



Larder update : April 2018

With so much trouble in the news it is easy to feel indignant. But the real question is what will we do. The Exmouth Community Larder only helps a tiny fraction of world problems, but the problems are real, local and immediate - and we can do something. It is a great pride to report how positively the Exmouth area community rises to help.

Our clients and customers have a wide variety of needs and problems, but none of them are helped by going hungry! There are unexpected mishaps, and people also get into silly situations. It is easy to think it is their own fault - it may be, but there are children and other people caught up in the problem. A couple had been separated, but reconciled and came back together all their benefits were stopped due to their change of circumstances.

Family breakdown is too common, but can result in one partner having all the money and the other partner all the children! There is often no real doubt about rights and entitlements, but legal and other persuasions take time - The Larder bridges the gap.

When invited to talk about what we do, audiences have been disappointed that I don't talk about actual cases - but the really interesting stories could too easily be identified. The saddest situations often involve violence and abuse - and of course confidentiality is especially key to those situations.

A lorry driver got into discussion with me some time ago, and pointed out he had a regular job and was well paid. After a long pause he added "...but I was off work from a Rugby injury for 5 weeks, and it was getting very tight....". It is said that most people are only a few pay slips away from a problem, and this certainly seems to be the case. On the other side it is a pleasure to see old "clients" on their feet and coming in with donations to help others.

Loneliness is another issue - we are not really geared to help that, but tea and coffee are generally on the go and we usually have volunteers free to chat to people. Perhaps it is not loneliness, but a feeling of being lost and rejected when the food runs out - and feeling embarrassed to ask help from charity. No-one should ever feel awkward about needing help; no-one is immune from a disaster, whether accident, illness or a relationship breakdown. The time to feel embarrassed is when you are well on your feet and failing to contribute to other people's needs.

Thanks as ever to the whole community for enabling the help we give : I hope these comments give a snapshot of how needs arise. The overall observation is that demand on The Larder is generally about the same since 2014 as the statistics show, contrary to various news reporters angles and spin!!

*Anthony Bernard
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www.exmouthlarder.co.uk*