

Issue No.5: April 2026

A message from our Chair of Trustees



Beyond Food: A new chapter for Arden Foodbank

Arden Foodbank is reshaping its approach in response to the growing pressures on families as living costs continue to rise. At the heart of our strategy is a gradual shift from emergency response to prevention.

While providing essential food remains vital, we are working towards offering wider support alongside it. This includes access to budgeting advice, employment support and benefits guidance. Our aim is to help people move towards financial stability and reduce the need for repeated foodbank use.

Community involvement remains central to everything we do. Donations, volunteering and local awareness all play a vital role in sustaining our services. It has been especially encouraging to see schools and youth groups getting involved through fundraising and food drives, helping to build a strong sense of shared responsibility.

Our three-year strategy to achieve our mission -

To be a caring, compassionate presence in our communities offering a warm welcome and food to those in crisis, and in partnership with others to give help, advice, hope and opportunities to all.

is built around three key priorities:

- **A Warm Welcome**
- **Working Together**
- **Reaching Out.**

Volunteers play a crucial role in bringing each of these to life.

For many people, visiting a foodbank can feel daunting. A friendly face, a listening ear and a kind word can make all the difference. Creating a safe, respectful and welcoming environment is at the heart of what we do.

Alongside food provision, we are strengthening how we connect people to additional support. Volunteers help by signposting clients to relevant services such as housing support, financial advice and employment opportunities. While not expected to give specialist advice, their awareness helps ensure people can access the right help at the right time.

This evolving approach has been shaped by the ideas, feedback and experience of our volunteers and the people who use our services. Their insights continue to guide how we develop and improve.

As we look ahead, the need for foodbanks may not disappear, but our determination to respond with compassion, partnership and innovation remains strong. Together, we are not only meeting immediate need but helping to build a more resilient community for the future.

Thank you to all our volunteers, donors and supporters. Your commitment, generosity and kindness make this work possible every day.

Christine Lewington

Rising demand – more families needing support

The start of 2026 has seen a significant increase in demand at Arden Foodbank, across both our Alcester and Studley centres.

Between January and March, we fulfilled **176 vouchers—a 10% increase** compared to the same period in 2025. While this rise is notable, what's even more striking is the change in who we're supporting.

We are seeing **more families** needing help.

In the first three months of the year, we provided emergency food for **460 people—a 26% increase** on last year. Of these, **217 were children**, representing a **50% rise** compared to the same period in 2025.

Behind every number is a person or family facing real challenges. This sharp increase, particularly in the number of children, highlights the growing pressure many households in our community are under.

Each nutritionally balanced food parcel we provide contains enough food for **three meals a day for three days, per person**. Between January and March, this amounted to **4,140 meals** provided to people in need.

Alongside food, we also offer essential items such as toiletries, household cleaning products, and even pet food for cats and dogs, recognising that these are all part of maintaining dignity and stability at home.

In total, we distributed **3,740kg of supplies, a 30% increase** compared to the same period in 2025.

Why people are reaching out for help

Behind the rising numbers are the real reasons people in our community are turning to Arden Foodbank.

So far this year, the most common reasons for referral have been:

- Insufficient income to meet the rising cost of essentials
- Priority debt
- Long-term physical and mental health conditions
- Delays to benefit payments

We provide more than food - support, advice and hope

Our mission is to be a **caring and compassionate presence** in our communities—offering a warm welcome and food to those in crisis, and in partnership with others, providing **help, advice, hope, and opportunities** for all.



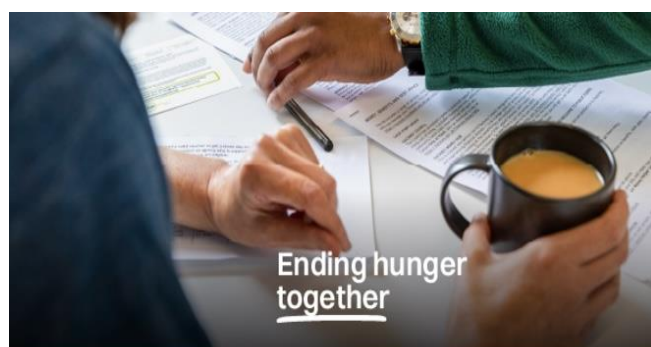
A key part of this is **signposting**—connecting people with organisations that can offer specialist support and help to address the underlying causes of poverty.

So far this year, we have signposted **57 clients** to other services that can provide the help they need.

The most frequently accessed organisations include:

- Act on Energy – supporting with rising heating and energy costs
- Citizens Advice – providing guidance on benefits, debt, and legal issues
- Alcester Community Fridge – providing fresh food
- Wellbeing for Warwickshire – offering mental health and wellbeing support
- Orbit Better Days – providing wider support for tenants.

By working alongside these organisations, we can offer more than emergency help—we can support people on their journey towards greater stability and independence.



Thank you for your incredible support

We are only able to provide this help because of the generosity of local people, organisations, and businesses.

From January to March, an incredible **3,548kg of food and essential items was donated**, along with **£3,470 in financial support**. Every single contribution makes a real difference to people in crisis across our communities.

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported Arden Foodbank financially, and to:-

- All those who host our donation baskets and to all those who leave food in them
- The kind people who brought donations to our foodbank centres
- The churches and many community groups who support us in so many ways
- The local businesses who give their time for free, and to those who donate food.

Spotlight on our supporters

Minerva Mill Innovation Centre

All of us at Arden Foodbank want to say a huge thank you to Minerva Mill Innovation Centre for choosing us as one of your local charities to support, and for your amazing **£525** donation in January from the proceeds of your Christmas Fayre. Thank you for your generosity, your kindness and for caring.



Asgard Marketing

A truly heartfelt thank you to Asgard Marketing for their outstanding generosity.

Their donation at the beginning of the year of **627.3kg of food and essential items** is

nothing short of remarkable. What made this even more special was the thought behind it—creating “Brew Packs”, “Clean Packs” and “Food Packs” filled with essential items, and involving their clients in choosing and funding them.



This initiative is a brilliant example of how a small business can make a **huge impact**. We are so grateful to everyone involved.

Alcester and Bidford Rotary

A very special thank you to Alcester and Bidford Rotary, and to their President, Vaughan Blake, for choosing Arden Foodbank as his charity this year.

Their February **jumble sale** was a fantastic success, with queues forming well before the doors opened and we were proud to be able to take part in it.

Thanks to the incredible support from the community, the event raised an amazing **£1,500**. This generous donation will make a real difference to people in Alcester, Studley and surrounding areas who are struggling to afford the essentials.



Date for your diary
1970s Disco – 19 June

Get ready to dig out the flares, platform shoes and kipper ties!

Waitrose Alcester and their customers

We were delighted to be selected as one of the first charities in Waitrose Alcester's newly reintroduced **green token scheme**—and even more thrilled to win!

A huge thank you to all the shoppers who supported us. We were honoured to receive **£1,500**, presented to us in February by the store's community champion, Tina.



Alongside this, our **March food drive** at Waitrose raised an incredible **358kg of food and £220**, helping provide over **400 meals**.

Thank you to the store team, customers, and our amazing volunteers who made the day such a success.

Studley High School

A huge thank you to the students, families and staff at Studley High School for their fantastic **whole-school food drive**.

Over four weeks in February and March, they donated an incredible **863 items (360kg)**—enough to provide **over 400 meals**.



The friendly competition between school houses made it even more exciting, with Griffin House narrowly taking the top spot.



Your generosity and community spirit are making a real difference.

Community Easter generosity

This Easter, community spirit was on full display. Thank you to everyone who donated Easter eggs, especially Alcester Baptist Church, for helping ensure local children could enjoy a special treat.



Special thanks to Alcester Town Walking Football, Alcester Town FC, and Great Alne Park, who together with their many generous donors, collected an amazing **208 Easter eggs**. Your kindness has brought real joy to families across our communities. Thank you.

Together, we are making a difference

Every donation, every event, and every act of kindness helps ensure that no one in our community has to face hunger alone.

Thank you for standing with us.

Our volunteers: The heart of Arden Foodbank

All of us at Arden Foodbank are volunteers, giving our time freely to support people in crisis. We are delighted to welcome **four new volunteers** to Team Arden since December.

Martin Price, Lynn Williams and Fiona Krober have joined our Alcester team, helping to pack and distribute food parcels each Friday at the Eric Payne Community Centre.

We're also pleased to welcome **Kate Morris**, who has taken on responsibility for managing our social media—helping us share our story and reach more people in the community.

A very warm welcome to you all. We hope you enjoy being part of Team Arden.

Celebrating service and saying goodbye

Since our last newsletter, we have said goodbye to several long-standing volunteers:

Viv Noon, Sally Leggitt, Diane Francis, Val Duffy-Cross, Jane Drake and Les Last.

We are incredibly grateful for their years of dedication and service. Each has played an important role in supporting the foodbank and the people we serve. They will all be greatly missed, and we wish them well for the future.

A special mention must go to **Les Last**, one of the founding members of Arden Foodbank fourteen years ago. The organisation we have today is built on the vision, compassion and determination of those early pioneers. **Les's commitment** over the years has helped shape the foodbank into the vital community support it is today, and his **legacy will continue** to be felt in the lives of so many people we help.

We also thank **David Volrath and Sophie Granlund** for becoming Friends of Arden Foodbank. While no longer registered volunteers, we're pleased they will continue to support us on a more informal basis.

Spotlight on our unsung heroes

Behind every food parcel is a team of dedicated volunteers working quietly behind the scenes.

One such group is our **restock team**—a small but mighty group who ensure that our distribution centres are always ready to serve those in need.

Each week, in all weathers, **Roger, Rob, Brian, Dave S, Alan and Dave G** transport food from our warehouse to our centres at the Eric Payne Community Centre in Alcester and the Methodist Church in Studley.

Meet Roger, Alan and Rob getting one load ready to take to the Eric Payne Community Centre — just one of many trips that keep our shelves stocked and our service running.



Working alongside our warehouse managers, **Cathy and Bryn**, they make sure shelves are fully stocked with food and essential items, ready to be packed into emergency parcels.

A special thank you goes to **Roger**, who patiently coordinates the monthly rota. Your dedication keeps everything running smoothly—thank you for all that you do.

We'd love to hear from you

Your feedback helps us improve what we do and how we share our work. If you have any comments, suggestions, or ideas, we'd really like to hear from you. Please contact Helen Watson at manager.ardenfoodbank@gmail.com

Arden Foodbank

c/o Globe House, Priory Road
Alcester, B49 5DZ

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07733551926

ardenfoodbank@gmail.com

arden.foodbank.org.uk

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Ending
hunger
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