



Still here and still helping in these difficult times

## GETTING BACK TO NORMAL?

The good news that restrictions are being eased, albeit very slowly, gives everyone hope that there is at last, light at the end of a very long tunnel. We all

want our lives back and for there to be a return to normality. But normal for many in our community will simply mean more of the same. Issues around limited resources, debt, low incomes, mental illness etc. will continue to impact on day-to-day life, with additional concerns over job losses. There is also the prospect of not being able to find other work.....and so it goes on.

ANFB recognise the enormous challenges that everyone is facing and continues to support clients through both short and long-term difficulties. We have been greatly assisted since November, by advisors from Birmingham Settlement based at two of our centres, on hand to identify clients with a variety of needs and to offer appropriate support.

The Trussell Trust's campaign, Hunger Free Future, is to work towards a society where everyone has enough to afford food. No one in the UK should need a foodbank's help; everyone should have enough money coming in to cover the essentials.

Surely the 'new normal' we seek to create should be one of eliminating the need for foodbanks altogether. If you would like to help do that, please join the Trussell Trust campaign at [trusselltrust.org](http://trusselltrust.org).

# HELP!!



This may not be an exact representation of our warehouse, but for our warehouse volunteers who struggle to find sufficient space for our donations in one place, they will tell you.....this is what it feels like!

Circumstances have once again led us to search for a safe and secure larger warehouse, local to B6, B7 or B8, around 1,000 sq ft or we are willing to share a bigger space! Currently we work between two sites and our St Matthew's space has been reduced. Any suggestions would be appreciated!

If like me the only things you really know about foodbanks are that people and companies donate food and others benefit from their contributions, then this might shed some light on what actually goes on behind the scenes. I caught up with the Chair of “Can Do 4:13” and Aston and Nechells Foodbank trustee Sharon Palmer MBE to explain more.



## Meet Sharon Palmer MBE

by **journalist Nicki Ingram** (who also manages our Instagram page)

“I was invited to be Chair of Can Do 4:13 a couple of years ago. The trustees have a very light touch really. We manage finance, make sure we provide good governance and operate really on a strategic level rather than a local level - we have a management committee who do that. The whole aim of the charity and project is to alleviate poverty in the area.”

Sharon isn't afraid of getting her hands dirty though. “When the pandemic hit, a lot of our loyal volunteers had to isolate for various reasons so we helped out on the ground distributing and collecting food etc. The board of trustees are not so removed that we don't roll our sleeves up and step in when needed.”

Sharon's empathy and values run through her like a stick of rock which is why she's the perfect person to be chairing this charity. “There has to be a value structure, empathy and common respect. You are only ever one or two pay checks away from being homeless or in need of a foodbank and we have a lot of professional people who use the service, there is no shame or judgement for those who come here, it's a humanitarian transaction.”

Aston and Nechells Foodbank isn't just about giving people food though. “We don't just provide a food provision but we also provide a financial provision by offering advice about money and debt management. We need to also appreciate that there is a difference between having money for food and the quality of food. To buy healthy food you almost need a mortgage, it's cheaper to go up a high street and buy a burger, that needs to change.”

Foodbank wouldn't be here without Sharon and her fellow trustees but they're only one of the cogs in the foodbank operational wheel. It wouldn't turn without the volunteers.

“I'm really, absolutely proud of all the volunteers' time, energy and volunteering spirit. Also a huge huge thank-you to our donors. We have donors from preschool children to big companies. Instead of doing Christmas presents etc. Sandwell A & E donated toiletries, nappies and personal care items to our foodbank, stuff that sometimes we overlook.”

When we think of foodbanks it's all too easy to become frustrated that they even have to exist in the first place but the positives are crystal clear. “We've had people come in for money management advice and we've never seen them again until they've come back as donors. Many of the users have now become donors as they're now in a better situation and it shows that what we're doing is working, That's a good news story.”

## DID YOU KNOW?

**FAMILY ACTION** has launched Food On Our Doorstep (FOOD) clubs to provide good-quality food at a low cost, whilst also reducing food waste. It costs just £1 a year for a family to become a member. Once you've joined, you can purchase a bag of tasty food items every week worth approx. £10-£15 for just £3.50! To become a member you must live or work within 15 minutes of a club.

**Erdington Club** - St Chad's Church Community Centre, Stoneyhurst Road, Erdington, B24 8HA. Wednesday 9:30am - 11:30am and Saturday 10am - 12noon.

**Saltley Club** - Norton Hall Children and Family Centre, Ralph Road, Saltley, Birmingham B8 1NA. Wednesday 3pm - 5pm and Friday 9.30am - 11.30am.

To find out more, please email [birminghamfoodclubs@family-action.org.uk](mailto:birminghamfoodclubs@family-action.org.uk)

## WHERE ARE WE?

ANFB distribution centres are in Nechells, Ward End and Aston.

St Matthew's Church, Wardlow Road, Nechells, B7 4JH  
every **Monday**  
from 12.00 to 2.30pm

The Elim Church, Church Walk, St Margaret's Road, Ward End, B8 2HA  
every **Wednesday**  
from 1.00 to 3.00pm

The Salvation Army, Gladstone Street, Aston, B6 7NY  
every **Friday**  
from 12.30 to 2.30pm

**ANFB Warehouse** is located at St Matthew's Church, 63 Wardlow Rd Nechells B7 4JH and is open for deliveries from **10am to 12noon every Tuesday.**

**The family of local foodbank supporter Doralyn Charles, who passed away last year have made a financial donation in her memory to ANFB. Doralyn, a much loved member of Birchfield Gospel Hall Aston, felt strongly that no-one should have to struggle to buy food and made generous donations to our foodbank over many years. A lovely lady who is greatly missed.**

**Ta very much Tesco!**



This is a typical weekly donation from our friends at Tesco, Aston Lane

During the period Jan to December 2020 ANFB helped approximately 25% more people than the same period in 2019

**Mission verse**

"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. I needed  
clothes and you clothed me...."

Matthew 25: 35-36

**Find us on social media!**

Take a look at our [new Instagram page](#)  
[astonandnechellsfoodbank](#),

Due to an annoying change of Facebook's  
layout, our [original Facebook page](#), Aston  
Nechells Foodbank, has now closed and can be  
found at Aston & Nechells Foodbank, please  
note the insertion of &

Look out for us on [Twitter @A\\_Nfoodbank](#)

**A couple of nice snippets of  
information from our volunteers**

"A neighbour of ours made a new year resolution  
to give donations to foodbank on a monthly  
basis. She is focusing on toiletries at  
the moment".

it is reported from our warehouse that most weeks  
a local baker provides the volunteers with  
wonderful cakes, which is much appreciated!

Space does not allow us to list the many  
generous food and financial donations that  
have been received over past months, but  
please be aware we are enormously grateful,  
saying thank you does not seem sufficient  
...but here goes.. THANK YOU ALL!



**contact us**

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**[info@astonnechells.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@astonnechells.foodbank.org.uk)**

**How you can help**

**Should you wish to support us  
financially at this difficult time,  
please go to our website and follow  
the donate links to JustGiving.**

**Thank you.**

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

**Facebook**

**Aston & Nechells Foodbank**

**Twitter**

**@A\_Nfoodbank**

**Instagram**

**astonandnechellsfoodbank**