

Sheena is awarded BEM in Birthday Honours

Community champion awarded British Empire Medal for charity work throughout COVID-19 pandemic

Sheena Hales has been awarded the prestigious accolade for her role in spearheading Royal Bank of Scotland's temporary foodbank



Sheena Hales of RBS looks through the many boxes full of clothes donations. Picture by Stewart Attwood

Sheena is Programme Manager in the Change Centre of Excellence at Royal Bank of Scotland. She proposed the initial idea of turning the bank's Gogarburn conference centre into a foodbank distribution hub when lockdown began in March.

Since then the site has since helped distribute an average of over 6,000 meals per week and take in huge donations including 220,000 items of new clothing and a truckload of potatoes.

Throughout the pandemic, Royal Bank's conference centre has acted as a drive-in food bank distribution site – partnering with the Trussell Trust, Social Bite and Cyrenians as well as forming a strategic partnership with KPMG and Deloitte to supply food, hygiene products and clothing to vulnerable people across the central belt and beyond.

Charities faced unprecedented demand during the Covid-19 pandemic, and Sheena's leadership in putting the idea to repurpose the centre into action allowed Royal Bank's partner charities to get involved too.

As a result, the charities have been able to accept and distribute large scale donations from leading manufacturers and supermarkets along with Scottish businesses and individuals all wanting to contribute to their local community.

Sheena Hales, Programme Manager in the Change Centre of Excellence at Royal Bank of Scotland, said: "When we first become aware of the full extent of Covid-19 and lockdown measures started coming into place, I think most people looked around at their local community and wondered what they could do to support those who might need some extra help.

"With the staff at our Gogarburn headquarters switching to remote working, it made sense to utilise the space we have on offer here at the conference centre and the idea came about to turn it into a foodbank distribution centre – meaning that the worthwhile charities we support would never be in a position

where they needed to turn down donations due to logistical concerns around facilitation or storage.

“Through our partner charities, we’ve been able to help a huge number of families across Edinburgh and further afield – something that has only been possible due to the hard work and dedication of our amazing team of volunteers.”

The British Empire Medal is awarded for extraordinary service to the community, recognising individuals who have gone above and beyond to support those in their local area.

Malcolm Buchanan, Scotland Board Chair, Royal Bank of Scotland said: “On behalf of everyone at the bank, I would like once again to thank and commend Sheena for her invaluable work throughout the course of the coronavirus pandemic.

“From pioneering the concept of the foodbank to her leadership of the volunteer team, Sheena has worked tirelessly to ensure that our charity partners are able to facilitate each and every donation and we are delighted that her efforts have been recognised in the Queen’s Honours list.”

Along with donations of food and clothing, the foodbank has helped furnish a homeless shelter in Glasgow and also partnered with the Scottish Book Trust to provide families with learning packs, story books and even tablets, Wi-Fi to support with remote learning.



Clothes Donations at RBS Conference Centre at Gogarburn.
Volunteer team Picture by Stewart Attwood