

Euston Foodbank Lockdown update June 2020 + two newspaper article links

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jun/03/record-numbers-used-uk-food-banks-in-first-month-of-lockdown>

<https://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/politics/euston-foodbank-coronavirus-deepening-child-poverty-crisis-1-6687036>

Euston Foodbank is a young foodbank in Trussell Trust reckoning, having come into existence in 2017, particularly to address the need we could see in the estates either side of Euston Station, and the many homeless sleeping rough around our mainline stations and in the inner city. We therefore do not benefit from an allocated big Tesco supermarket and its top-up funding, but the support of our sister foodbanks and the quality assurance processes of the Trussell Trust make us willing members. Our trustees are drawn from each of the local churches, and there are an equal number of elected volunteers on our management committee. You can read more in our annual report and accounts on our website.

Up to the beginning of this year our work had steadily increased to supporting a rolling number of households of nearly a hundred a week, around 7,000 people during the year. The main reason the frontline professionals refer people to us is low income, followed by benefit delays, especially since the introduction of universal credit. Homelessness, debt, domestic crisis are increasing factors. There is no doubt that austerity has fractured our society and we will need foodbanks to paper over the cracks for some years yet to come.

With the coronavirus coming we bought in supplies of gloves, non-clinical masks, hand sanitiser and the protection our volunteers needed to continue our work. We have around 40 volunteers to cover our four sessions, and a fifth of them needed to self-isolate. We have a big waiting list, so with both part-time staff members off due to the virus, I ran two training sessions and we have excellent teams who run a slick process. The first week was bumpy as we established procedures to issue food parcels to people queuing in the street, and with many referral agencies shut made arrangements to issue vouchers.

Demand increased by over 200%, so we were now supporting 300 households a week, and distributing nearly 3 tons of food weekly instead of 5 tons a month. With the managers returned to run the sessions, I have been focussing on the supply chain. To begin with the additional help has been from the Red Cross bringing vanloads from the local government emergency committees, Camden Council and the Trussell Trust organised deliveries from Tesco. Home counties foodbanks have donated their excess stocks. Our regular contributors continue to donate too, and we have been buying in supplies, which has cost as much as £600 a week.

We are now planning for coming out of lockdown, when generosity in an emergency will be wearing thinner. The need will not go away as furloughed staff fall redundant, and sadly there is likely to be a second spike in the autumn, with families struggling on sick pay. I am anticipating needing to buy in significant amounts of food supplies to meet the demand.