



## Annual Report 2015-16

This report covers the second year of our operation, from April 2015 to March 2016. Over the course of the 12 months, the Trustees have met formally on four occasions to discuss and agree on decisions about the income and expenditure of the charity, to plan activities and to review progress to date. This is significantly fewer meetings than in the first year which required more discussions and decisions about procedures and governance, arrangements which are now all in place. All trustee meetings were presented with up-to-date accounts by the Treasurer and a written record maintained. Mal Maclean was re-elected as a trustee for a further term of 3 years.

### Activities

The Charity has continued with its approach of both funding other people to carry on their own work which fits with our charitable objects and initiating activities of our own, creating Soul Food Spaces in new locations. Over the course of the year, we have financially supported the following initiatives run by other Organisations:

- **Windmill Hills Men's Lunch Club** (run by Advance) quite close to Gateshead Town Centre. This is a weekly club attended by around 30 men at which a full lunch is provided and the afternoon has a programme of social activities. Soul Food Spaces contributed by paying for a year's membership to FareShare North East which provided them with sufficient food to cook each week and also to begin to offer attendees a food parcel to take home with them. This is the second year we have funded this work and our contribution was vital to their continued operation as they have no other income stream and those involved in the cooking and running of the club give their time freely. As such this is exactly the sort of activity that Soul Food Spaces was set up to help. During the latter part of the year, the premises in which they operated at a nominal rent was taken over by a larger charity and they were forced to relocate to the Teams an area of high deprivation but several miles away and difficult for the majority of existing clientele to continue attend. We will look to help this group become more integrated into the other work going on in the Teams and therefore more self-sufficient.
- We developed a good relationship with **St Chad's Community Centre** in Bensham, Gateshead and provided them with two grants over the course of the year. The first was split between pans, cutlery, chopping boards and kitchen knives to enable their kitchen to be fully functioning as well as a lump sum to be able to provide the pre-school children with fresh fruit. This provided around 20 children with a portion of fruit every day throughout the year. The second grant made to St Chad's Community Centre was to pay for food for a full Christmas lunch attended by local families in touch with the project. Over 100 adults and children attended the meal and afternoon of games and activities.

- We also established contact with a small unregistered charitable group called ***Peace of Mind*** which works with asylum seekers and refugees in Newcastle and Gateshead with a particular focus on women. We funded them to provide emergency food parcels and to run a Christmastime celebration meal at a drop-in in Bensham, Gateshead which they already hosted. This relationship has gone from strength to strength and working in partnership with them has led to perhaps our most exciting project so far, setting up an alternative food bank in Bensham.

Soul Food Spaces has also continued to run two of its own events begun last year:

***The Monthly Meditation*** has continued to grow in numbers and impact. In July 2015 we started running two sessions on a Saturday in order to cope with the number of people attending which was in excess of 40 people, and far too many to manage. The format for the sessions themselves and the free food has remained unchanged. Every month we continue to have new people attending and we now a mailing list of over 190 people despite never having advertised the event and relying solely upon word-of-mouth for publicity. We have maintained the importance of it being a free event to prevent there being a barrier for those who are unwaged. Anybody who has wanted to contribute has been pointed in the direction of the donation page of the website. Soul Food Spaces pays for the lunch and hire of the venue. The meditation undoubtedly addresses the emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of those who attend and completely fulfils the charitable objects of Soul Food Spaces. It has continued to remain popular for people in recovery from addiction and a strong sense of community and fellowship has grown up amongst attendees who socialise over the buffet lunch. As a result of the success of this event, a Community Interest Company called Just Meditation was formed in November 2015 to build upon this initiative and to extend the range and scope of meditation in the North East. From April 2016, Soul Food Spaces has passed over responsibility for payment of the room hire to just Meditation but Soul Food Spaces will continue to fund the lunch for a further year. By 2017 it is likely that there will be a lot more meditation workshops and classes run in the area making the food offer at just one of these events seem rather random and at that point Soul Food Spaces will decide whether or not to continue funding this lunch.

***Pilgrim Street***, the faith based meeting which began in November 2014 has continued to run throughout the year on the first Sunday afternoon of the month. It is preceded by tea and cake and a time of sharing, discussion and liturgy follows. Numbers have remained quite small but this has enabled a strong trusting group to form. Although correspondence and administration is handled by Soul Food Spaces there is no cost to the charity of running Pilgrim Street because cakes and refreshments are donated and a very low cost room hire has been negotiated which is paid directly by members. It remains an important meeting for the core of attendees and there is some prospect of this growing in ambition and scope in the course of the next year.

## **Finance**

The Financial Accounts for 2015-16 show the incomings and outgoings of the charity. Once again we have not sought external grant funding and have relied upon a number of private donations to maintain the charity. We received donations amounting to

£2335 and gave grants and supported activities totally £3473, a slight increase on year one. Reserves of around £7927 covered this shortfall. We have completed the process of registration with HM Revenue and Customs which entitles us to receive gift aid on donations and we are currently awaiting a payment from HMRC covering the first 28 months of our operation. Although we have not significantly extended the number of grants or supported many more groups this year, we maintained our strategy of selective support for those who we believed would benefit from our limited assets to achieve mutually shared goals and ambitions in relation to food and community. As we become more confident and experienced it may be that we wish to increase our income either from direct donations or by approaching grant-making bodies in order to provide greater levels of funding and support for selected beneficiaries. It is anticipated that we will significantly increase our giving next year as projects that are currently at the planning stage become operational.

### **Partnerships**

As we have started to become established, we have formed a number of partnerships with charities and organisations whose aims and values are aligned to our own. These include those we have funded such as Advance, St Chad's Community Centre and Peace of Mind, but also other organisations such as Food Nation, FareShare North East, The John Paul Centre and The Wayne Hemingway Estate. We have also become "members" of two food based development groups. Bensham and Saltwell Alive is a charity promoting these areas of Gateshead which set up a sub-group to map and develop food based initiatives in the area. We have attended this since it commenced in November 2015 and are a core member. We were also invited to attend a national event for Independent Food Projects held in Manchester in March 2016. The intention is for this to become a constituted group. We will seek to attend meetings and become better linked to activities elsewhere in the UK. Already useful contacts have been made and a host of clever and innovative ideas shared.

### **The Future**

This year we have managed to continue to establish the charity, maintaining what we started and steadily building knowledge, contacts and ideas which will stand us in good stead for the next few years. The website has limitations but serves its purpose for those who seek information about the charity and we have made use of social media with twitter accounts for both Soul Food Spaces and Pilgrim Street. Our aim is not to make the charity well-known or draw attention to ourselves but to support and facilitate the many small groups and organisations in our local communities who are doing good work to bring communities together and to feed people in body, mind and spirit.

As we move into our third full year of operation we are on the verge of starting our alternative food bank in partnership with Peace of Mind. It will be a significantly different type of food distribution to the dominant food bank model led by the Trussell Trust. Ours will not be time limited, will offer choice of foods, will be run by those who benefit from it and will have high levels of fresh produce. Operating from Corpus Christi Church in Bensham it will particularly target single asylum seekers on minimal income and local people whose benefits have been sanctioned. Soul Food Spaces is

committing significant funding to this project to get it off the ground and to demonstrate a more inclusive and less demeaning way of distributing good food to those in need.

Thanks to all those who have donated their money, time, skills and energy to enable Soul Food Spaces to continue to do so many of the things that we set out to achieve. Thanks too for the continued interest and good will extended towards our work. We look forward to continuing to help those in our local communities who are isolated and hungry to find food, companionship and greater wholeness in the forthcoming year.

Soul Food Spaces Trustees; May 2016