

Emergency supplies make a vital difference to the hungry



TAKING STOCK: David Brett, a volunteer at the Beehive stores depot

FOOD BANKS: Affluent Chelmsford had 2,659 people use them last year

Report: Megan Tatum
Pictures: Gareth Morgan

"I JUST couldn't bear the thought that people couldn't feed their children, the idea that they wouldn't be able to feed themselves, and go without in order that their children could eat."

It was this dismay at families

going hungry that made Carol Kellingray join the team of 70 volunteers who co-ordinate Chelmsford food bank, a service that gave 2,659 people in the city emergency supplies last year.

Speaking to the Chronicle on Monday, Carol, joined by fellow volunteer Tony Edwards at the charity's newest distribution centre at Trinity Methodist Church, is awaiting clients in a welcome room equipped with comfy chairs, plates of biscuits and cups of tea on offer.

"They can stay as long as they want, and go whenever they're ready, but often when they leave they say thank you for listening to me, because we feel listening and caring is just as important," she added.

The vital service, which now operates out of four locations in Chelmsford, supplies around 35 tonnes of food per year to those caught in a crisis, from single parents struggling to pay the bills, to those made redundant, or prisoners booted out of the system without a penny to their names.

But six weeks ago the team was forced to vacate the premises on Waterfront Place to make way for a redevelopment, meaning they now store donated food in a warehouse several miles from their distribution centres.

Transport

It has left the charity, established in 2012, desperately in need of transport to shift the boxes around the city, a service currently fulfilled by dedicated volunteers free of charge.

"We need to move in excess of 1,500 boxes a year from the warehouse into our four distribution centres in the city, as well as from our other storage centre, supermarkets, and for special occasions like harvest," said volunteer Clive Pickett, standing in the warehouse off Beehive Lane, where shelves are stacked with tinned vegetables, UHT milk, biscuits and coffee.

Each donated food item begins its journey here where it is checked, labelled, and sorted into its corresponding place in the large unit at Beehive Business Centre.

Volunteers then pack the food parcels according to strict checklists, be it for single people, couples or families, with just enough items to provide a healthy diet for three days, with the team even catering for those who may simply have access to a kettle, with meals such as pot noodles.

More than 30 of these boxes must then be transported to one of the organisation's four distribution centres each week, to be given to those in desperate need - and it is in fulfilling this final stage of



VITAL SUPPLIES: Sarah Davies and Ruth Leverett are busy at the Trinity Methodist church in Rainsford Road, where people can chat and have a cup of tea with volunteers

As it gets colder and people have to turn their heating on they have to make that horrible choice between heating and eating

Ruth Leverett

the process that the food bank needs urgent funding, in order to allow them to buy the vehicle needed to do the job.

It's a cash injection they're hoping to acquire before their busiest month in December when both the need, and the public's generosity, is at its highest.

"As it gets colder and people have to turn their heating on they have to make that horrible choice between heating and eating," said Ruth Leverett, project manager.

"There isn't a stereotype for the type of people that need us, as it's for people in crisis and that can

affect absolutely anybody, so it might be a family on a low income, or with an unexpected bill, or someone who has been made redundant."

The demand on food banks, such as the one in Chelmsford, has surged in recent years, and the team have already helped 1,500 people in the first six months of this financial year, with the busiest time to come.

It is vital projects such as the Chelmsford food bank that the Essex Chronicle and Essex Community Foundation are looking to help with their 2014 Surviving Winter Appeal.

Since we first joined forces in 2010/11, Chronicle readers have raised more than £78,000 for front-line organisations and at risk individuals, which often face high demand during the winter.

This year the ECF is kick-starting the 2014 campaign with a fund of £10,000, which it will be using to award grants to organisations in the coming weeks.

■ If you want to make an application to the appeal go to www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk or call ECF on 01245 356018.

- 3-day food supply for one person**
- Cereal – 1 small packet
 - Soup can – 2 standard
 - Baked beans or spaghetti – 1 standard
 - Tomatoes OR pasta sauce – 1 standard
 - Vegetables – 1 standard
 - Tinned potatoes – 1 standard
 - Instant mash – 1 packet
 - Meat – 1 standard
 - Fish - 2 standard
 - Fruit – 1 standard
 - Tinned rice pudding – 1 standard
 - Instant custard – 1 packet
 - Biscuits – 1 small packet
 - Sugar – 1kg
 - Pasta, rice OR noodles – 500g
 - Tea bags OR coffee - 40 tea bags OR small coffee
 - Fruit juice – 1 carton
 - UHT milk – 1 carton
 - Extra treats (when available):
 - Chocolate snacks



KEEPING TRACK: Roy Backley, a volunteer at the Beehive depot, keeps tabs on the supplies going out to distribution centres

Stories straight from the front line of hardship

■ **A boy from Chelmsford wrote:** "I got run over and hurt really bad. Mum used to drink a lot which didn't help. Then my mum started getting on drugs. Then I had to live with Nan and granddad. I lived with them for a year. My mum now wants me back so she has stopped drinking. So now I can go and stay with my mum. This makes me happy."

■ **An ex-prisoner, who was released after being cleared at trial, said:** "I was held in HMP Chelmsford for ten months for a false allegation to a charge I didn't commit. I was found not guilty in court on the 22nd of July 2014 after serving ten months on remand for a false allegation. Now I am left without nothing. I have lost everything and I am on medication and suffering with PTSD and I am finding it very hard. At times I feel suicidal and no point living this sort of life."

■ **A mother from the city said:** "Today me and my three children are homeless following domestic abuse and my youngest child being sexually abused. We are currently staying in a hotel, waiting to be re-housed. The food bank is beneficial, and a life-saver, and without it we would definitely struggle, it helps so much."

NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT'S ALL FOR THE CAUSE



I/WFE would like to support the Surviving Winter Appeal 2014.

Name

Address.....

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If you are a UK taxpayer, Essex Community Foundation can reclaim Gift Aid, ie 25p on every £1 that you give, at no extra cost to you. Please sign below if you want Essex Community Foundation to reclaim tax on this donation.

Signed Date

■ Please return this slip with your donation to: Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT

How to make a donation

- Text WINT77 to 70070 to donate £5
- Visit www.justgiving.com/Winter-Appeal-2014
- Send a cheque to Essex Community Foundation, 121 New London Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0QT – please complete and return the form above and remember to tick the Gift Aid box
- For people in the 60-plus age bracket, ECF is suggesting that those who do not need their government Winter Fuel Payment could consider donating it to the Surviving Winter Appeal

WHERE TO FIND LOCAL FACILITIES

- **CHELMSFORD:**
 - 1 St Andrew's Church is in Chignal Road: 10 to noon on Tuesdays
 - 2 North Ave URC is at North Avenue: 10-12pm on Thursdays
 - 3 Bell Street Hall is at Bell Street, Great Baddow: 1 to 3pm on Tuesdays
 - 4 Trinity Methodist Church,
- Rainsford Road CM1 2XB: 10am-12.30pm Mon, Wed, Fri
- The coffee shop is also open during these times
- 3. Witham Methodist Church, Guithavon Street: 10am-noon, on Fridays
- **BRAINTREE:**
 - 1 Braintree Baptist Church, Blyth's Meadow (near Sainsbury's): 11am-2pm, on Wednesdays
 - 2 Christ Church, London Road: 10am-2pm on Fridays
- **MALDON:**
 - 1. Maldon Elim Church, Wantz Road: 10am-3pm, every Wednesday