

## **Report to the thanksgiving service at the 1st anniversary of The Larder**

It's amazing to realise it is just one year ago that The Larder opened in this hall.

Since then we have given out over 700 packages, providing about 15,000 meals, all from food and donations given by many churches, a mixture of community groups, businesses and fund raisers and private individuals.

<SLIDE 2 - Agencies>

Clients have been referred to us by 30 different agencies, the Open Door Centre, EDDC revenue and benefits and Citizens Advice bureau, many agencies of the NHS and others. The list on the screen may be a bit wrong as we don't always know the correct official titles.

Some of us thought we knew what we were doing, but only one person really knew.

So, Praise the Lord in this Service of Thanksgiving that there was a detailed plan which unfolded as we discovered it!

Our volunteers always came from a diverse range of churches; as more volunteers have joined us we include a significant number from no church at all - so we have truly become a community driven activity. The last time we took score, there were 13 different churches represented plus 6 other groups.

We decided early on to be independent rather than join the Trussle Trust. This would have cost us money for the Trussle Trust franchise fee and slowed down our start-up while we received their training. It didn't seem to us that getting food onto shelves and parceling out took much training, but of course we soon discovered that we do need a basic organisation.

Throughout this first year we have been blessed by the right people coming along and making their presence felt just as we have needed them. A few people left us because they didn't like long periods of inactivity or wanted us to extend what we do; we should be grateful to them as they did help us to define how we work.

<SLIDE 3 - Agencies categorised>

We give our food to people in a Food Emergency, usually defined by a referring agency who can also help the client address the underlying crisis, whether needing to find a way through the welfare system, looking for a job or some other cause. We do not counsel clients, but do discuss their needs so that we can signpost them to the most relevant agency. For example, clients referred by the Child Centre or NHS department may have a primary crisis dealing with welfare claims or finding a job.

The slide summarises agencies and the proportion of vouchers from each category over the whole year.

Our first priority a year ago was to get the word out to those that might be in need of help and agencies supporting them. So a big Thank You to the Exmouth Journal who gave us publicity and most importantly reprinted news of The Larder in the Exmouth Herald which goes out free throughout the town and surrounding area.

We have an email address which four of us can see, so many agencies are able to refer clients by emailing ExmouthLarder@aol.com, the authentication being the email address from which the request is sent; in The Larder we always have at least one person watching for incoming emails.

Our clients are ordinary people of all age groups who are suffering from bad decisions, bad luck or usually some combination of both. No-one should feel embarrassment as a client of The Larder; embarrassment is reserved for those back on their feet who fail to put something back ..... or maybe those of us who are on our feet and happy not to need support!! This evening's readings are sufficiently clear!

<SLIDE 4 - donors>

Food comes from a wide variety of churches and donors. The list on the screen shows churches and schools over the whole area. Most importantly it also shows companies and organisations with no church affiliation, so we are growing into a true community venture - Thank You to the Deputy Mayor for being here this evening to symbolise this and all those with no church affiliation.

When food arrives from donors it is checked for dates, then counted and put on the shelves. We no longer put out urgent requests for shortages, because soon after we announced a shortage we received a glut of the items concerned - so we just take what comes and use our cash donations to fill in the gaps.

In the last couple of months we have opened a distribution centre in Budleigh Salterton, using the Catholic Church hall which is well placed discreetly in the centre of less affluent housing estates. We serve this from Exmouth because there is not enough need in Budleigh to justify a separate volunteer team sorting food.

Budleigh Salterton does lack a counselling or support service to match The Open Door Centre or CAB which people can drop into - so if anyone knows suitably qualified people in Budleigh who might volunteer a couple of hours a week .....

Our other recent extension is being able to offer small cash top-ups for gas or electricity on recommendation from agencies - the cash for this coming from EDDC. As winter comes on, this may be increasingly important.

So, THANK YOU ALL for your support, donors, volunteers, agencies and everyone helping us to connect those of us who are reasonably comfortable with those of our neighbours who are hitting hard times.

With Christmas in sight, let us remember that the Great God, whom we are here to praise and serve, trumpeted the most important news He would ever tell mankind to a ragged collection of rough sleeping outcasts minding sheep on the hillside above Bethlehem

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