

Facts about Breakfast Club

1. How many people use the breakfast club and how has this grown in the last few years ?
2. How many people use the food bank and how has this grown too?
3. How this is funded and run ?
4. What other agencies are available to the homeless in Harrogate?
5. What type of people use the homeless food bank facilities? I really want to educate the children into that this can affect anyone.
6. How they can help / what they can contribute.

1. Breakfast club began about 17 years ago, with one man saying "thankyou" to the offer of a cup of coffee, because he hadn't had one for 3 weeks. Within 2 weeks we had 3 people every day. Now we get between 114 and 24 people each day from a total of about 200 whom we know by name who come either for breakfast or food parcels in the evening or both. The numbers are increasing all the time.

It began with just a cup of coffee each day, now it is a "full-monty" breakfast of cheese and ham toastie with a poached egg on top with extra - either sausage or bacon (always from outdoor bred pigs, and free range hens) plus porage with syrup or honey, soup - which is a good rich home made beef or chicken broth, cereals, toast with jam or marmalade - and of course tea or coffee, and a glass of pure orange juice if they would like it. On Saturday we always have a full english - toastie, egg, bacon, sausage, hash-brown, tomatoes, mushrooms and sometimes baked beans - because this is the only free hot meal available that day.

2. Food parcels (never food bank, or food hand-outs - think how these are distributed, and you will understand why) began when Tony Shepherd came about 30 years ago - very informal in those days - if people gave food, there was some to give to those who came. Now it is more formal - still food parcels handed over with love, but those who come are offered a menu which they can choose from - 3 tins, and a loaf of Bettys bread, On Thursdays there are sandwiches as well, some left over from lunch time RefleXions, some made specially, with vegetables and other tasty extras left over from the Forward Together meal at Wesley. On Saturdays there are usually filled rolls and cakes left over from the refreshment days. If we have been given eggs, chocolate bars or fresh fruit this is shared out as well. Everything is given with as much fun, love, and general conversation as possible, so that people do not have to feel embarrassed or ashamed at the idea of receiving charity. We never check whether they need food or not, and we also offer a tin of dog food if they have a dog. Families are always looked after separately, usually in the morning, so that young children do not have to come. Up to about 20 come each evening. - but again they are different people each evening, and sometimes we welcome back old friends who have been doing quite well, but find that they cannot manage because everything's gone wrong again.

3. All this is funded mainly by the tremendous generosity of the congregation of St Peters who give regularly by standing order and one off donations. They also hand over cash to me on a regular basis. I spend up to £1,000 a month, including the free lunches we provide every Sunday. We one time received an award from Lloyds Bank, which was very welcome, and once got a donation from Waitrose from the button scheme, but we had to spend that award in the shop in a very limited time period, so it was not easy. We also get donations of food from the congregation especially on Tic Tac Sunday, the first Sunday of the month; from St Peters school and various churches at Harvest; excess food from HHP; bags for families from Lower Wharfedale churches at Christmas; regular donations from the Quakers, St Marys Roman Catholic Church in Knaresborough, and Goldsborough Church. A lot of these food donations are used for our monthly "Super supermarket" *. St Peters Rainbows gave a wonderful donation of chocolate bars for a treat for our members, each with a lovely card drawn by the Rainbow, saying that they were thinking of them. I know these cards particularly were very much treasured.

We get donations of "seconds" clothes with slight faults from the Mountain Warehouse on a regular basis. Thick coats, socks, jumpers and shoes are very welcome to people who can never have enough to buy these new.

I run the Breakfast Club with 2 deputies, one of whom was a former breakfast club member. We have about 25 volunteers for breakfast club from at least 6 different churches, or no church, and 5 different nationalities. The food parcel team is made up of about 18 volunteers who also lead the evening service.

4. The main agency which helps the homeless in Harrogate is the Harrogate Homeless Project in Bower Street, which aims to get as many people off the street and into accommodation as possible. They have about 17 bedrooms, and 6 bunk beds for people on their "No second night out scheme".. They also have a drop in centre called Spring Board, behind Wesley Chapel opposite Jubilee car-park. Here they can get support, showers, washing facilities, clothes, free drinks of tea and coffee and a lunch for a nominal charge from Monday to Friday every week - even bank holidays and Christmas day. They are open from 10 - 2

The council also has homeless hostels

The Trussel Trust have a food bank which operates once or twice a week at Mowbray Community Church. You have to be referred to receive food here, and after interviewing you, giving you advice on how to get off benefits, and praying with you, they will make you up a box of food. Unfortunately you are only allowed to receive this about 3 times a year, except for exceptional circumstances.

We give out food 365 days a year in the evening, and Breakfast Club is every morning except Sundays and Christmas Day, when the church is too busy praying.

I am not aware of any other agencies in Harrogate, although there are others in Knaresborough, Ripon, Wetherby.

5. The types of people using our facilities are quite a cross section of society. Ordinary people like ourselves, our children, our parents, our brothers and sisters - people for whom for some reason things have gone wrong. Some worked so hard that they had break-downs, and could not work any more, or tried to cope by drinking too much, and becoming alcoholics. Some had marriages which broke down, and they suddenly had no home, some had good jobs but were suddenly made redundant with no warning, and they could no longer pay the mortgage. Some were in the army, and after terrible stress in war-zones, had support from the army for 6 months, and then suddenly find themselves with no money, and not sure where to go, because they are still suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The children who are used to living in barracks, and suddenly find themselves very poor in much worse accommodation find it particularly difficult.

Some are rough sleepers - some of these by choice, because they can't cope with living in the world, some can't cope with rules and restrictions of the No Second Night Out Scheme, . Many are too young or immature to cope with the responsibilities of having their own flat, and need to be helped to get to that point, as you would your own child. Harrogate Homeless Project tries to help them.

Nearly all of them are on benefit or universal credit. This is paid once a month, and should be equivalent to £10 a day, if you haven't had any stoppages. It's very hard to budget such a small income over a month, so it nearly always will run out long before the end of the month.

Many have drink or drug problems, and smoke, and when things are difficult these addictions come first before food, so if we feed them, at least we know that they get food once a day.

There are some who are very vulnerable with mental health issues, and need somewhere safe that they can come

For all of them, I hope, we become their friends and for some almost their families.

We respect them, discuss things with them, laugh with them, share jokes, listen to stories.

They help us with various jobs such as watering the church garden, helping with breakfast and the Sunday Lunches, and setting up the daily services,

Many never had a happy childhood, they may have been fostered, abused or simply not loved.

They are hungry for the normal loving relationships we are all entitled to.

We try to never judge them.

6. Finally how can you help / contribute?

Food (NOT baked beans - Bower Street has enough to last over a year!) - Interesting tinned meals, tuna fish, tinned fruit, dry pasta, pasta sauces, interesting soups, tea bags, long life milk, biscuits, sweets, chocolate (everyone likes treats), coffee, spreads,

Smellies: shampoo, deodorant for men and women,

Clothes: socks, underpants, gloves in winter,

Financial: Vouchers so that they can buy electricity or clothes - from Sainsburys or Primark. (but write on them - NO TOBACCO or ALCOHOL) Regular donations to St Peters Church - clearly marked that they are for the Breakfast club

Help always welcome - come along and find out what we do - either in the morning from 8.00 - 9.30, or in the evenings from 4.30 - make yourself known that you want to help, or we will offer you food - people who need food look just the same as everybody else.

* Our Super supermarkets are held about once a month, when we have enough for everyone to get something of everything. All the food, smellies, clothes, sweets, are put in piles - a pile of meat meals, a pile of boxes of tea bags, a pile of packets of biscuits, a pile of toothbrushes etc. - and everyone who comes is given 2 bags for life, and they can pick up one thing from each pile. It is nearly always a very sociable occasion, and everyone

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