

# Darwen Food Larder – a potted history

The idea of setting up a Food Larder was sparked off by a family in dire need at Christmas - no money and no food for the family late on



Christmas Eve, 1997. The Churches that were part of the group 'Churches Together in Darwen' were approached and asked if members of congregations could supply dried and tinned goods for distribution

to those needing supplies in emergency situations. The head of the Darwen Social Services agreed that Social Workers could distribute food to those in needs. Volunteers were recruited, and the U.R.C. Central Church offered space for sorting and packing parcels each month. A stock of boxes was left at the CTD Furniture Store, and these were distributed as required to Social services, Clergy, and other agencies who may know of situations of need. This involved moving heavy boxes and eventually the Furniture Store provided both a storage room, and space to sort and pack donations. Empathy and camaraderie developed between volunteers and staff of the Furniture Store.

In 2011, when the closure of the Furniture Store became imminent, 'Nightsafe' offered a room at their local residential home, that cares for young people, providing help, advice,



and support until they are able to live independently. The Food Larder was welcomed enthusiastically by the staff who put in shelving for storage. Freezers were also put in for gifted bakery and market items and also freshly cooked food for appropriate distribution. They became the principal distributors of emergency food parcels for Darwen, and provide general advice especially about other agencies for further help. As more space became needed, St. Joseph's Church provided part of their parish

centre for food 'drop off', sorting and initial packing. Nightsafe remained the distribution centre.

The start of lockdown during March 2020 brought further challenges as



Nightsafe could not act as a distribution point at this time. Again, in a manner that echoed the formation of the Food Larder, an emergency referral and delivery procedure

was put in place in response to a family being in crisis at the start of the national lockdown. With Nightsafe acting as a point of contact and a team of volunteers delivering parcels, we were able to ensure continuity of support. The effects of the pandemic saw a rise in the number of Darwen Households requesting food. Fortunately, this was more than matched by an increase in donations from individuals and business with support from Darwen Town Council and Darwen Rotary Club.

As lockdown eased, steps were taken to establish a more sustainable way of distributing food. Meeting Places began to act as a centrally located distribution point, with Nightsafe once again functioning as a location where emergency food was provided. The profile of the Food Larder was raised through the initiation of a social media profile and website. Our volunteer team was joined by members of Darwen's Medina Mosque and collaboration with St James' Church commenced.



The Food Larder continues to operate thanks to the generosity of the people of Darwen (of all faiths and none) and the unwavering commitment of a group of volunteers. Charities, businesses, shops, market traders, schools, voluntary organizations and banks have all played a part. Harvest collections, reverse advent and lent campaigns, and various other fundraising events provide important food and financial supplies.

As we look to the future, we expect that the support provided by the Food Larder will continue to be needed. We are confident that the goodwill and support that have sustained the Food Larder for the past 23 years will continue, ensuring that we can continue to work with the people of Darwen to prevent hunger and provide support to help to free our fellow townfolk from poverty.