

Sutton Foodbank

Before the COVID pandemic Trinity Church started collecting food on Communion Sundays at the beginning of each month as a thanks offering. This stopped during the pandemic and when it restarted the collections were either items of food and toiletries or, from March 2023, cash donations to enable the purchase of whichever goods were most needed by the Foodbank at that time. During the first twelve months of cash donations Trinity raised £2,443.

Sutton Foodbank opened in 2009 and is run by Sutton Community Works. It is a Christian organisation motivated by Jesus' teaching on poverty and injustice. They operate according to Christian principles of compassion, honesty, integrity, openness, kindness and care of all people, regardless of backgrounds or beliefs.

In order to access the Foodbank vouchers are required and these are available through GPs, Health Visitors, Social Workers, Sutton Citizens Advice Bureau and other agencies. The Clients then take the voucher to one of the 3 distribution Centres in the Borough.

- Sutton Salvation Army, Benhill Road, open twice a week
- Bishop Andrewes Church Carshalton, open once a week
- St Michaels & All Angels Church Wallington, open once a week

Clients receive three days worth of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food in exchange for their voucher. They are given: Long-life milk and fruit juice, a packet of cereal, tinned soup, baked beans, meat, fish, vegetables & tomatoes, a jar of pasta sauce, tea or coffee, sugar, a packet of biscuits, tinned rice pudding, custard, tinned fruit or sponge pudding, a packet of rice or pasta. Toiletries are distributed as and when available. Quantities vary according to the number of people to be fed. Most clients only visit once but they are allowed up to 3 vouchers in 1 year. Sutton Citizens Advice provide advice to Foodbank clients at all the distribution centres to maximise their incomes.

Foodbank Volunteers – there are around 90 volunteers who are roughly divided into different teams: storage, transport (collection from Tescos & Asda donation points & deliveries to the centres from the storage centre); meet and greet volunteers who man the centres and serve the clients and a re-stock team for each centre.

Donations of food and toiletries come from the public, some donated to the collection boxes in Tescos (the big one next to the Big Yellow Storage Co.) and Sutton Asda, churches and individuals. At Harvest time donations come from local schools.

Storage of all food and toiletries donations is in four units at the Big Yellow Storage. Everything gets weighed in, then it gets sorted into type, checked to make sure it is in date then stored in crates until it is needed. The main unit stores items in small plastic boxes ready to go out to the centres, so there is a constant cycle of filling the boxes from the crates, getting the boxes together to fulfil the orders from the centres which is usually on a weekly basis.

Distribution to the delivery locations is according to their weekly email requests to the storage volunteers. The orders are put together in boxes which are each weighed and recorded, then the transport teams are notified that the orders are ready for collection & delivery.

The Trussell Trust receives monthly figures of the weight of donations coming into Sutton Foodbank and being distributed by the Foodbank also the numbers of people using the Foodbank together with the reason they are doing so. These figures then become part of the national statistics used by government departments and in parliament.

Sutton Community Works is a charity set up to encourage local churches to work together to meet the needs of the local community by putting their faith into action. Their projects include Sutton Foodbank, Sutton Community Foodshop, Street Pastors, School Pastors, Housing & Homelessness and Praying for the London Borough of Sutton.