since the crisis hit back in the spring.

Our position then was not promising: Although with the help of our friends at Holy Trinity Church and the Night Shelter we had set up a delivery service to take boxes of food to those that needed them, we were running out of food as donations from shoppers dried up at the same time as the supermarket shelves were becoming empty. Our only option was to use our own funds to buy food – something simply not sustainable in the long term.

We appealed for help from our local community, through the Bishop's Stortford Independent and our social media followers, and we were frankly amazed by the people's generosity. Donations of food shot up, with many local groups setting up collection services to bring food to our door, and we also received 'Government' food boxes via the Council which were very welcome. So much so, that at one point we were rapidly running out of storage space at the Methodist Church where we are based. We have also benefited from donations of money from individuals, private companies, retailers, public authorities and children doing sponsored bike rides! I struggled to keep up with the 'thank you' letters – a nice problem to have!

As a result of all this community support, the Food Bank was able to meet with the increased demands on us (we now provide three times as much food as we did in February) and build up a sufficient financial 'cushion' to face the future with much more confidence. Our crisis is over for the moment, as is our need for donations of money for the time being. So, people of Stortford, thank you again for your support. We'd love you to keep the food rolling in to us, but also maybe think about the other local charities that might need your help in these difficult times.

With much appreciation,

Bill Macdonald

Chair, Bishop's Stortford Food Bank