

How we're continuing to respond during the Covid-19 crisis and more stories of encouragement

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that Slough Foodbank has had to significantly change the way that we operate. The speed and frequency of change has been incredible. Reinvention and adaptation have been absolutely critical. We've had to be brave and willing to experiment.

Significant changes to the way we run include:

- Operating from behind closed doors
- Social distancing at distribution centres and our warehouse
- Only accepting e-vouchers from referral agencies
- An increase of over 30 new referral agencies during this pandemic
- Purchasing urgent requirements when warehouse stocks ran low – donations of food and basic toiletries decreased due to restrictions on purchases from supermarkets
- Pre-packing food parcels in an additional warehouse (Thanks to landlords SEGRO) to speed up distribution to clients
- Home deliveries to those isolating and shielding.

The community – both individuals and local companies – has also rallied to support us through offers of help and donations of food, services and money. This newsletter highlights some of the stories of positivity that we have seen during what continues to be a crisis with far reaching impact on the health, financial hardship and food poverty in Slough.

Throughout this pandemic, Slough Foodbank has continued to focus on our prime objective which is to provide three days' worth of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable, emergency food to local people who are referred in crisis. This is testament to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and everyone who has supported us. We are hugely thankful.

Key statistics: Number of people helped during the crisis

We have published monthly statistics on the number of people we have helped during this crisis – see the table below.

Slough Foodbank statistics: March to May 2020 (compared with March to May 2019)

	March	% increase (versus 2019)	April	% increase (versus 2019)	May	% increase (versus 2019)
Total	717	112%	687	123%	553	63%
Adults	417	103%	417	98%	369	68%
Children	300	127%	270	178%	184	55%

Slough Foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust Network who have recently published a press release highlighting that April was the busiest month ever for UK foodbanks. Sadly, Slough Foodbank is significantly higher than the national average as the table below shows.

National comparison: Key stats April 2020 (compared with April 2019)

	% increase Slough Foodbank	% increase Trussell Trust National network
People helped	123%	89%
Children helped	178%	107%

Message from Slough Foodbank Manager, Sue Sibany-King:

"It is incredibly heart-breaking to be reporting this huge increase in the need for our services in the first 5 months of 2020. For the full year of 2019 we saw a 19% increase in the number of food parcels supplied, so these further sharp increases are a real and stark picture of the effect Covid-19 is having on individuals and families within the Slough area.

Whilst the pandemic is responsible for an increase in need, it has highlighted that so many were struggling in poverty before it took hold and therefore were totally unable to withstand an extra crisis. Numbers have been increasing steadily since September last year because many households just do not have sufficient income to pay costs like rent and buy food. This has to be addressed quickly and we should not accept that in the 6th richest country we still have poverty and homelessness."

Bev Kindred appointed Development Executive

The foodbank relies almost entirely on volunteers for all our activities to support our clients, with the exception of the role of Manager, which is a paid position. The Trustees have been aware for some time that, for sustainability and risk mitigation, there is a need for a second employee in the role of Development Executive. This position liaises with agencies, manages the voucher system and deputises for the manager during her absence. The work

of this role has increased significantly over time and is not suited to being shared across a pool of volunteers. The current pandemic has further highlighted the critical need for this role and, therefore, the Trustees decided to appoint into this position now.

We are delighted to announce that Bev Kindred has accepted the role of Development Executive. The appointment is on a part-time fixed-term contract, and dependent upon continued funding.

Covid-19 impact on volunteer numbers

The biggest challenge during Covid-19 has been to keep the distribution centres adequately staffed. Many of our trained volunteers had to stand down due to self-isolation or shielding. Yet at the same time we have been overwhelmed by the response of the community and the number of individuals who have joined Slough Foodbank to work alongside our regular volunteers. Our Volunteer Co-ordinator worked hard to ensure we had experienced volunteers, together with untrained helpers. Whilst every day began and ended with a different challenge, we now have a rhythm and are getting used to the 'new normal'.

Support from the media

Slough Foodbank Manager, Sue Sibany-King, has been incredibly busy, not only overseeing the operations of the Foodbank but also responding to the media requests and offers to highlight Slough Foodbank and our efforts. We are thankful to them for highlighting our cause and their readers and listeners for their support.

- Radio Berkshire Breakfast show with Andrew Peach
- The Slough Observer:

<https://www.sloughobserver.co.uk/news/18366123.slough-foodbank-needs-support-coronavirus/>

<https://www.sloughobserver.co.uk/news/18409961.welcome-gift-food-bank-langley-iver-rotarians/>

- The Foodbank Show
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPuaKhFZR8E&feature=youtu.be&t=3035> and
<https://youtu.be/o-xlOj-xoko?t=3167>

Huge support from the community

We have been overwhelmed by the number of people from the local community offering to help in so many different ways. We have been unable to record all donors to send a thank you, due to the changes we have had to make to operate effectively ensuring social distancing but also focusing on core efforts to get help to people who need it. We are hugely appreciative to everyone who has supported us.

We've highlighted below some of the support received, where we have been able to track it:

Crowdfunder Covid 19 Crisis appeal

We set-up a Crowdfunder Covid-19 Crisis appeal and in 68 days it raised £14,502 with 252 supporters. We are grateful to the Slough Observer, who helped to promote this and to everyone who donated. The effects of Covid-19 continue to impact those who are already vulnerable and living in poverty, relying on benefits and facing huge financial hardships. This money will go a long way towards ensuring we are able to continue to get food and basic toiletries to people who need it most.

Delivery of protective gloves

We were so grateful for a delivery of food safe protective gloves from Give Food and Slough CVS for our volunteers to wear when packing and delivering food parcels. These gloves as well as hand sanitisers were impossible for us to source by ourselves and have made a difference to ensuring we continue to work safely helping to protect both our volunteers and clients.

Individuals & groups raising money

- Community group 'Paving the way' raised £720 for Slough Foodbank when they did a sponsored run/jog/walk of 10km whilst they were fasting during Ramadan - this means no food or water for 18 hours.
- Alannah Barazi, aged 7, had a wonderful idea to support Slough Foodbank and The Trussell Trust by reading 55 books in a readathon. She raised £358 for Slough Foodbank and £146 for Trussell Trust.
- Two brothers Shailen (age 5) and Nayan (age 10) held an online auction of their artwork. Families and friends supported this initiative and they raised a fabulous £620, smashing their target of £250.
- Langley & Iver Rotary have donated £500 worth of food to Slough Foodbank.

Local companies providing services for free

- One of Slough Foodbank's referral agencies, Radian, has kindly loaned us their van for six months. This means we can more easily move the extra supplies we need from the permanent collection points in supermarkets, to the warehouse and to distribution centres as well as home deliveries
- Aftab at Rapid Response Team has been doing a sanitising clean of our premises on a weekly basis for free. This has been an enormous help to us, especially during this time of increased focus on hygiene and cleanliness.
- Cliveden National Trust donated the Easter eggs that would have been used on their Easter trail which had to be cancelled. We were able to give these to our clients over the Easter period as a little chocolatey treat in addition to their 3-day, nutritionally balanced food parcel. However, we had more than we required, so it was a privilege to be able to share the love and donate eggs to Wexham Park and Charing Cross hospitals
- 'Walk and Talk Upton' generously donated provisions to our warehouse

- SSE have allowed one of their employees who is currently on furlough, to use the company van and their fuel for charitable purposes. This has been a huge help as we have been making local home deliveries.
- Krisi's car wash Park Road, Farnham Royal cleaned the Slough Foodbank van for FREE – service with a smile and a heart.
- SCS (Sofa Carpet Specialist) who contacted the foodbanks that are part of the Trussell Trust network and which are closest to their 100 stores to offer a financial donation to help during this time. In the longer term they are keen to create a partnership with us to support with food donations.

Some of the feedback we have received:

"Would just like to thank you and your staff for all the support you've given to families at our school. It's been great to see familiar faces at the collection centre and being able to deliver packages and to see the reaction of families is an amazing thing and they thank you from the bottom of their hearts."

"Thank you for your care, time and bravery"

"Thank you for looking after vulnerable people of Slough"

"You are providing a fantastic service at risk to yourselves. You have my admiration and support"

"Thank you everyone for your wonderful selfless work"

"You're doing a vital job, especially so at this time. Carry on, and my good wishes are with you."

"I love and respect the work you do none stop, throughout the year, come what may. Thank you."

"Praying a blessing on everyone who is working to keep those in need fed. God Bless"

Ways you can support Slough Foodbank:

We would like to thank you for your continued support of Slough Foodbank. If you would like to know how you can continue to support us we do have a shopping list of items that we currently need, this is published and updated regularly on our web site – [see our current shopping list](#).

If you would like to provide toiletries we have created a [wish list with Eosho](#), which enables you to buy directly online and avoid the need to drop off at our warehouse.

Financial donations can also be made in a variety of ways to suit you. If you are a UK tax payer, it is most beneficial to make a donation to our bank account and ensure you have completed a gift aid form which is available to download on our web site. [See ways to make financial donations](#).