

# Keeping Good Company

22 September 2024



Over the past 3 years we've been increasing our work to address the root causes of poverty in our community, while continuing to support those who need our help. This has hopefully contributed to a slight fall in foodbank use this year, although numbers are still much higher than a few years ago.

We have now opened our second Pantry and there have been increasing opportunities for us to influence and work with other organisations towards our vision of ending poverty in Surrey.

However, as we enter this Harvest season we are facing a number of challenges. Overall, our food donations are down, some of our funding has dried up, we have to be prepared in case foodbank use goes up again (with energy prices due rise) and we have both a higher number and more complex cases in our support work. Poverty is still very much in our midst.

The good news is that as we have developed our work and focused increasingly on prevention – trying to stop people getting to crisis point – preventing poverty is now very much getting on the agenda. Our End Poverty Pledge has picked up traction and gradually individuals and organisations are signing up and realising that to beat poverty we need to commit to actions and work together to change our culture.

This has been matched with our participation work which has grown mainly through the Poverty Truth Commission. With our

commissioners we have produced a Short Guide to Participation, which includes some case studies to show how people with lived experience of poverty are shaping what we do and encouraging others to take the participation 'journey' too.

It's an exciting time but we need to continue pushing so that we see a constant in the reduction in foodbank use, people escaping poverty and developing their resilience so as an organisation we are working ourselves out of a job!

This year we have seen some encouraging changes within our foodbank. In May we piloted a new foodbank model at one of our largest centres, after running 2 focus groups with both clients and volunteers. Our 'Choose Your Food' model seeks to recreate a shopping experience for our clients, where instead of being handed over a packed bag of food and toiletries, clients can now walk around with a shopping basket and select their own food and toiletries.

The positive impact of the new model has been felt across the whole of our foodbank operations. Our clients, who have consistently said they much prefer this model, not only because it helps make a foodbank visit more dignified but also because it means clients actively contribute to reducing food waste, by only taking the items they need and want, even when they are entitled to more.

Our volunteers, who have enjoyed greater engagement with clients as they choose their food. And, from an operational perspective, a decrease in stock sent to the centre. As clients are only taking what they need, they are actually taking less food. In the first 2 months following its launch, the amount of food taken per person has reduced by 20%.

We are now exploring how we can transition other centres to this model, so all our clients, across every foodbank centre, can share in the same experience.

With our Summer holiday period over and the restart of school,

so too the foodbank is getting ready for a new Harvest season. Every year we are blessed to receive donations from schools and churches which help to keep our centres and pantries stocked for those in our community experiencing financial hardship. Whilst, so far in 2024, we have seen an encouraging decrease in numbers of people attending our centres, we know that with winter approaching, families and individuals will see their bills increase and many will need support to ensure they can access essentials, like food and toiletries.

Unfortunately, the first 6 months of 2024 saw an 18% reduction of stock in, compared to the same period in 2023. We rely on the generous and faithful donations of our community to help us secure the stock we need to continue supporting families and individuals through our food provision projects.

If you would like to organise a food donation this Harvest, see our 2024 wishlist below. Please click on this link for a list of our donation points. If you are organising a delivery directly to our hub (Good Company Hub, Ruxley Lane KT19 0JG), please let us know by contacting us on [foodbank@goodcompany.org.uk](mailto:foodbank@goodcompany.org.uk)

**New Chair of Trustees needed!**

A fantastic opportunity for someone who is passionate about helping people locally and being part of our vision to see a community free from poverty.

**Fundraising Manager role**

We're looking for an experienced, creative and proactive Fundraising Manager who is passionate about our vision to create a poverty-free future for our community.

Jonathan Lees

Founder and Managing Director, Good Company

For more information visit

Good Company – Supporting Our Community