

## Welcome to Junes Food Bank Newsletter!

As the halfway mark of the year, June stands as a threshold—balancing the hopeful stirrings of spring with the vibrant promise of summer. Its mere arrival is enough to draw people outdoors, inviting them to revel beneath longer days, fragrant blooms, and the electric hum of life in full flourish. Yet, among the months of the year, June boasts an especially interesting fact: it is the month during which the Northern Hemisphere celebrates the summer solstice—the longest day and shortest night of the year.

## June and the Summer Solstice

On June the 21st, the sun reached its highest point in the sky as seen from the North, bathing the world in more daylight than at any other time of year. For ancient civilisations, this event was not simply about sunlight. The summer solstice marked a moment of cosmic alignment, a time of ritual and festival. Stonehenge in England is famously aligned with the sunrise of the solstice, drawing thousands each year who wish to witness the dawn as their ancestors did millennia ago.



## Fond Farewell

We bid a heartfelt farewell to Isobel, since the beginning, Isobel has been at the very heart of the Food Bank. Her dedication, compassion, and tireless support to the Food Bank, never went unnoticed, from giving her time generously to guiding and encouraging patients from the hospital who joined us. We will miss Isobel, though this chapter is ending, we hope it's not a goodbye. We'd be absolutely delighted to welcome her back for the occasional shift when time allows. Thank you, Isobel.



## Volunteers Week Celebration at the Food Bank

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, the food bank came alive with warmth, gratitude, and a spirit of celebration as Trustees and staff hosted a special event in honor of Volunteers Week. This gathering was more than just an event, it was the Trustees' heartfelt way to express their deepest appreciation to each volunteer who gives their time, energy, and compassion to support the food bank and its mission.

Volunteers are the beating heart of the food bank, providing essential support that enables the organisation to serve those in need within the community. From sorting donations and preparing food parcels, to offering a listening ear and a friendly smile, each volunteer plays a vital role. The Trustees recognised the invaluable contributions of these individuals, acknowledging that the food bank simply could not operate without their commitment and generosity.

The Volunteers Week event was filled with moments of reflection and celebration. The food bank was decorated to create a welcoming atmosphere, and attendees enjoyed light refreshments, warm conversation, and a sense of camaraderie. Trustees took the opportunity to personally thank volunteers, sharing stories and words of gratitude that highlighted the positive impact volunteers make every single day.



# Volunteers Week June 2025

## Notice: Volunteers Needed for Picnic on the Park – Sunday, 13th July



Wansbeck Valley Food Bank is excited to announce our involvement in the upcoming “Picnic on the Park” event, taking place on Sunday, 13th July, from 12:00 to 16:00. This community gathering is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the summer, connect with neighbours, and support a vital local cause.

We are seeking enthusiastic volunteers to assist on the day of the event. Your help would be greatly appreciated with:

- Setting up the gazebo before the event begins (11.00-12.00)
- Taking down the gazebo at the end of the day (15.00-16.00)
- Helping throughout the event as needed (12.00-13.00 & 13.00-14.00)

If you are available to offer your support, please let the office staff know as soon as possible, or pop your name onto Rota Central.

As part of our ongoing mission, we will encourage all attendees of Picnic in the Park to bring a food item to donate to the Food Bank. We will be promoting this appeal across our social media platforms in the run-up to the event. Every donation helps us provide essential support to those in need within our community.

We are also planning to hold a raffle during the event, with all proceeds going directly to Wansbeck Valley Food Bank.

Whether you can lend a hand with set-up or pack-down, or support us during the event, your involvement makes a real difference. Please contact the office staff as soon as possible if you can volunteer on Sunday, 13th July.

Thank you for supporting Wansbeck Valley Food Bank. We look forward to seeing you at Picnic on the Park!

## New Collection points

We are pleased to announce the addition of two further collection points on Wednesdays and Fridays at Aldi and Lidl in Bedlington. We are deeply grateful to both stores for supporting the Food Bank.

## Family Passes – Woodhorn Museum

We are delighted to share some uplifting news for local families facing financial hardship. Thanks to a generous donation from Woodhorn Museum, 50 annual family passes have been gifted to Wansbeck Valley Food Bank clients with children, offering a full year of free access. The gesture is aimed at families who may not otherwise have the opportunity for such outings due to financial constraints. The hope is that the passes will provide moments of joy and connection throughout the year.



## Update from David

### Update on move into the new warehouse

The move out of the grit store was completed a few weeks ago. During July the focus of our attention is on the layout of the new warehouse and the integration of portacabin-based activities into the new facility.

The major challenge is providing access to enable the storage of bags and other items at a workable height for volunteers and creating a safe system of work for the unloading and loading of vans. The ramp into the warehouse looks quite innocent until you attempt to unload a van either using the pallet truck or pack the items onto a trolley of some description!

We are also going to have our own dedicated Wi-Fi facility as the current facility is proving not to be robust enough to cope with the needs of the food bank. The signal keeps failing hence the problems of the doorbell and downloading of the client referrals in the office.



It is proposed that once the new warehouse is set up, we plan to run a series of trial shifts from the new facility. The focus this week continues to be the restocking of the warehouse with the range of food items that are used in the bags to enable this trial to take place.

Once the trial is complete and the necessary modifications are made, the move will take place. We anticipate being fully operational within the new warehouse by the end of July. Due to the transition taking place in stages, we do not anticipate the need to close the food bank for this final transition. In the days running up to the final move, it is planned to create an additional supply of bags in reserve to ensure there is a supply of bags to be available for clients.

### **Supply of stock and the content of food bags**

In the last edition I outlined the challenges of getting certain food items that we use to fill the bags for clients. We have since been able to restock with custard, cup a soup and Smash. The supply of Smash continues to be limited, hence the recent decision to use fresh potatoes for the family sized C bags and the children's bags. This will enable us to keep the limited supply of Smash for A and B bags.

The new challenge now lies in sourcing the supply of tinned meat to the volumes we require. We have a pallet on order however it is taking time for the order to come into the warehouse of the wholesaler.

The issue of Pasta n Sauce has now been resolved, and we should be in a position to restock this item shortly for future inclusion in the bags.

As a part of the ongoing development in the content of the food bags, once the move is complete, we are planning to review the items included in the bags. In addition, we plan to develop a planned menu and dedicated bags for the special bags we supplement the mainstream bags with. This will include having a dedicated bag for the homeless, gluten free, diabetics and halal to make meeting the demand for these clients more easily. As always, any suggestions in terms of modifications to the contents of the bags will be most welcome.

In preparation for winter, Karina recently coordinated the securing of some external funding to the value of £1900 to purchase sleeping bags and tents for the homeless.

