

# Newsletter

## TOGETHER

### Partnership working

by Lorraine Schulze - Editor

In this Spring newsletter we want to focus on the work we do **in partnership** with so many others locally. We hope it will help to explain a bit more about what we do and who else we work with.

In particular, we're going to look at the referral process, why that's important, how it works and who some of our referral partners are.

We are a Trussell foodbank, part of the UK-wide Trussell community of foodbanks. We operate within the Trussell referral partner model. This means that most of our clients are referred in to us by over 140 local and national referral agencies. Most of these partners work locally in Medway or further afield throughout Kent. Some are national partners e.g. larger housing agencies who might place someone in Medway from another part of the country.

### Meet the team

*Sharon Wicker - Office Manager*



**Hobbies/Interests:** I own 2 lovely dogs who keep me busy with walks. I am trying to learn to crochet, - not going well, and I love any opportunity to meet up with friends for a coffee and a catch-up. 😊

**Favourite book:** from childhood - The Railway Children, now any kind of chick flick.

**What do you do at MFB and why do you work for this charity?** I am the Office Manager but I also enjoy getting out to meet and support our clients when possible. I started volunteering at MFB after leaving a teaching career and never imagined I would work full time for the charity but once I started, I realised I had found a second family and going to work became a joy not a stress. I love what I do and who I work with and together, we are able to make someone's day just a little brighter. I look after our referral partners and **build important relationships** with them to support our clients.

Our local referral partners include GPs, social services, schools, faith groups, other charities, housing agencies, council services such as the local family hubs. Any organisation can sign up to become a referral partner if they think they are likely to meet people in need in their work. Training and support are given. **We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our referral partners for working with us to lift people out of poverty.**



Sometimes people question why clients need to be referred in for support – should we not just hand-out food to anyone in need who asks for it? The reason why the referral process works is that it actually gives foodbank clients more support. They will often get help from the referral partner, and then we can offer emergency food, as well as support from our Foodbank Advisors, giving good wrap-around care and all with the aim of clients not needing foodbank support in the future. More about our Foodbank Advisor support later...

### Easyfundraising

As a self-funding charity we are always looking for ways to grow our fundraising. Using [easyfundraising](#) is a great way for our supporters who shop online to raise money for us without you actually giving us any money!

Easyfundraising works with 100s of retailers who donate money if you shop online, and if you're signed up to easyfundraising.

It's very simple to set up and use – do get the donation reminder which will pop up on your device when you shop with a retailer who is signed up to easyfundraising.

Huge thanks to the 28 people who are already supporting us in this way and who have raised over £500 over the last few years. 🙌 PLEASE JOIN IN!



## From the Project Manager *Ruth Lindsay*

### Our Vision: A Hunger-Free Medway, Together

Our three-fold mission:

**End hunger today**

**End hunger together**

**End hunger forever**

The challenge is great, but the progress we are making right here in the Medway Towns is testament to what happens when a community unites for a common cause.

### Ending Hunger Today

We are incredibly proud of our immediate impact. Operating across **9 dedicated centres** in the Medway Towns, our team of **140 amazing volunteers** works tirelessly to ensure that nobody goes without a meal. Their dedication is the heartbeat of this charity, providing a lifeline to those in crisis at the moment they need it most.

### Ending Hunger Together

No single organization can solve food insecurity alone. We are working harder than ever to **build lasting relationships with local charities, businesses, churches, and schools**. Collaboration means that we are creating a safety net that is stronger and more connected than ever before.

### Ending Hunger for the Longer Term - Forever

As Project Manager, much of my focus is looking toward the future. We don't just want to manage hunger; we want to end it. This requires being 'out there'—building connections and ensuring our voice is heard where decisions are made, showing up at every table and speaking to whoever will listen. We actively speak into vital local groups, including:

- The Medway Food Partnership
- Churches Together in Medway
- VCSEF Leaders Meetings (across Medway and Kent)

**Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we are making a difference today—and for the long term.**

## Bringing Hope in Hardship

The role of a Foodbank Advisor by Katie Kalsi – Foodbank Advisor

At Citizens Advice (CA) Medway, Foodbank Advisors play a vital role in supporting people through some of their most difficult moments. Our job goes beyond issuing foodbank vouchers - it's about listening, understanding, and helping people feel seen.

I attend various Foodbank session centres and meet clients who face financial hardship, food insecurity, or emotional distress. As a Foodbank Advisor, I meet them with compassion and patience, offering practical help as well as emotional support and prayer. We signpost to other services, provide tailored advice, and walk alongside clients on their journey, often witnessing incredible resilience and strength. This role is built on kindness. It's about being present, offering hope when it feels in short supply, and helping people believe in themselves again. For many, we become a familiar, friendly face, a reminder that they are not alone.

As part of CA Medway we have a full range of services that I can tap into, supporting clients with a range of issues that can lead to food crisis. These include debt, benefits, housing, relationship issues, and employment. The service is flexible and can engage with

clients face-to-face, over the phone & digitally. It's important that I ensure that the needs of the client help to shape their journey.

The relationships formed are deeply meaningful and we celebrate small victories together: a client finding housing, securing work, or simply smiling again after a long time. While the needs can be great, the reward is even greater knowing we've made a real difference.

My faith is at the heart of what I do, and it is the simple belief: to always be kind, loving, compassionate, and to truly listen.

That's how I help and that's how change begins. Together, we can keep hope alive.

Blessings – Katie



*We are very grateful for the **excellent partnership** that we have with CA Medway. Foodbank Advisors are jointly employed and funded by CA Medway and Medway Foodbank.*

**Our charity is open to anyone in need from any faith or none. We are supported by many churches, Christians and other faith groups across Medway. 🙏 For those who pray...**

Thank you for taking the time to pray for Medway Foodbank.  
**Praying our values together: Dignity, Compassion, Justice & Community**

### Thanksgiving

- + For support with stock & funds from many in our community
- + For people who gave during our *Give in Lent* campaign
- + For support from local churches and faith groups
- + For changed lives through the work of our Foodbank Advisors

### Requests

- + For clients to find solutions and peace in times of crisis
- + For friends in other charities struggling financially
- + For ongoing support with our fundraising efforts

From the Volunteer Co-ordinator  
Demi Bushnell-Wye

**Huge thanks as always to all of our brilliant teams of volunteers** who support our work at our office, warehouse and in our 9 foodbank centres. The support that you give to so many in need is outstanding, showing care, compassion and dignity. **THANK YOU**

I also wanted to highlight the kindness of those we meet in the community who despite their own struggles want to donate to us to help others who are finding life difficult. I recently met Chloe who has been so generous in supporting our St Nicholas Foodbank centre. She has researched the items needed and then thoughtfully prepared goodie bags for our clients, with special treats for children to bring a little extra joy to those who need it most.

**THANK YOU TO CHLOE AND MANY OTHERS WHO SUPPORT OUR WORK**



*Demi & Chloe on the left, with the volunteers from St Nic's Strood*

## Social media update

**FOLLOW US:** Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Bluesky, X/Twitter

We very much appreciate your support on social media as it helps to bring our work to a wider audience in Medway and beyond.



## The Story of Medway Foodbank

by Lorraine Schulze – Editor

### Chapter 2

#### So what happened next?

In our last newsletter we left the foodbank at The Cedars School where the food storage/office part of the work started in 2011.

Helen Gallagher was the Project Manager at the time and quickly realised that larger storage premises were needed. She oversaw the move to Unit 19 on Medway City Estate, before finishing at the end of 2013.

There were 4 foodbank centres:

- The Salvation Army, Chatham
  - Strood Community Project
  - St Mark's, Gillingham
  - Open Doors, Chatham
- ...with plans to open 3 more foodbank centres:
- Walderslade together with Pip n Jim's Church, based at The Net Community Hub
  - Twydall, where 4 Twydall churches worked together to open a centre
  - in Rochester, where 5 churches worked together to get the foodbank centre started



*The foodbank centre at The Net Community Hub, Walderslade*

All 3 centres successfully opened, reflecting the positive partnership working between us and local churches and community groups. We remain very grateful for the kind partnerships that helped to set up the charity and are still at the heart of Medway Foodbank. More in next issue...

## Working Together

*From a Foodbank Referral Partner by Kirtsy Scurr – Project Manager of All Saints Community Project (ASCP), Chatham*

Working closely with Medway Foodbank is at the heart of how ASCP helps those who are struggling. By hosting regular foodbank sessions at the centre, we provide a safe, welcoming space where people can access essential food support without added stress or stigma. Sessions run twice a week, making it easier for clients to get the help they need, in a place where they already feel comfortable and known.

What makes this **partnership** so powerful is the way it enables support to go beyond just food. People coming through the doors, are greeted by a friendly team who take the time to listen, build relationships, and gently connect clients with other support available at the centre - advice, wellbeing activities, or simply a chance to sit and chat.



*ASCP foodbank store and packing area*

By **working together** with Medway Foodbank, ASCP is able to offer not just practical help, but a sense of **belonging, dignity, and hope for the future.**

DATA ROUND-UP 2025-2026	
Clients 2025-26	11,479 Ad: 6691 Ch:4788 8% decrease from 24-25
Centres	Vouchers
All Saints	1788 (39%)
St Mark's	917 (20%)
Open Doors	551 (12%)
St Nic's	443 (10%)
Twydall	339 (7%)
Harvest	148 (3%)
St Justus	144 (3%)
MidKent	135 (3%)
The Net	115 (2%)
Deliveries & MFB	58 (1%)
2025-26 TOTAL	4641

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**THANK YOU**

**Ending  
hunger  
together**

**Medway  
Foodbank**  
Together with Trussell