

COVID -19 Emergency Food response March 2020 - Sept 2020 Report

Summary

Since the end of March 2020 and the beginning of lockdown in the UK there has been a tremendous community effort to make sure people don't go hungry in Cambridge. Whilst we are now moving to a second phase of emergency provision it is clear that in Cambridge, as elsewhere in the country, Covid -19 has highlighted and compounded ongoing issues associated with poverty and austerity. We are concerned that this winter will bring more hardship and that many more people will struggle to feed themselves and their families. The burden placed on local communities to fill bellies with volunteer effort may prove too much. Whilst we recognise the role that surplus food, food banks, charities, and community solutions play in alleviating hunger, we also call on government and other statutory partners to step up and tackle the root causes of food poverty together and in partnership with those who are working with or have experience of food poverty.

Whilst this report tries to capture the work that has taken place across the City since March 2020 until end Aug 2020 it is impossible to capture and document all. From the 100's of volunteers, the people growing food and donating from allotments, streets and community farms to the chefs who have worked tirelessly and all those that have donated, delivered and driven we would like to **thank you all**.

The work of Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance

Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance (CFPA), established in 2018, quickly mobilised in late March 2020 to develop a structure of food support for vulnerable residents. CFPA is a collaborative network of organisations, led by Cambridge Sustainable Food, that have been working together on food access issues since 2018. CFPA published the first Food Poverty Action Plan for the city in 2019. CPFA have been meeting regularly throughout the crisis, and are represented on the City Council Reference group by Cambridge Sustainable Food

CPFA developed a three pronged approach to the current situation:

- Phone and online signposting service
- Establishing community food hubs - eight spread across the city. These are based at Barnwell Baptist Church, Abbey; The Edge Cafe, Romsey; Hope Church, East Chesterton; Church of the Good Shepherd, Arbury; St Andrews Church, Cherry Hinton; St James' Church, Queen Edith's; St Thomas Hall, Coleridge and Trumpington Pavilion, Trumpington.

- Community meals/ shopping bag delivery service which grew out of the existing Holiday Lunch provision



Holiday Lunches

Holiday Hunger projects usually run throughout Cambridge over school holidays. These have been coordinated by the City Council and have successfully been running for the past 5 years. In 2019 - 2020 venues such as The Church of the Good Shepherd, Buchan street or Cambridge United have served over 3983 meals to families throughout the City. These meals not only offer the chance of a meal but provide a much appreciated social gathering for parents and children with activities offered by organisations such as CHyPS or Kettles Yard. During the easter and summer holidays we were able to offer these families a cooked meal and Art and Craft Activity packs provided by Cambridge United and the City Council. Although not the vibrant community meals people were used to during usual times people were pleased to still be able to access a meal delivered to their doorstep, often by a familiar face in the community.

Easter Holiday Lunches (Mon 30th March - Fri 17th April)

111 households received deliveries, and 75% of these recipients were children. The largest number of meals were delivered in CB4, and were cooked by a team of volunteers led by Alex Collis, at Arbury Baptist Church. Other postcodes received meals from Cambridge United Community Trust, either prepared by them in the kitchen at the football club, or donated by a local restaurant, Pipasha.

Summer Holiday Lunches

For the period from 20th July to the end of August there were 1706 meals delivered to 97 households. The shopping bags delivered with the meals were discontinued from the 27th July onwards, except for 3 households who particularly requested to continue.

2876 Holiday lunches delivered Easter and Summer 600 bags of shopping delivered to families 111 Families received meals



Community Meals

At the end of the Easter Holiday Lunch period it became apparent that lockdown and the situation regarding shielding and furlough were set to continue and that a continued emergency response was needed that reached further into the community whilst also continuing to support families.

Working with the City Council to target families and contacting agencies such as Age UK, Citizens' Advice Bureau, GP surgeries, schools plus the mutual aid groups, we sought to reach

as many people as possible. Families who had been receiving holiday lunches were contacted to see if they wanted to continue to receive support. 97 families out of the original 111 households decided they wanted to continue, representing 351 individuals (including children)

During May, the preparation of meals for CB4 and for the Community Food Hubs relocated from Arbury Baptist Church to the Cambridge Regional College, with its large professional training kitchens. This was only made possible by CRC generously allowing the team to use the premises for free. This allowed good social distancing for the team, and enabled them to increase production, and provide meals to the Community Food Hubs: feedback from the hubs showed that these were very popular. At the end of May, Cambridge United Community Trust stepped back from the meals programme to concentrate on other community activities, so the full production was picked up by the team at the college. Pipasha Restaurant kindly continued to donate meals regularly on a Wednesday, and these were distributed via the Community Food Hubs, also proving very popular with recipients.

5039 Community Meals delivered to households
867 shopping bags delivered
2515 cooked meals sent to the Food Hubs

Food Hubs



There are 8 Community Food Hubs in the City. The Community Food Hubs act as a focus for the local mutual aid groups and voluntary sector to make sure those that need food are able to

access it. Each hub is operating independently and opening times are coordinated to make sure there is coverage over the city each day (Mon - Sat).

8 Food hubs

113 tonnes of food distributed

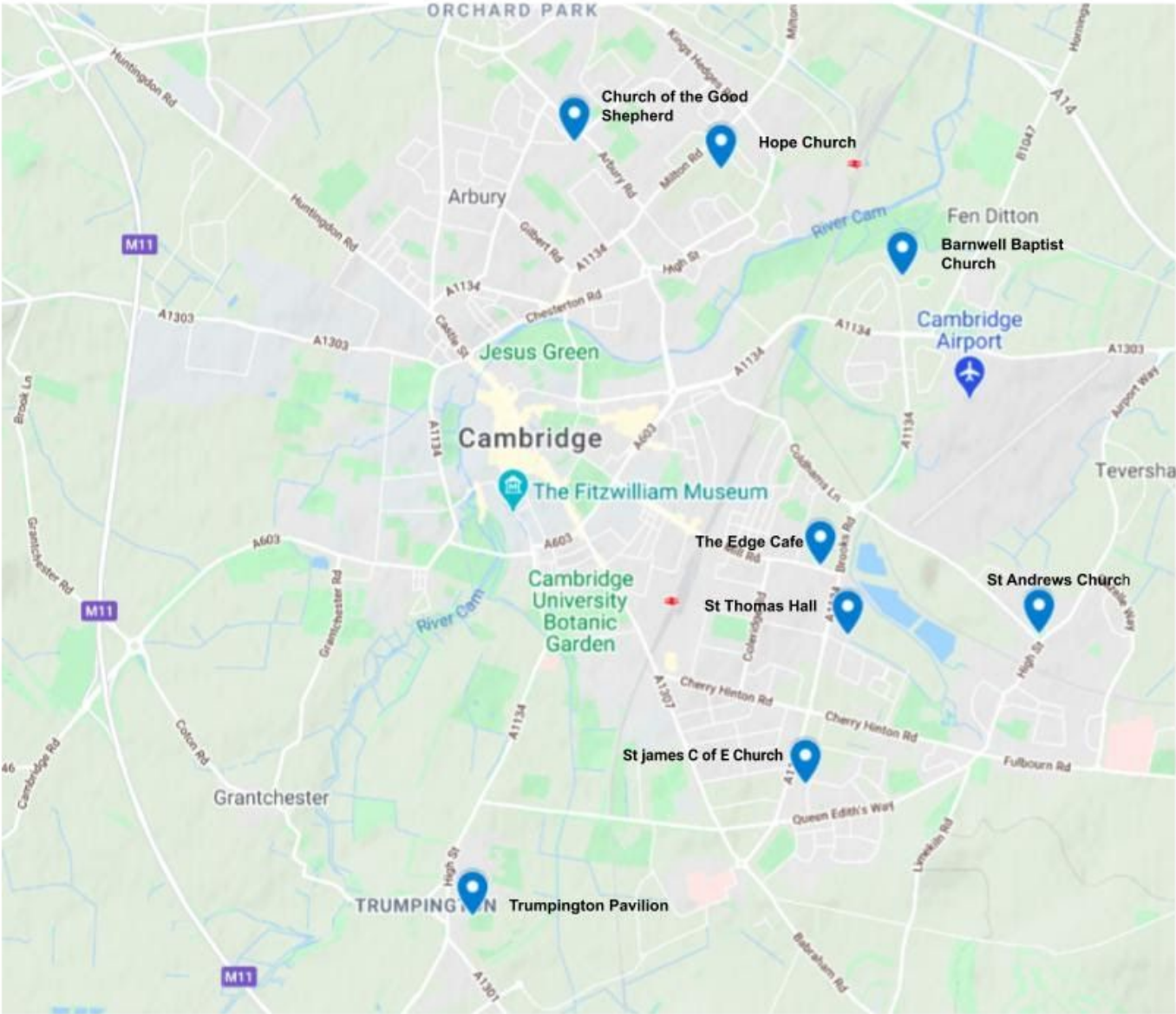
17588 visits

83 volunteers

230 volunteer hrs a week



Location of Community Food Hubs

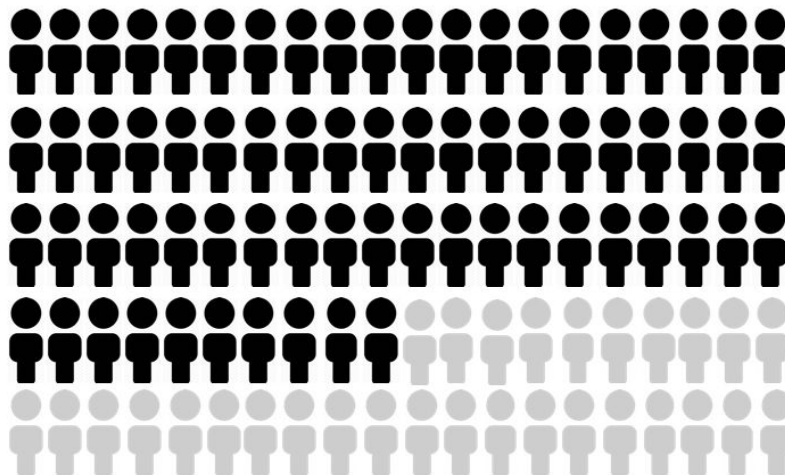


Survey/ Questionnaire

We undertook a survey in July 2020 with people who are attending the hubs to understand the effects Covid and lockdown were having.

The questionnaire had 218 responses which represented a total of 640 people in households benefiting from the community food hubs. Based on the average number of weekly food hub visitors across May, June and July being 903 and the assumption that the majority of families would visit the food once per week, the questionnaire response rate was 24%.

Responses to the question: "Has Covid-19 changed the amount of money you have each week to live on?"

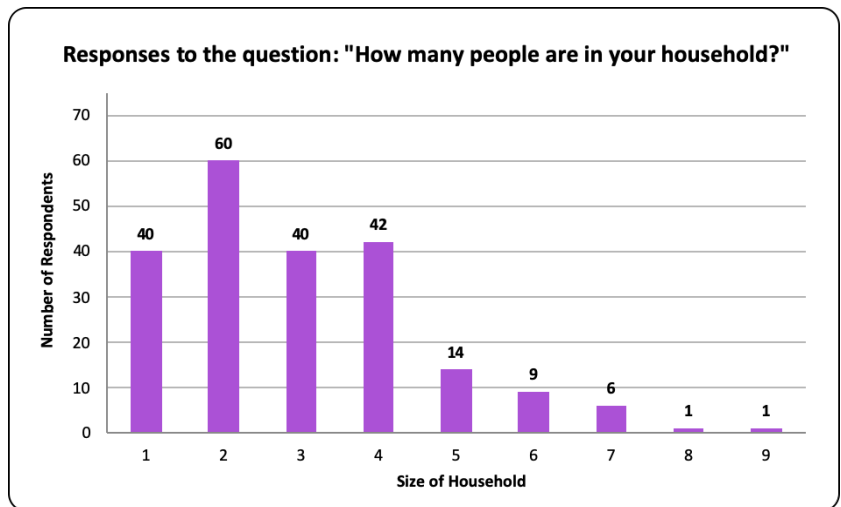


70% of hub respondents answered 'Yes'

Household Size and Composition

Respondents' household sizes ranged from 1 to 9, with 1 respondent living in an eight person household and another in a nine person household. As shown in the figure to the right, the largest number of respondents lived in 2 person households (28%).

The majority of respondents had children in their household (61%). 18% of respondents had a retired person in their household and 12% had a disabled person in their household.

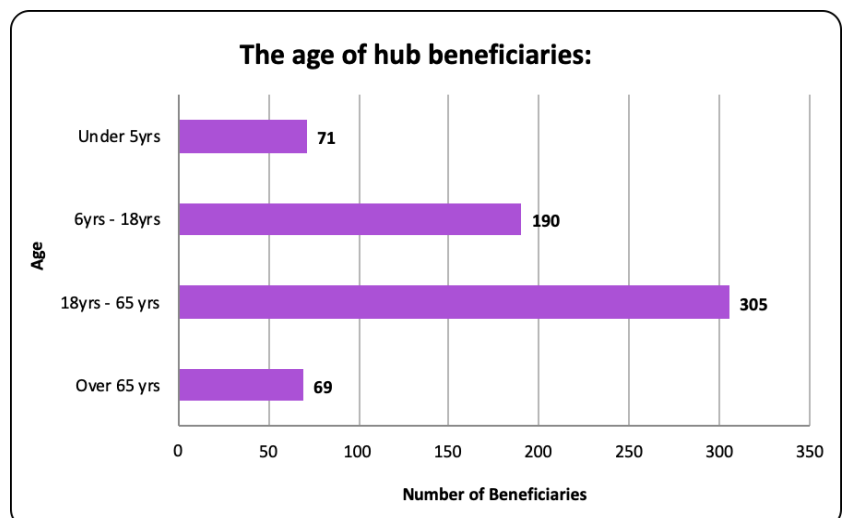


Ethnic Background

The majority (84.5%) of food hub respondents identified as white, with 15.5% from a BAME background. This is similar to the wider city's population, where 82.5% are of white descent and 17.5% from a BAME background (2011 Census data for Cambridge).

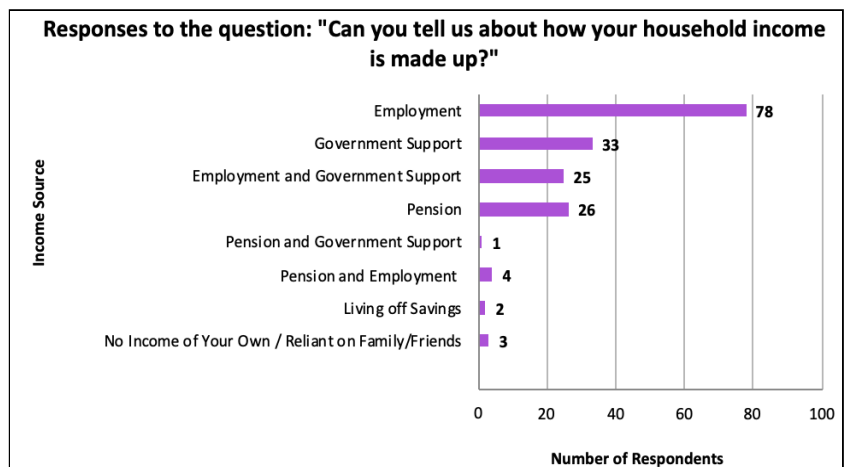
Age

The largest number of food hub beneficiaries were aged between 18 and 65 (305, 48%). As demonstrated in the figure to the right, a total of 261 beneficiaries were children (41%). 71 of these children were under the age of 5 (11%)



Income

Respondents reported incomes from sixteen different sources, which have been classified into eight income source groups. As shown in the figure opposite, 45% of respondents obtained their income from employment alone, 19% obtained their income from government support alone (including benefits and furlough scheme) and 15% of respondents' income was a combination of employment and government support. A further 15% obtained their income solely from a pension.



Reasons for visiting

The majority, 59% of food hub respondents, stated that 'using the hub is helping me feed my household better than I could without it', whilst 34% reported 'I would have found it difficult to feed my household without the hub'. Moreover, 31% of respondents reported using the food hub to 'reduce their environmental impact'. One respondent stated the hub helped them consume a more varied diet.

Changes to stop visiting

In order to stop visiting the community food hub, 43 respondents (30.5%) said they would need to return to work. A further 46 respondents (32.6%) said they would need more income/work. 7 respondents stated they would need to be able to access a food shop safely.

What the organisers and volunteers said

Hub organisers and volunteers said that the benefits of the hubs included providing people with access to food and access to better food such as fresh fruit and vegetables which people couldn't usually afford. They also valued the fact that using surplus food in this way was helping the environment and that learning about the issues food hub users face meant they could refer them on to other agencies. They felt that the hubs facilitated a sense of community/local shared responsibility.

Phone and online signposting

A phone-in helpline and an online form and hub information were set up quickly in lockdown and the information was quickly distributed around the city resulting in the first call on April 8th.

Many people were able to fill in the online form or find advice on the CSF website about food hubs and community lunches, reducing the need to call. Calls have come from a range of people including families and people who have found themselves in financial difficulty through loss of work, those isolating or in some cases, older people or people with physical or mental health problems. What became apparent early on is that although calls were minimised due to access via the website, those we did speak to often had complex needs or situations. Most of the phone calls have been from people who have been unable to fill in the form themselves, were in crisis or who found communicating in English difficult. For the latter group, Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum has been key in providing interpreters and identifying need. We have also completed safeguarding forms when required and liaised with mutual aid groups and food hubs to link people to the help they need.

Through conversations with people, we have been able to administer food bank vouchers, provide signposting to local hubs for fresh food, to mutual aid groups for shopping help or the occasional food hub delivery, a friendly chat or listening ear and sometimes adding them to the community meals list. We have also had contact from people outside of the city and we've tried hard to find information for those people and get back to them with whatever help we can.

Some of the people we've helped have been quite desperate when they speak to us, worried about how they will feed themselves or their families. One caller had a large family comprising both adult and younger children where all the adults except one had lost work due to COVID and they had no food in the house. Another, severely disabled, was unable to access their usual forms of help. Another older person had come out of hospital, was shielding and on a very limited income. We had families who suddenly found themselves with children at home, no school dinners and were worryingly short of food. People who were furloughed, or suddenly had no zero hours work, had no recourse to public funds, had to wait weeks for benefits or were 'too proud' to access benefits. All these people had difficulty accessing food because they couldn't access their usual methods of sourcing cheaper food and shop frugally, couldn't get out at all, or weren't able to access the supermarket with their children in tow.

Through the phone line we've been able to administer food bank vouchers, direct people to food hubs, and reassure people. We've also been able to help signpost people to CAB, CECF

and the city council financial inclusion officer. In total we've received just under 90 calls, but each has been very individual and has provided valuable support.

Volunteers

We had a staggering 11,936 volunteer hrs and over 40 volunteers cooking, preparing and delivering community and holiday lunches. We continued to have some of the best and committed professional chefs still on furlough to lead the kitchens at CRC.

11,936 Volunteer hrs preparing and delivering meals
40 Vols preparing and delivering meals



Grow a Row

We started a campaign to ask people to 'grow a row' for distributing fresh produce through the Community Hubs. This has resulted in George Street residents setting up their own collection point for home grown produce, Cherry Hinton Allotments growing food for us, and other allotments such as Trumpington delivering fresh produce to the hubs. Co Farm have just planted out the new Community Farm and all produce is being circulated through the hubs this year to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to access fresh produce. Donations of fresh produce have also come in from Co Veg in Thriplow, a programme aimed at bringing together farmers and local communities





Cambridge Business Community

Along with donations of food from local businesses including Breckland Orchard, Cambridge Fruit Company, Cambridge Juice Company, Cambridge Cheese Company, Cambridge Organic Food Company, Cocobolo Coffee Roasters, Meadows Cambridge and many many more, the small independents in Cambridge gave their time and skills too. Initially working out of the Kitchen at Arbury Baptist Church and then, as more space was required, a kitchen takeover at CRC, a team of local chefs worked tirelessly to produce over 10,430 meals. Local restaurant group Cambs Cuisine provided the backbone of the cooking team with 5 of their furloughed staff and then we had regular appearances from local chefs from Garden Kitchen, Cafe Abantu, Kath's Kitchen, The Anchor at Burwell, Rosie Sykes, Afternoon Tease, Steak and Honour and Jacks Gelato.



Cooking for the community

By Andy Vesile

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When Covid-19 brought lockdown, isolation and hardship to our city, it also created a renewed sense of community.

This was seen clearly in the way volunteers stepped forward to ensure 'Cambridge's' most vulnerable had food in their cupboards and hot meals on their tables.

And this is why some of those volunteers are the latest winners of our two-night hotel breaks, a gesture we are running with the 14 Hotel Group to thank the key workers and the people who provided the essential services and cared for the sick.

Nominated by CBE Alex Collis from a list of many, Julia and Michael Hall, James Freeman, Jacob Slater, Jan Butler, Charlie Berr and Karina Thomas have been named to the team which stepped up to feed the city.

Volunteering in the kitchens at Cambridge Regional College (CRC), the chefs ensured there were meals for the most vulnerable.

"When their businesses had to close temporarily or they were furloughed from their jobs, they didn't see the negative side but looked on it as an opportunity to help others at a time when their own financial futures were far from certain," said CBE Collis.

"There's been an absolute joy to work with, and I am so very proud to know them all. Alex, a main chef at The Cock in Hemmingford Green, which is part of the Cambs Cuisine group, said he volunteered at CRC for two days a week "to give something back and to help others who were struggling during the pandemic as well as

James Slater and Michael Hall
Picture: Keith Haggard



for 12 weeks.

Another Cambs Cuisine worker, Charlie also volunteered, his usual role is as a porter at the Three Horseshoes at Mollington, but the former restaurant owner may also be remembered as a previous landlord of the Alma and the Alexandra Arms pubs.

He said: "I have been volunteering in the kitchen helping to prepare, cook and present the lovely food. I wasn't needed at work and thought that I could be useful. I also thought it would be fun, and it has been."

For Jacob, the passion for his chef's while volunteering has



experience I had there was being able to pass on my knowledge and teach some of the volunteers about the basics of how certain culinary methods impart flavour into meals, or how the use of salt well in a dish increases the dishes flavour balance, or how the addition of a single spice can change the dish entirely."

Husband and wife, Julia and Michael Hall moved both on furlough and wanted to help. Michael works for Cambridge Assessment as a senior chef and Julia is a catering manager at Cambridge.

"We've been cooking the meals Wednesday to Friday each week,"

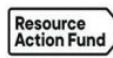


Pets

We have been working with Wood Green Animal Shelter to make sure that people are able to feed their pets. Thanks to their generosity we have been able to distribute pet food and advice on how to access free services through the Food Hubs

Art Packs

THOUSANDS of children in Cambridge were able to access the city's major cultural venues from their own homes, thanks to a partnership between Cambridge City Council and the city's leading cultural institutions, including



the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Cambridge Folk Festival, and Kettle's Yard. Creative packs were distributed through the Food Hubs from June to Aug.

Each pack included inspiring activity sheets and arts and crafts materials so families could share positive experiences together. Many families have limited digital connectivity and may not have arts and crafts supplies in their homes.

Healthy Start Veg Boxes

Cambridge Sustainable food partnered up with Cambridge Organic Veg Company to develop a veg box scheme whereby those that were in receipt of Healthy Start Vouchers were able to access fresh veg delivered as part of COFCO's veg box scheme for the cost of one voucher and a £2 membership fee per week. The pilot scheme saw 10 participants receive veg boxes for 5 weeks during July and August.

Across the City: Reports from partners and organisations around the City

C3 Church

The C3 church ran the "Love your Neighbour" campaign beginning mid of March this year, through which they supported people with food and emotional support by providing a phone call that gave a listening ear to people during this period.

In that period, they delivered 2,372 food hampers reaching a total of 6,493 household members across the City and County (made up of 7,751 adults and 1,742 children).

They also provided 5,312 meals through a variety of funded projects including a hot meals food van (1082), Waterbeach food hub (2757), ready meals for the C3 community fridge (1257) and some council funded meals (1298).

Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum in partnership with the Karim Foundation



Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum (CECF) in partnership with the Karim Foundation offered support in accessing food to Cambridge's culturally diverse minority ethnic communities. Many of these had no recourse to public funds, required language assistance or needed particular culturally diverse

ingredients and food. Working with The Cambridge Central Mosque they were able to offer emergency provision during Ramadan and volunteer community interpreters & development workers were able to help reach some of the most marginalised people.

During this period they facilitated a major donation of food from the Cambridge Central Mosque to Cambridge Sustainable Food and organised translated material about the Cambridge Food Hubs into community languages. This was posted out to all their beneficiaries in the CB1, CB2, CB4 and CB5 postcode areas.

Cambridge Food Bank

The food bank has provided 1,206 food boxes which reached 1,859 adults and 1,019 children. The number of people accessing food bank boxes hasn't changed much from last year's figures. There has been a small decrease (-2%) in the vouchers that have been awarded but a rise (+12%) in the number of people benefitting from them.

There is a general feeling that people accessing the food hubs throughout the period has helped keep food bank voucher levels steady which may be why there has not been a significant spike.

CHS

CHS reports that they have seen an unprecedented increase in demand for CLAS awards, especially for supermarket vouchers. In the first 4 weeks of lockdown, grants for CLAS Supermarket vouchers increased 178%. The number of supermarket voucher referrals in the first quarter of this financial year was almost the same as the annual figure for last year, and by the end of August, the number surpassed the annual total for last year.

For comparison, last year (19/20) 287 vouchers were awarded to the value of £24,660. In the five-month period between April and August this year the numbers have risen to 323 vouchers to the value of £35,634. Cambridge accounts for 27% of the total supermarket awards accounting for 207 vouchers to the value of £9,710.

CHS report that they have seen a change in the profile of families needing help i.e. from those 'financially stretched' to 'rising prosperity groups'; the latter have never navigated the benefit system. Most have either lost their jobs or have been furloughed and have experienced a sudden and drastic loss of income. They also highlight the increase in numbers of households with children experiencing poverty, a 21% increase compared to previous years.

Foodcycle

Foodcycle would usually take food from supermarkets that would otherwise go into landfill and use it to create a hot meal that it served at the venues they work out of. Covid has meant they are unable to do that. Throughout the last five months, they have collected the food and created food parcels to distribute to people that would usually come to the meals. They have delivered 1,242 food packages to Cambridge households.

King's Hedges Family Support Group

The KHFSG have helped the local families they work with by providing 40 emergency £5 supermarket vouchers, issuing 32 Foodbank vouchers, provided 70 summer packs including chypps activity packs, a Happy Newspaper and recipe boxes with £5 supermarket vouchers to get fresh ingredients, made 7 successful applications to Cambridge Aid, made 3 referrals to GrowKids, provided 6 £25 Primark vouchers for emergency clothing needs, made further referrals to Besom and careers advice (through Clarion Housing) and signposted regularly to Community Food Hubs and Healthy Start voucher scheme

The Meadows Children and Family wing

The MC&FW have supported their families by; delivering 100 food boxes to families in need, supplying 22 supermarket vouchers (10 were referrals for support to Cambridge central aid and 12 were what we were able to provide under different Covid funding applications), issued 9 food bank vouchers, liaised with schools on behalf of families struggling during lockdown, worked in partnership with Red Hen project to get food to families, contacted community food hubs / volunteer community groups to get additional support for families.

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