

# Slough Foodbank

## Helping local people in crisis



*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.” Matthew 25:35*

### Introduction

Slough Foodbank believes that no one in the community should have to face going hungry. That's why they provide three days worth of nutritionally balanced, emergency food and support to local people who are referred to them in crisis. They are part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK.

Slough Foodbank is a project founded by 2 local churches and is now supported by lots of churches and community groups, working together towards stopping hunger in the local area.

Their mission is: *To serve with compassion, motivated by Christian principles, those in need in Slough and the surrounding area by providing a listening ear, food and other essentials.*

- Slough Foodbank is an independent Charity (CIO) run by a Project Board of 5 trustees plus a manager
- 155 local, professional agencies assess and refer people to Slough Foodbank
- 4 Distribution Centres - open 5 times per week
- Warehouse and office at Montrose Avenue courtesy of Segro (Rent Free)
- About 90 volunteers, including 6 key supporting roles. Around 50 volunteers are working in the distribution centres.

### Slough Foodbank Facts

Slough Foodbank opened in 2010, and since opening there has been an increase in demand and need for emergency food parcels.

- 4,781** Three-day emergency food supplies given to local people in crisis last year, up 19% on 2018.
- 2,382** Vouchers were redeemed in 2019 which helped:
  - 1,718** Children (an increase of 27% on 2018)
  - 3,063** Adults
- 92** Average food parcels per week
- 184** Fuelbank vouchers processed in 2019 which helped 258 Adults and 190 children

## About Slough Foodbank

This year marks 10 years of Slough Foodbank and as statistics show, there is lots to do to ensure food can be provided during a time of crisis and continue to help raise the profile of food poverty and lobby for those who are in need.

Statistics for 2019 show a shocking increase in the number of people needing help with an increase of 19% in food parcels distributed this year versus last year. It is deeply distressing to witness the number of children requiring help increasing by 27% versus last year – particularly during the summer holidays. Many people in the Slough area feel hopeless, as they just do not know what the future might hold and struggle with benefit delays and changes, low income, debt and homelessness. Slough Foodbank feels it is vitally important to remain committed to supply food, home fuel and share hope and encouragement that the community cares.

## How Slough Foodbank works

Every day people in the UK go hungry for reasons ranging from redundancy to receiving an unexpected bill on a low income. A simple box of food makes a big difference. Once the immediate problem of hunger and lack of food is met, the people receiving help are better able to think about their problems and get help to tackle them. Other benefits of Foodbanks include helping prevent crime as they don't need to steal, helping prevent housing loss as rent money isn't spent on food, helping to limit family breakdown as some of the stress and arguments are reduced and mental health problems caused by stress and pressure are relieved.

## Food is donated

Schools, churches, businesses and individuals donate non-perishable, in-date food and toiletries to a foodbank. Large collections take place as part of Harvest Festival celebrations and food is also collected at supermarkets as well as being delivered direct to the warehouse.

In 2019 the warehouse managed 60 tonnes of stock in and 60 tonnes stock out, with December being the busiest month where 11 tonnes came into the warehouse and 7 tonnes were distributed out. During December an additional 192 Christmas hampers were prepared distributed.



Christmas adds so much pressure to people living in food poverty. Slough Foodbank selected Christmas treats and goodies from the generous donations received and put together hampers which they hope sent a message of love and helped in a small way to make the Christmas season more enjoyable for those who are in crisis.

The hampers typically included chocolate biscuit selections packs, mince pies, crisps, pickles, custard, tinned ham or salmon, crackers, tea, Christmas pudding, chocolates as well as a toiletries gift pack.

## Food is sorted and stored

Volunteers sort food to check that it's in date, it is stored in strict date order in the warehouse and packed it into boxes to be sent to the distribution centres ready to be given to people in need.



### **Professionals identify people in need**

Slough Foodbank partners with 155 referral agencies which include a wide range of care professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers, children's services and children's centres and police to identify people in crisis and issue them with a foodbank voucher.

### **Clients receive food**

Slough Foodbank clients bring their voucher to a one of 4 distribution centres, open 5 days a week across the Slough area where it can be redeemed for three days emergency food. Volunteers meet clients over a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits and specially trained volunteers take time to chat and signpost people to local and national support agencies able to help with the longer-term problems.

### **More than food**

Slough Foodbank provide additional help and support alongside an emergency food parcel. In addition to food, Slough Foodbank also provides basic toiletries such as shampoo, shower gel, toilet roll, razors and shaving foam as well as baby food and nappies.

Slough Fuelbank is a one off top up to home energy (gas or electric) to help clients to heat/cook the food we provide. Too often people are forced to make a decision between food and fuel.

Slough Foodbank also creates activity calendars to give a guide to 'What's on' in the Slough area. In addition to a General calendars, specific calendars are provided for: 'Homeless', 'Older People', 'Pre-School and babies' and 'School children & teens'.

Slough Foodbank asks clients if they have any pets and then provides pet food accordingly. This helps to keep the pets in the family and stop food being fed to pets instead of clients.

## What's in a food parcel?

Slough Foodbank provides three days of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food.

A food parcel contains:

Breakfast cereals	Rice	Tinned meat	Tea or coffee
Soup	Pasta sauce	Tinned vegetables	Biscuits
Pasta	Tinned beans	Tinned fruit	Snacks



Family food parcel



Single person food parcel

## Streets Homeless Food parcels

Slough Foodbank puts together special food parcels for the Homeless as they are less likely to have access to cooking facilities and tin openers. Careful consideration is given to collating items for these parcels to ensure suitability and ease for the recipient.

## Dietary Requirements:

Slough Foodbank can usually adapt the food parcel to meet dietary needs, for example, gluten free, halal or vegetarian. Volunteers chat to clients about any special dietary requirements they may have.

## Client Stories

Anyone can find themselves in a crisis through a range of reasons and often there is more than one contributing factor. **It is widely accepted that most people are 1 month away from crisis and 3 months from homelessness.**

Everyone's life has its own story. Here are two recent stories from Slough Foodbank.

## Client Story 1

*As a single father of three children, time and energy have always been at a premium. A few years ago I started showing symptoms of having anxiety and depression, which gradually chipped away at my ability to perform well at work. I eventually lost my job due to this and have been struggling to cope with the unrelenting nature of bills, school fees etc. When this became overbearing I enlisted the help of a social worker, who advised that they could help with things like a Foodbank voucher. It makes one of the myriad worries a little easier, which allows me to concert my efforts on rebuilding other facets of my life. Thank you.*

## Client story 2

*When my money changed over to Universal Credit, I suffer with depression, I didn't realise that I would struggle. But I'm finding myself having to borrow money off friends and having to pay them back when I get paid so I end up with virtually nothing so my depression is starting up as I did get a bit better but coming back down. I have a 7 years old daughter and I worry every day. My friend referred me to the food bank and to get the vouchers. The people who work at the food bank are so lovely and helpful.*

*Please explain how you felt when you came to Slough Foodbank: Before a couple of weeks ago I never used one, never had to but I didn't feel ashamed as the ladies made me feel relaxed and so lovely.*

## Feedback from a social worker:

*I am a social worker for Bucks CC. I visited a client this morning who is in a wheelchair and has not eaten for 3 days due to benefit sanctions. He has gotten into debt, borrowed from the church and was out of options. I rang Slough Foodbank. They have provided my client with food which will maintain his nutrition. I dealt with a lady in the Slough Baptist Church distribution centre she has been so lovely, couldn't have been more helpful.*

*I felt so in awe of the amazing work being done, and how kind the people are volunteering and donating. It has encouraged me to ensure that I donate to Foodbank.*

*My client had no options left. He would have gone without food again. Just keep up the incredible work.*

## Slough Foodbank's wishlist

Every month the Foodbank publishes a wishlist of items they require. Currently the warehouse is full with kind donations following the December abundance. The main shortages they have are toilet roll and shaving foam.

If you would like to make a donation, a monetary donation doesn't take up any floor space so will be gratefully received.

<https://www.wonderful.org/charity/sloughfoodbank>

## **Myth Busting!**

Part of the challenge Slough Foodbank faces is to ensure that communication about Slough Foodbank is true. There are many myths about Foodbanks but it helps enormously for the correct information to be out there. It also prevents waste if donated items are those that are actually needed.

Often generous people may give larger bulk packs of rice or pasta. However, these take up a lot of room in the warehouse, can't be split and are very heavy for someone to carry home from a distribution centre. The Foodbank really needs sizes suitable for individuals or families.

They never knowingly give out of date food in the food parcels, not because of a possible health risk but because of the message it sends out to people in need. Slough Foodbank wants to show people their value and worth and giving out of date food does not do this.

However, Slough Foodbank also hates waste, so there are help yourself options available for day old fresh produce such as bread, bakery items, fruit and vegetables and up to 3 month out of date non-perishable food. This is in addition to the standard food parcel.

## **Slough Foodbank give thanks that:**

- In recent years, they have never run out of food thanks to the generosity of the people who live and work in and around Slough - (Unusually they did shop 3 times recently for certain items, spending over £800.)
- Segro has given them a warehouse and office premises rent free for the past 8 years and will continue to do so for the next two years
- They have loyal support from our volunteers, churches, other faith groups, referral agencies and local media.

## **Slough Foodbank's prayer requests are for:**

- Volunteers
- A suitable venue in Britwell and the volunteers to man the new venue
- Donations - and for donors to be open and aware of what is helpful and what is not
- More support for clients to prevent the various crises that send them to us
- A world where Foodbanks are not necessary

Slough Foodbank feel privileged to be the platform for community to work together to help prevent local food poverty.

Further information on Slough Foodbank is available at:

[www.slough.foodbank.org.uk/](http://www.slough.foodbank.org.uk/)

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

To donate to Slough Foodbank: <https://www.wonderful.org/charity/sloughfoodbank>