



FRESH FOOD TO FOOD BANKS

LEIGH ON SEA
AREA OF SERVICE: 



Project description

During the pandemic, we supported those shielding by delivery of food. On occasion, we provided the same service to those using the local food bank. In one of those trips, a Lions volunteer discovered that the fresh food component of the parcel consisted 3 potatoes and 2 carrots – for a family of four! After exploration with the Food Bank project manager, it became clear fresh food donations were sporadic and highly variable in quality (often end of shelf life products) so many items had to be discarded as not fit for use. We decided to address this and created the Fresh Food to Food Banks project. For nearly 18 months now, we have been buying and delivering fresh food (potatoes, onions, carrots, apples, eggs, bread, etc) on a daily basis and delivering it to the food bank distribution centres for their use on the same day.

This service project would not have been possible without full collaboration between the fund raising and community service teams within our club. The fund raising team generate the income (mainly in our charity shop) to enable the approx. £1,000 we need each month to support this service. Our community team buy the food at local suppliers and supermarkets and shop locally to minimise the carbon footprint as they deliver to the food banks. We started with a 3 month trial project to ensure the method worked and that we could maintain the service. We are still going strong after 18 months now, and are expanding our offering to meet the new need of hygiene poverty by delivering toiletries too.

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What went well?

We transformed occasional, random donation of fresh food to a sustained, reliable supply to food banks. Whilst the previous offering provided basic sustenance to those in need, the additional health benefits of fresh food are well established and we have been able to offer that on a regular, reliable basis.

Additionally, as this is a more personalised service, we are able to flex deliveries to meet the specific needs of the particular distribution centre, thus ensuring food is not over supplied or wasted, nor are there gaps that we could fill.

We work with a range of partners in our hunger support initiative but this particular project is a close (daily) partnership between Southend Foodbank and the Lions Club of Leigh on Sea. We are supported on occasion by SAVS (Southend Association of Voluntary Services) as they can highlight some small local grants to help us fund the project. However, the vast majority of the annual £12,000 funding donated to the project comes from our own fundraising activities.

Having highlighted the scale of this, I should point out that this is a scalable project achievable by almost all clubs as any additional deliveries provided to meet highlighted gaps in supply at food banks will be of value.

Lessons learnt

We are now a trusted partner of both Southend Foodbank and SAVS and are likely to be the first port of call if they need assistance from a service organisation, as evidenced by their request to address hygiene poverty. It has raised our profile with a wide range of people and organisations in the local voluntary sector and our efforts there have also been rewarded by two existing food bank volunteers joining our Lions club.

The links we have made mean we are now starting to explore how we might help the local community with the emerging fuel poverty issue.

 14,000 people served
(so far)

 900 volunteer hours
(so far)

