

SOCIAL AID BRIEFING PAPER

COMMUNITY LARDER PROJECT

CHURCHES IN HEREFORD ACTION TEAM

Monday, the 9th February saw the opening of the Community Larder in Hereford. The Larder, which operates from the portakabin at the back of the Baptist Church in Commercial Road, Hereford, is open between 10am – 12 noon, Monday to Thursday.

The Community Larder distributes bags of food to anyone who asks for help, and the bags, which contain enough food for immediate needs, are made up on site and distributed by volunteers. All the food is donated through churches and other organizations locally and is collected by a volunteer driver who delivers the items to the portakabin.

There are currently 32 volunteers on the database, but while each of these will need continued support to ensure their on-going commitment, there will always be a need to recruit new volunteers. Likewise, to date there has been no shortage of food donations. Adequate supplies though, rely upon dedication from the existing providers and also finding new churches and organizations willing to collect on behalf of the project.

The food bags are divided into three types: one for those with no reheating facilities; one for single people with access to a hob or microwave; and one for couples who can reheat food. Should a family require help a suitable sized bag would be made provided.

The first four weeks have been busy and in all a total 220 bags have been distributed. Some people have returned for a bag each day, while others have come just once or twice. Some have been referred to the Community Larder through agencies working with them, while others have heard about the project through friends and word of mouth.

To date no one has been refused help, but everyone taking a bag is asked to sign a monitoring form. Statistics, including age and sex of the recipient, are also recorded as well as whether they have been referred by an agency and, if so, which one. In this way a clear picture of who is being assisted through the Larder may be created; information which may determine the success of future funding applications.

The pilot ends on Thursday, 30th April, and if the Churches in Hereford Action Team agree to its continuation, then it will re-open on Monday, 11th May. The time lapse of one week will enable new systems to be initiated and also give the psychological break between the old way of managing the project and the new. This will be important for both volunteers and clients.

Shelagh Callaghan, Project Coordinator, March '09