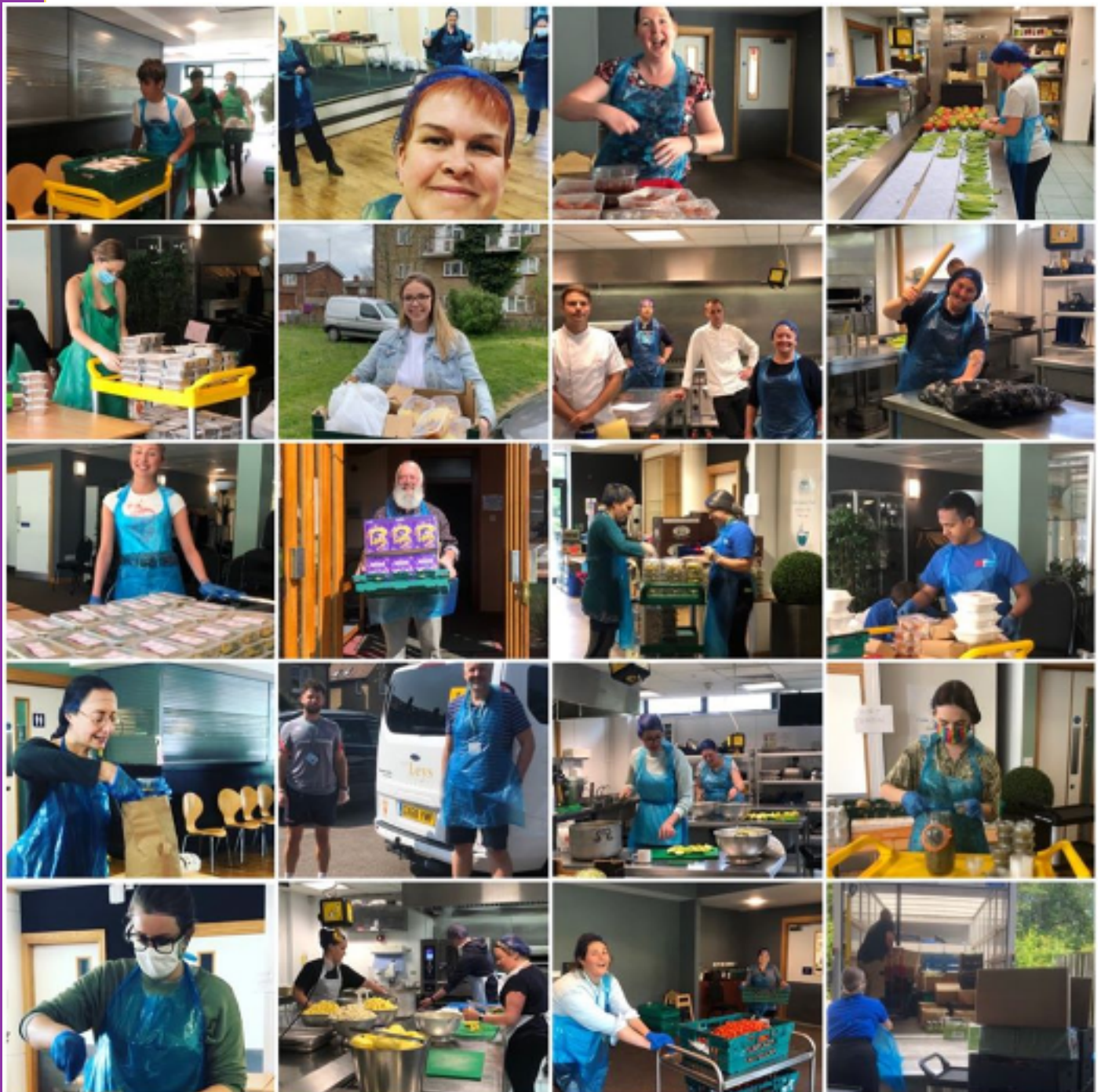
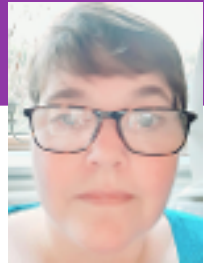


Cambridge A Community at work

Covid-19 Emergency Food Response April 2020 – March 2021





Sam Dyer

Director and CEO, Cambridge Sustainable Food

The exceptional circumstances of the past year have highlighted with renewed urgency the central importance of food in the systems that both sustain and impact our lives.

The essential work that the Food Poverty Alliance has done in the past to build relationships and experience in the city has made it possible for Cambridge to respond effectively and collaboratively to the pandemic crisis: to feed hundreds of hungry families, and to support diverse groups and organisations to step up together to the challenges we face today.

As we enter into a new period of both hope and uncertainty, we will continue taking action toward transformational food systems change, addressing the long-term climate crisis as a driver of poverty, and supporting collaborative and mutual aid networks throughout the city to build a more sustainable future.

Whilst there are too many people to thank individually there are a few that have gone above and beyond this year. A big thank you to the CSF team, Gemma, Louise, Becca, Jasmine, Sarah and Bea. To Alex Collis who tirelessly organised the community meal teams. To Binnie, Dora, Dan, Carl, Sam and all the other City Council staff that pitched in and joined the team.

*Thank
You!*

Introduction

Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance (CFPA), formed in October 2017, works together to alleviate food poverty in the city. The ongoing work of the Alliance, including delivery of the Food Poverty Action Plan for the city, has adapted to the ever-changing circumstances of the past year. New activities and services offered by Alliance members have evolved quickly and in response to local need, and in many cases services have totally changed to incorporate new Covid-safe practices.

It is clear that in Cambridge, as elsewhere in the country, Covid-19 has highlighted and compounded ongoing issues associated with poverty and austerity. Food insecurity was already prevalent in the UK before the pandemic but has been dramatically exacerbated by Covid-19, leaving many people vulnerable to hunger and poor diets.

Over the six months from August 2020 to January 2021, 4.7 million adults (9% of all households) have experienced food insecurity (Food Foundation: Impact of Covid on Household Security).

Cambridge is no exception in experiencing increasing levels of food poverty or a drop in household income. Findings from a questionnaire carried out with Food Hub users in Cambridge showed that 67% of respondents reported a fall in income from August to December 2020, 35% experienced a reduction in hours or pay and 23% became unemployed.

Whilst this report tries to capture the enormous amount of work that has taken place across the city in the last year, it is impossible to capture it all. From the tireless work of hundreds of volunteers and community activists, mutual aid groups and the generosity of donors large and small, to Cambridge City Council who seconded staff and allocated a base for the food redistribution centre, local businesses and chefs cooking up a storm and growers including CoFarm, the response in the city has been phenomenal.

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9 Community Food Hubs

1 Redistribution Centre

36,644 Food Hub visits

37 tonnes of surplus food redistributed September to March

15,396 Cooked meals including desserts

Over 100 Organisations Involved

10 members of staff

339 volunteers

18,621 volunteer hours

266 tonnes of food distributed



10 Newsletters

877 Subscribers

30

Press mentions












Facilitated by **CAMBRIDGE SUSTAINABLE FOOD**

 **CAMBRIDGE**
Food Poverty
Alliance

Number 1:
Phone and
online
signposting
service

Number 2:
Supported the establishment of Community Food Hubs - nine spread across the city. Based at:

-  Barnwell Baptist Church, Abbey
-  The Edge Café, Romsey
-  Hope Church, St Georges Hall, East Chesterton
-  Church of the Good Shepherd, Arbury
-  St Andrews Church, Cherry Hinton
-  St James' Church, Queen Edith's
-  St Thomas Hall, Coleridge
-  Trumpington Pavilion, Trumpington
-  Shah Jalal Islamic Centre, Arbury

Number 3:
Community
meals/shopping
bag delivery
service which
grew out of the
existing Holiday
Lunch provision

Through the phone line, we have been able to administer Food Bank vouchers, direct people to local hubs for fresh food, to mutual aid groups for shopping help or the occasional food hub delivery, as well as, very importantly, reassure people.

At the beginning of the first lockdown services which would usually deliver face to face provision such as Holiday Lunches, Seniors' Meals and Cambridge City Food Bank all had to close and/or adapt to Covid-safe practices as quickly as possible. It became imperative that signposting to new or adapted provision was widely available across the city.

Web pages with details of emergency food provision were quickly set up at the beginning of April 2020, as was a phone helpline and online form. These have been regularly updated with any service changes.

Calls have come in 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 and mental health problems.

What became apparent early on is that those we did speak with often had complex needs or were in complex situations. Many of the phone calls have been from people who have been unable to complete the online form, 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 culturally specific support.

We have also been able to signpost people to CAB, CECF and the City Council Financial Inclusion Officer. Each call has been very individual and has provided valuable support.

A helpline and online emergency assistance form were set up in April 2020 and in total we have received 627 enquiries about how to access food and services. (113 phone calls and 514 online forms). Information was distributed around the city to local authorities, schools, 33 organisations and all mutual aid groups, resulting in the first call to the helpline on April 8th 2020.

Some of the people said they felt desperate when they phoned, worried about how they were able to feed themselves or their families.

Families contacted us who suddenly found themselves with children at home, no school dinners and worryingly short on food.

People called who were furloughed, or suddenly had no zero hours work, no recourse to public funds or had to wait weeks for Universal Credit and benefits. Some told us they felt too ashamed to even apply.

All these people had difficulty accessing food in part because they couldn't access their usual methods of sourcing food or shop frugally. They couldn't leave the house or

weren't able to access the supermarket with their children in tow as the supermarkets wouldn't let more than one person in at a time.

Towards the latter end of the year, call numbers have reduced, which may suggest that more people know what services are available locally. In a recent survey, the majority of hub organisers strongly agreed that as a result of the emergency food work more people know where to access support locally when in difficulty. The number of Community Food Hub visits has also levelled off, consistently averaging at just over 600 per week since September 2020.

One caller with a large family comprising both adults and younger children had lost work due to Covid and had no food in the house.

An older person, just out of hospital, was shielding and on a very limited income.

One individual called from prison gates, they had just been released and needed support.

8251 Community Meals

4611

meals delivered to households

3640 meals sent to Food Hubs

993 shopping bags delivered to households

The first lockdown was announced just as the Easter 2020 school holidays were about to start. Spearheaded by Councillor Alex Collis, the community meals initiative meant that holiday lunches were delivered straight to the doorsteps of families over the Easter holidays. A growing number of families, as well as those individuals who were sheltering, quarantining and those just unable to cope, were also able to receive a meal and shopping bag straight to their doorstep between April and the end of August.

Meals were either prepared and cooked by a team of volunteers, including some of the best local, professional chefs, by Cambridge United Community Trust or donated by local restaurants, such as Pipasha.



Initially, community meals were prepared at Arbury Road Baptist Church. During May, with support from the Cambridge University Colleges Catering Managers' Committee, the preparation of meals relocated to Cambridge Regional College, with its larger professional training kitchens. CRC generously allowed the team to use their premises for free. This enabled them to increase production in a Covid-safe way and also provide meals to the Community Food Hubs. Feedback from the hubs showed that these were very popular.

Working with the City Council and through agencies such as Age UK, Citizens' Advice Bureau, GP surgeries, schools, plus mutual aid groups, we sought to reach as many people as possible to receive cooked community meals delivered to their doorstep. 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 105 households decided they wanted to continue.



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 CRC. They continued the community meals provision throughout the summer, alongside the summer holiday lunch deliveries until the end of August. 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.

“Thank you so much - this has really been a great help to me and my family during this time. My baby has suspected Covid-19 so we are having to fully isolate for 14 days and we can't get an online food shop until Tuesday.”

In August, Cambridge City Council re-purposed Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre (a City Council run community centre) as a new community-based Food Redistribution Centre.

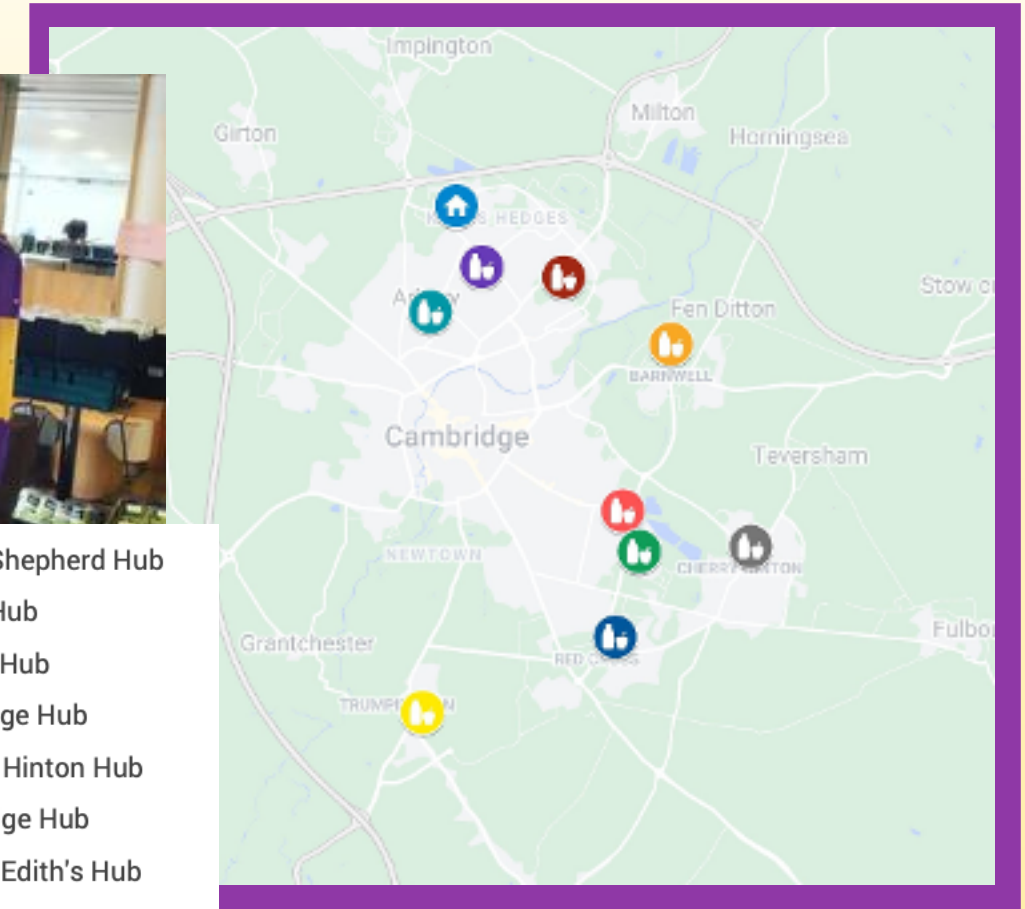
Buchan Street has become the heart of the emergency food response in the city, supplying food and other supplies on a regular basis to the network of Community Food Hubs and other local organisations including Winter Comfort, The Red Hen Project, It Takes a City, Cambridge Community Kitchen and Cambridge Women's Refuge.

Buchan Street has become the central place for local businesses, organisations and individuals to both donate and volunteer. Use of the centre has enabled us to scale up the amount of surplus food redistributed, as well as continue the holiday lunch delivery service

and facilitate the Christmas Hamper partnership project.

Through operations at Buchan Street we have also been able to continue to provide cooked meals, either prepared in the centre's kitchen by volunteer chefs or donated by local food businesses. These have gone to the Food Hubs and directly as food parcels to people who cannot get out of the house.

Food distributed has been drawn from a variety of sources. We have sought as much food as possible from donations and local surplus. We have received weekly deliveries of between 1.6 and 2 tonnes from Fareshare, a paid membership organisation. Hubs have also raised funds and donations through developing relationships in their local communities.



- Good Shepherd Hub
- Hope Hub
- Abbey Hub
- The Edge Hub
- Cherry Hinton Hub
- Coleridge Hub
- Queen Edith's Hub
- Trumpington Hub
- Buchan Street Centre
- Shah Jalal Hub

Community Food Hubs

There are now 9 Community Food Hubs in the city. Eight of the Food Hubs have been running regularly since the first UK lockdown. The ninth Shah Jalal Food Hub became operational in March 2021.

Cambridge Sustainable Food CIC has been supporting the hubs with funds, ingredients, advice and updated guidance. The hubs are inclusive - anyone can go to them, without the need for referral or means testing.

Whilst some of the Food Hubs now have a handful of paid staff members to support the running of their Hub, the Community Food Hubs Network largely relies on volunteers, preparing, collecting, delivering and serving food, to keep people fed each week.



Across the year, we undertook two surveys with Food Hub visitors to understand the effects of Covid-19 and impact of the Food Hubs.

Across both surveys:
Respondents household sizes ranged from

1  13

The majority of respondents lived in either CB1 or CB4 



57% said they would find it difficult to afford to feed their household without the hub

27% said the hub is helping them feed their household better e.g. healthier

December 2020

July 2020

218 responses 



640 people

264 children

24% response rate

December 2020 

124 responses



370 people

123 children

20% response rate

36% of respondents reported at least one person in their household having a disability

December 2020

67% of hub respondents reported a drop in income in the last six months

December 2020

44% of respondents said they found things difficult financially before Covid-19

December 2020

We also surveyed Food Hub organisers twice throughout the year. In the January survey, hub organisers highlighted how being involved in the hubs had also had a positive impact on their lives during the pandemic, as well as visitors.

“It has made us slightly less despairing to be able to do something practical that makes a difference.”



"We can eat healthy meals that would just simply cost too much to buy with the money we have left"

"The money that I am saving on groceries is helping pay off bills/ debts/ loans which have previously caused much stress"

In addition to helping households to avoid going hungry and eat more healthily, a key impact of the Food Hubs mentioned by many beneficiaries was the ability to save money on food, enabling them to pay their bills and heat their homes. Some respondents also stated that access to food through the Hubs had improved their mental health through reducing stress and isolation.

In the December survey, 65% of respondents reported that visiting the Food Hub gave them a greater sense of community.



Abbey Food Hub

at Barnwell Baptist Church



The end of March 2021 marked one year since Abbey Food Hub first opened. Celebrating this milestone is a great time to reflect on the past year and the amazing things that have been achieved in that time. When they first opened their doors, it was as an emergency response to the first national lockdown. They wanted to support the community by ensuring that everyone had access to food. They are proud to have provided this and much more to Abbey. They have achieved their aim of keeping people fed during the pandemic. Each week they see over 160 visitors to the Food Hub and offer delivery to those unable to attend in person. And they have saved an eye-watering 25 tonnes (25,000 kg) of food from going to waste. However, some of their proudest achievements are not necessarily linked to the amount of food distributed or saved from landfill or even to the number of mouths fed (although they're very proud of this too!) They're linked to people! For many, the Food Hub has acted as a source of human interaction. A place to see a friendly face during periods of loneliness and isolation, not only for visitors but for volunteers and members of the Abbey People team too. The friendships formed in the queue and between volunteers and visitors over time has been wonderful to witness. They've also been astounded by the volunteer effort over the past year. More than 70 people have given their time to support the Food Hub, many of whom have volunteered weekly for months on end - bringing energy and enthusiasm to each session.

The Trumpington Food Hub

at Trumpington Pavilion



The Trumpington Food Hub began operating out of Trumpington Pavilion in May 2020. Since then, the hub has managed ever changing circumstances and continued to supply food to all those who come, with the support of a great core group of volunteers. Visitor numbers were highest during the summer months with over 50 households visiting the hub each week, but dropped slightly towards the end of 2020. In the third national lockdown, they have seen larger families coming to the hub for support.

They have provided more than just food to Trumpington residents. Many hub visitors have formed new friendships in the queue and support one another. Parents have been given advice on how to cook vegetables for their families, as well as free books for their children through Bookstart. The hub has also provided a focus for generosity in the community. One hub organiser said "a single mother who had to use the hub when she was laid off now donates and last week did a collection in her street after she saw the 'free school meal' food boxes".

The What Will Help Food Hub

in Cherry Hinton



The Cherry Hinton Hub has brought together a strong team of dedicated volunteers, drawn both from the local community and further afield. They have seen visitor numbers fluctuate with announcements by the government – about furlough, for example, or the announcement of successive lockdowns. Christmas was a really busy period, and they ran a really successful reverse advent calendar donations drive, which meant they were able to supply over 90 families with Christmas hampers filled with both essentials and some festive treats. Since the start of the new year, visitor numbers have stabilised at around 50 visitors each week, although there have been more people collecting not just for their own families but for neighbours too.

The hub ran veg box deliveries with the Cambridge Fruit Company over February half term and the Easter holidays thanks to some generous donations, and have established a very successful partnership with The Leys School, whose students have really taken an interest in the food poverty work happening across the city. They are now developing their future plans, thinking about how the food hub can best work as a long-term part of the Cherry Hinton community. One volunteer said: "It's really exciting to be part of the work happening across the city, and we're looking forward to the future."

Arbury Community Fridge

at The Church of the Good Shepherd



The Food Hub at The Church of the Good Shepherd first opened on 20th April 2020 and since then has run over 80 sessions! In the early days of Covid-19 they were open three times per week but since the end of September have been open to the community once per week.

To them, running the food hub for the past year has been about so much more than food poverty. In addition to putting more and healthier food on the table for a range of community members, including those shielding, housebound, newly unemployed due to the pandemic and many many more, they have also been able to support people with other issues including fuel, mental health, potential cases of abuse and connect families with other organisations for help with things like homeschooling, a major challenge for many parents that visit the hub.

One volunteer said "it's been an honour to support the community during this difficult year."

Queen Edith's Community Food Hub

The Queen Edith's Food Hub began operations in May 2020 out of St James' Church in Wulfstan Way in response to urgent food need brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic. Every Saturday they provide food to approximately 55-60 households (feeding 160-200 people). Funded primarily by generous monetary and in-kind donations from Queen Edith's residents, the hub buys in the majority of its stock from food wholesalers. They also provide pastoral care services and have offered free clothes, toys and books at various times during the year. There is a committed group of some 30 volunteers of all ages, several of whom are hub visitors themselves, and both visitors and volunteers report that the hub provides them with a strong sense of community.



Coleridge Community Food Hub

The Coleridge Food Hub began operating in May 2020. Running the hub has not been light work but certainly has been worth it to help visitors through difficult times. With the help of the food distributed via Buchan Street they have been able to provide people coming with an important supply of fresh fruit and vegetables, bread and much more. The hub also provided a point of contact with other people for those living alone during lockdown and a place where people can find out how to access further assistance if needed. In one case, linking up with the local City Councillor, they were able to point a lady who had recently moved to Cambridge in difficult circumstances to places where she could access support.

Hope Church Community Food Hub

The end of March saw one year since Hope Church Community Food Hub first opened its doors to visitors. In that year, their greatest achievement as a hub was reaching 500 families supported. To fund their work they have largely relied on gifts and donations from Hope Community Church as well as other churches, using the money to buy in 400kg of food per week from charity Fareshare. Their hub has made a difference not only by helping ease their visitors financial strain but also providing a real sense of community. Some people have met for the first time through the hub and have become friends.

The Edge Community Food Hub

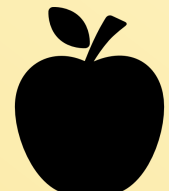

The Edge Community Food Hub grew out of the existing redistribution of surplus food through their Community Fridge, which had already been taking place at the Edge Cafe for the past four years. In 2020 they joined forces with all the other Food Hubs that have popped up due to food poverty caused by the pandemic. They have organically grown to accommodate the queues of people needing support in their area. They have a band of volunteers who have been in the queue themselves and have offered their services to help them organise and distribute the food. They believe The Edge Food Hub is now an integral part of Cambridge City and together, with the support of CSF and the other hubs, they provide a much needed service to all those who struggle with food poverty.

Shah Jalal Community Food Hub

The Shah Jalal Food Hub is the most recent addition to the Network of Community Food Hubs across the city. After several weeks of planning and delays due to the national lockdown, they opened for their first session in the last week of March 2021, which saw 25 visitors collecting food and supplies. It's been great to see them up and running in Arbury!



Easter 2020

 **1068 Meals to**
105 Households 



273 children received deliveries across the city. The majority of meals were delivered in CB4 and were cooked by a team of volunteers led by Cllr Alex Collis at Arbury Road 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.

Meals continued to be cooked by a team of volunteers led by Cllr Alex Collis, this time located at Cambridge Regional College, who kindly donated their spacious kitchens for meal preparation.



Summer 2020

1815 Meals
119 Households

October half term 2020

838 Meals
195 Households

510 children received meals. In October the half term holiday coincided with MPs rejecting Marcus Rashford's free school meal plan. Subsequently, we received an influx not only of families in need of a lunch delivery, but also businesses and organisations in the community wanting to offer their support.

- Pho, Fitzwilliam College, Abcan and Schlumberger all very generously donated meals and desserts. A large number of lunches were also prepared in advance at Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre by chef Michal from Cambridge Assessment and Luthfa from Cambridge City Council.
- Local restaurant Steak and Honour set up their food truck at the Community Food Hubs in Cherry Hinton and Arbury during October half term. Mark Poynton and the team at The Shepherds also cooked over 150 delicious meals which were donated directly to the Cherry Hinton Food Hub at St. Andrews Church.



February half term 2021

 **568 Meals to 129 households** 

Delivered from Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre, 58% of recipients lived in CB4. Fitzwilliam College, Jack's Gelato, Romsey Mutual Aid and The Garden Kitchen Cambridge all supported the holiday lunch programme in February, along with Lucy and Alex who prepared and cooked desserts at The Meadows Community Centre.

Local chef Bea Brown joined us in running an online cookery workshop for holiday lunch families during February half term. 22 families joined in to cook a healthy lunch from scratch together.



"Last week was delicious, and the crafting pack went down very well - I've attached a picture of Eleanor's Easter wreath"

Easter 2021

In the last few days of 2020/21, 338 meals were delivered to 83 families, including 213 children, in Cambridge city. Delicious lunches were prepared at Brown's Field Community Centre with the support of local chefs Rosie Sykes, Bea Brown and a team of volunteers.

Craft packs with inspiring activity sheets and art materials have been much appreciated, in particular as many families have limited digital connectivity and do not have a ready supply of arts and craft supplies in their homes. Thank you ChYpPS!

How much?

4627 holiday lunches delivered in 2020/21



889 children received meals*

348 families reached

* includes estimate for Summer 2020, based on average of 2.6 children per household across other holiday lunch sessions during the year.



510 hampers

359 family games

249 bags of fresh fruit and veg

Over 1702 people had a better Christmas

Local residents were so pleased to receive some support, especially at the end of such a tough year. Feedback included:

“Thank you for helping put a smile on our faces, especially the children.”

“I’d just like to thank you so much for this hamper my daughter is over the moon with the game and colouring stuff as well.”

“Merry Christmas to you all and thanks for organising all this to make our Christmas better.”

WOW!!! You donated nearly £12,000 to our Christmas appeal.



For the past four years, Cambridge City Foodbank has run an annual Christmas hamper campaign. In light of the unusual circumstances, in December 2020 CSF teamed up with them and Cambridge City Council to support delivery of festive food parcels, bags of fresh seasonal vegetables and games to bring some cheer to 510 families struggling financially across the city.

We worked with organisations including the Red Hen Project, Abbey People and Kings Hedges Family Support Project to reach as many households as we could.

The project was made possible by a tremendous collaborative effort. Festive food parcels were kindly donated to the Foodbank by the Cambridge community, whilst the City Council provided games with the support of Lighthouse Toys, Histon, as well as individual donors.

Cambridge Organic, Nationwide Produce, Cambridge Fruit Company, CoFarm Cambridge, Romsey Mutual Aid and Spearhead International also all generously donated fruit and vegetables.

In addition to the hamper project, CSF CIC sourced and organised Christmas meals for 135 sheltered housing residents, prepared and delivered by Fitzwilliam College and Cambridge Dining Company to residents on Christmas Eve 2020.



From the very start of the pandemic, the support from Cambridge businesses and organisations for the emergency food programme has been astounding. Not only have financial donations and mountains of food been donated to the cause, but small independents in Cambridge have given their time and skills too.

During the community meals and holiday lunches provision out of Arbury Baptist Church and CRC, a team of local chefs worked tirelessly to produce thousands of meals for vulnerable residents. Local restaurant group, Cambs Cuisine, provided the backbone of the cooking team with five of their furloughed staff. We had regular appearances from local chefs from the Garden Kitchen, Cambridge Assessment, Café Abantu, Kath's Kitchen, The Anchor at Burwell, Rosie Sykes, Afternoon Tease, Steak and Honour and Jack's Gelato and many other businesses.



Over 100 businesses and organisations have supported the programme!

Since the relocation to Buchan Street, invaluable local support has continued. Businesses and organisations including Stir Bakery, Salvation Army Histon, Maison Clement, Cambridge Organic, Pod Orlem, Pata Negra, Pipasha, Zara Indian Cuisine, the Bangladesh Welfare Association and many many more have regularly donated food and supplies to be circulated to the Community Food Hubs Network. Many others, such as Hong Kong Fusion, The Garden Kitchen and The Chestnut Group have also prepared cooked meals to go out to children and their families during the school holidays.

Connection Through Crafting handmade 150 face coverings for hub visitors, whilst local exercise group, Zumba and All Things Fitness, held a fundraiser. Cocobolo Coffee Roasters and Meadows Deli Cambridge both set up pay it forward schemes to support the provisions. The Tzu Chi Foundation have made donations, volunteered, and even ran a pop up hot drinks stall outside one of the Food Hubs.



We have also worked 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.

Cambridge City Council Financial Inclusion Advisor has been on hand with financial advice. Cambridge Water and Anglian Water have also attended hubs to help customers with their water bills.



In summer 2020, we started a campaign to ask people to 'Grow a Row' of fresh produce including fruit, veg and herbs to donate to the Community Food Hubs.

This resulted in George Street residents setting up their own collection point for home grown produce, a number of local allotments including Cherry Hinton, Trumpington, Our Community Garden and Old Chesterton growing food and several orchards in Cambridge donating fresh fruit.

In September, we were able to organise a group of 21 volunteers to go socially distanced apple picking at Wandlebury Country Park orchards, who kindly donated their fruit. We came back with 40 crates of apples! Fen End Farm also donated fresh produce.

Support for the campaign from individual members of the community has been brilliant. Someone who lived on an orchard got up early for a couple of weeks to bring us 20 kilos of plums a day, another cycled with a 17 kilo pumpkin in her bike trailer. Gardeners of Histon Community Allotment have also donated baby strawberry plants to be given out to Food Hub visitors.



1 street collective



Over 40 crates of apples



A 17 kilo pumpkin!



2 tonnes of fresh produce!

We will be running the campaign again in 2021 and continue to foster growing support from local green-fingered individuals, farms, schools and groups this coming season!

Donations came in from two community farms in the surrounding area, CoVeg in Thriplow, a programme aimed at bringing together farmers and local communities, and Cambridge's first community farm, CoFarm.



CoVeg
A programme aiming to bring together farmers and their local communities to produce local vegetables which otherwise may not be available.

The concept is simple: farmers can provide their land & machinery, and willing members of the community team up to help grow, maintain and harvest the crops.

CoVeg is the brainchild of a local farmer based in Thriplow, who generously decided to hand over some land to the community. Part of the land he cultivates himself, whilst another area is cultivated by people from the village.

CoFarm
CoFarm is Cambridge city's first community farm, working with and for the community. The farm is currently being developed off Barnwell Road, on 7-acres of agricultural land in the Green Belt, which is right next to Coldham's Common - a very special green space in Cambridge. The site has been transformed from an empty field into a thriving urban market garden, where local volunteers have worked to grow veg throughout the pandemic.

CoFarm
Donated over 4.5 tonnes of organic veg
Worth £21,000
to the Community Food Hubs



This year CSF CIC worked with established organic veg box provider Cambridge Organic, Cambridge Food Hub and CFP members to set up a Healthy Start Veg Box Scheme.

Piloted in Summer 2020, the initiative enables families on low incomes to access affordable, organic and often locally grown produce, direct to their door. In exchange for a Healthy Start voucher and a small fee each week, families can choose to receive a weekly veg or fruit and veg box, delivered to their doorstep. Additional costs, such as delivery, are covered by Cambridge Food Hub/ Cambridge Organic.

Following the pilot's success, the scheme has become a long-term and permanent initiative. It is now fully subscribed and managed by Cambridge Food Hub and Cambridge Organic, with CSF supporting the scheme's promotion. The scheme has recently been extended to families whose children receive free school meals.

"The kids loved finding out what was in the box each week"

"It made me try new things"



HEALTHY START



AMAZINGLY, FANTASTICALLY BRILLIANT!!

Over the past twelve months, we have witnessed an outpouring of support from the Cambridge community, volunteering their time to help out with the emergency food response. In total, we have had a staggering 18,621 volunteer hours and 339 volunteers contributing to the work, with each volunteer playing a fundamental role in the provision. Quite simply, we couldn't have kept local residents fed during this very challenging year without them.

We have had some of the best, local, professional chefs leading the kitchens at CRC whilst on furlough. We have also had volunteer support from local businesses including Elaje Hair and Beauty, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press, as well as from parents of The Leys School. Some visitors to the Community Food Hubs have started to volunteer at the hubs too.

Volunteers have helped with a variety of projects from cooking, preparing and delivering community and holiday lunches, to collecting surplus food waste from supermarkets, picking apples at Wandlebury, assembling bags of fresh produce at Christmas and welcoming visitors to the nine Community Food Hubs.

Not only has the time and effort of local volunteers been integral to the emergency response, we have also found it has been beneficial for the wellbeing of our volunteers, especially during the lockdowns. One hub user who helps out weekly at one of the hubs reported that volunteering has increased her feelings of worth and productivity.



339 volunteers
A staggering 18,621 volunteer hours!



Sue



“My name is Sue and I have been volunteering since June 2020. Firstly, with the community meals preparation and distribution from CRC, and more recently at Buchan Street.

To say it has been fun would be an understatement once I had found out how to get in and out of CRC and around the City Centre by car on the supermarket collections! As a volunteer manager, back in the old days when I had a job working on events, I had never really

realised the hugely positive benefits of being a volunteer. Trying something new and learning different skills have certainly increased my confidence. Making new friends, re-connecting with old friends and being part of a community. The CSF project is making a huge and very real difference to people across Cambridge and I am proud to be a part of it.”

Roly

“My friend introduced me to CSF, who had plenty of opportunities for volunteering in a number of roles, especially in the run up to Christmas. Volunteering has been a great benefit to me personally and I've learned a few things along the way. I've really enjoyed the chance to get out and do something positive for the community, as well as meeting new people, and hope to continue while I can still be of use.

It has been a real insight into a side of Cambridge and the work that goes on there which I didn't know much about before. In the way of help and support and equally what they expect from us as volunteers. These are difficult times and it has been good to feel part of something - it has made me feel happier and healthier”



Jules

“Like many, when the pandemic struck my work in film and creative comms was badly affected. It just dried up in the spring/summer of 2020 and I had too much time on my hands - when I wasn't home schooling that is. It was a worrying time. Having recently gone freelance, there was no furlough scheme, nor government support. But I realised I was lucky and, as a household, we were lucky as one of us still had work. We also had our health and were able to deal with the situation. I was keenly aware that many others could not say the same.

So, once home schooling eased, I started helping at the Good Shepherd food hub. It was great to get out again, meet new people and find a new sense of purpose. It was so rewarding and heart-warming to meet the visitors and get to know them over the weekly sessions.

I was surprised by how much need there is and greatly impressed by CSF's operation and people. So I wanted to do more, sharing my professional skills too. Helping to plan and design a social media fund raising campaign, as well as funding applications, was a good fit. It benefited CSF and helped me 'keep my hand in'. It's an incredible story really and it's no wonder it struck a chord.

I've also offered advice on shaping CSF's sustainability consulting offer, helped with holiday cooking and deliveries and the starting up of a new community food hub. I continue at the Good Shepherd and have learnt new food hygiene knowledge in the process. It's been wonderful to be part of such a great team and organisation that plays such a vital role in our society.”

Julie's* Story

*name changed

We spoke to Julie, one of the many people who were supported during 2020.

Julie was working on a zero hours contract as a schools catering assistant when the pandemic hit. She was also in receipt of working tax credit, child tax credit and child benefit and was just about making ends meet.

Julie is a single parent to five children aged from five to seventeen years, two of whom Julie tells us have behavioural issues. One of the children tested positive for Covid-19 over Christmas 2020 making it a particularly challenging time as Julie had to make sure they isolated in their bedroom.

The family live in a housing association property and their rent is covered by housing benefit. Julie was put on furlough at the beginning of the pandemic, meaning she took a drop in income, and found there was a shortfall of £10 per week. She had to decide between paying the rent or buying food.

We supported Julie and her family through the Holiday Lunch programme and with extra weekly support where needed during 2020.

Julie and her family love the fresh fruit and veg they received. Even when Julie was working, she found that buying fresh fruit and veg was expensive and added a big chunk to her shopping bill. Having a big family means that money is always tight, even before lockdown, and Julie would sometimes go without food so that her children could eat.

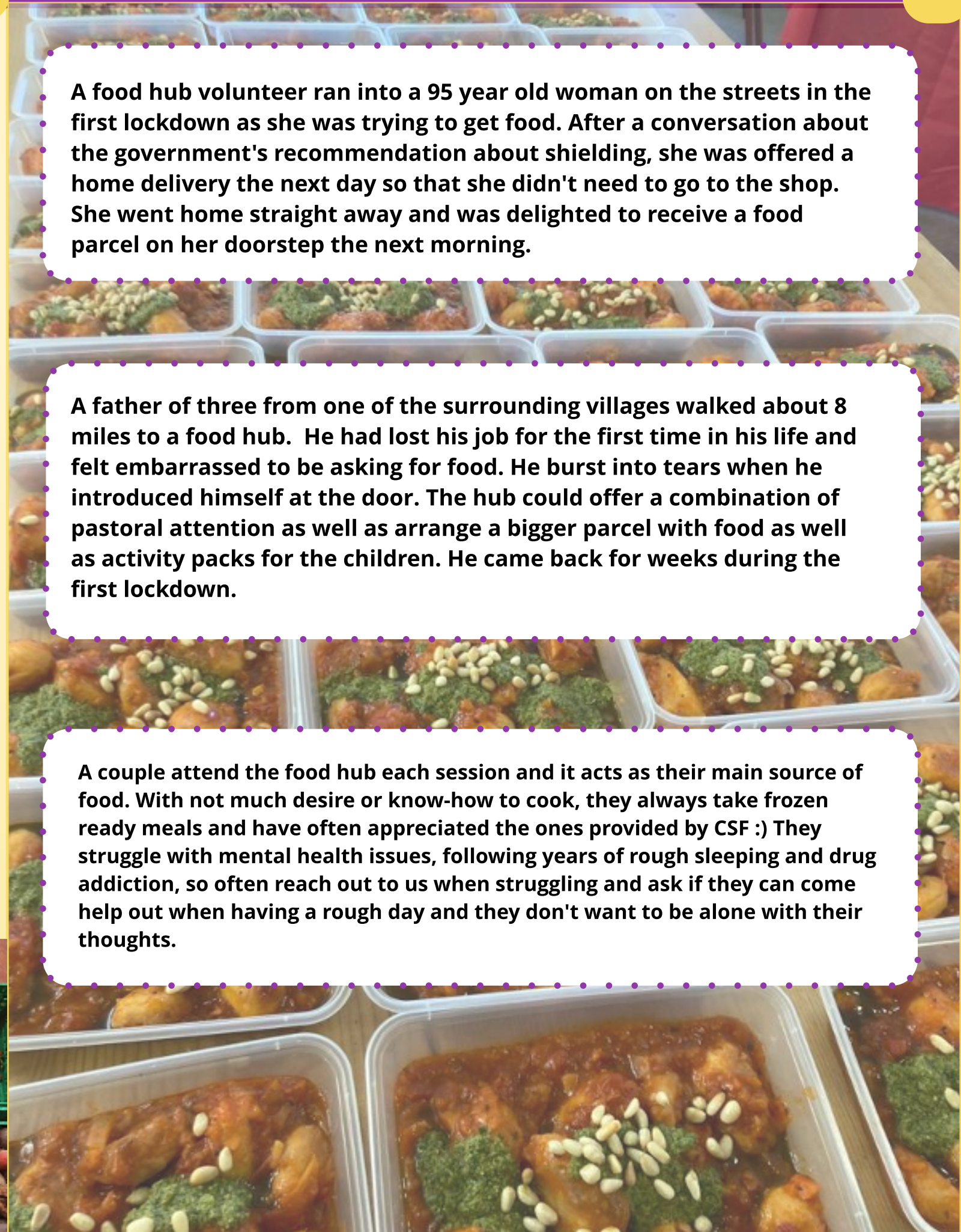
Julie said that receiving assistance with food took the pressure off - 'just knowing that we're going to get it is a help' and 'one less thing to worry about'. The family also really enjoyed the holiday lunches and Julie said that it removed the burden of preparing meals for her family on those days.



A food hub volunteer ran into a 95 year old woman on the streets in the first lockdown as she was trying to get food. After a conversation about the government's recommendation about shielding, she was offered a home delivery the next day so that she didn't need to go to the shop. She went home straight away and was delighted to receive a food parcel on her doorstep the next morning.

A father of three from one of the surrounding villages walked about 8 miles to a food hub. He had lost his job for the first time in his life and felt embarrassed to be asking for food. He burst into tears when he introduced himself at the door. The hub could offer a combination of pastoral attention as well as arrange a bigger parcel with food as well as activity packs for the children. He came back for weeks during the first lockdown.

A couple attend the food hub each session and it acts as their main source of food. With not much desire or know-how to cook, they always take frozen ready meals and have often appreciated the ones provided by CSF :) They struggle with mental health issues, following years of rough sleeping and drug addiction, so often reach out to us when struggling and ask if they can come help out when having a rough day and they don't want to be alone with their thoughts.



The Cambridge Covid-19 emergency food response has received a great deal of media attention in the last year with 30 media references to the emergency food poverty work which has taken place across the city. The focus of media mentions has been varied with many articles directly discussing the emergency provision, the local impact and reach as well as how people can access help if needed, whilst other references centre more on community experiences of food poverty in the city.

References to the emergency response in the media have mostly come from local sources, primarily newspapers, such as Cambridge News, Cambridge Independent and Varsity. However, there has been some national attention on Cambridge's food poverty work from Veg Cities (Sustain UK) for the Grow a Row campaign, and Child Poverty Action Group. There has also been engagement with local Cambridge radio station, Cambridge 105 Flavour Radio, to talk about Grow a Row and the community effort to feed Cambridge families.

At CSF we have used our social media output in the last year through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to raise awareness of the growing issue of food poverty in Cambridge, as well as signpost local residents to emergency food. We have also used our channels to promote how local businesses, allotments, volunteers and other members of the community can support the response, and to give our thanks to those who have helped and donated. Promotion of the Christmas fundraising campaign through social media resulted in nearly £12,000 being raised for the emergency response by you too!



10 newsletters, 877 newsletter subscribers



Twitter: 2901 followers, 473 Cambridge food poverty tweets with 1292 retweets



20169 visits to Covid-19 emergency response webpages

30 articles on emergency response in the local press

Instagram: 1754 followers, 148 Cambridge food poverty posts, total reach 39414

Facebook: 2055 page likes, 336 Cambridge food poverty posts, total reach 230,133 with 11092 engagements

34550 website visits in total



Parents tell of struggle to feed their children

A mum who has had her income slashed by half and another who is struggling to find work while home-schooling her young daughters tell ALEX SPENCER of the battle to keep them from going hungry.



The growing challenge of feeding a city

Food poverty is not just a problem for the pandemic – it's an issue that is only going to get worse. MARK TAYLOR finds out what's being done to put meals on plates.

It is incredible in times of food shortages to see the number of people who are struggling to feed their families. In Cambridge, the number of people who are struggling to feed their families has increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. The Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance has been set up to help people who are struggling to feed their families. The alliance has been set up to help people who are struggling to feed their families. The alliance has been set up to help people who are struggling to feed their families.



The growing challenge of feeding a city is a topic that is becoming increasingly relevant. As the pandemic continues, more and more people are struggling to find ways to feed their families. This is a challenge that is being faced by people in many different parts of the world. The Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance is one of the organizations that is working to help people who are struggling to feed their families. The alliance has been set up to help people who are struggling to feed their families. The alliance has been set up to help people who are struggling to feed their families.

Cambridge City Foodbank

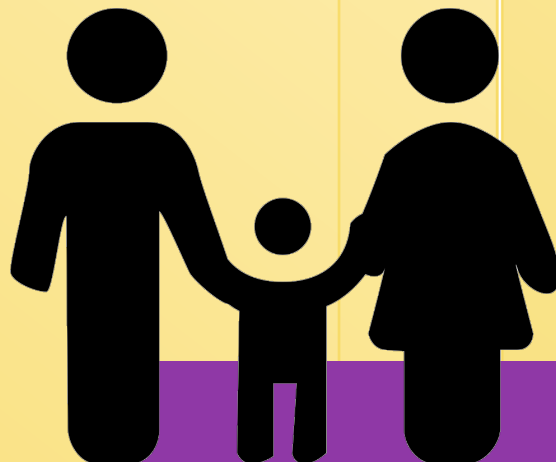
During the year from 1st April 2020 to March 31st 2021, Cambridge City Foodbank has supported around 10,000 people and distributed over 143 tons of food. We have been providing food through our network of distribution centres, our Fairbite foodclub shop and in our support of the network of food hubs. We work with over 140 professional agencies to provide food for people in crisis. We remain committed to the support of people facing food insecurity, whether because of the immediate effects of Covid-19 but also longer term. We are actively looking to expand Fairbite into new areas of the city, giving more people choice in the food they can give their families.



FoodCycle

Bringing people together has always been at the core of FoodCycle's values, in the beginning of 2020 (Jan-March) we served 517 three course community meals. When news of lockdown was announced we had to act fast, it was no small task but with support FoodCycle Cambridge have delivered 1,966 parcels to residents, providing the equivalent of 29,590* meals over the course of the year. Our volunteers have donated 2,069 hours and we have saved 12,427kg of food from going to waste. As lockdown restrictions have eased, we are pleased to be moving to Cook and Collect where guests can collect a nutritious free hot meal and a bag of food.

* based on estimate that 0.5kg of food is one meal



It Takes a City

Under the coordination of It Takes a City and on the request of the City Council, teams at the Salvation Army, Wintercomfort and St Andrew's Street Baptist have been feeding those who were formerly rough sleeping and were accommodated in hotels due to covid. We provide 3 meals a day - a hot lunch and dessert, sandwich and snack dinner, and a cereal/porridge pot breakfast. The Salvation Army stopped in August due to renovations; since then Wintercomfort and St A's have split the week between them, providing resilience by having 2 completely separate teams. As of 31 March 2021, St A's had provided 33060 meals; more than 200 individuals have been helped with accommodation and food and the total number of meals provided by the 3 kitchens is close to 100,000.

Ingredients to the church kitchen have been provided by CSF, the Abbey Food Hub, C3 and BEFA (Buckingham Emergency Food Appeal), amongst others. These are delivered to the accommodation by a combination of myriad organisations and individuals including the Community Library Bus, Cambridge vans, Caring for Cambridgeshire's Homeless, Cambridge Street Pastors, Cambridge Churches Homeless Project, Street Bite, Just Love, the Cambridge Chinese Christian Fellowship and the Cambridge Korean Church. Numbers rose as high as 120 in accommodation at any one time, but have now fallen to about 40; while some people are back on the streets, many have benefitted and are resettled in longer term accommodation and some in work. An article in the Lancet assessed that many lives have been saved during 2020 due to the 'Everyone In' campaign and the care received.

wintercomfort
for the homeless



Karim Foundation

In partnership with CECF and local independent stores we have provided culturally appropriate dietary food to predominantly ethnic minorities, with many having no recourse to public funds from the most deprived wards in Cambridge. Over 180 food packs as well as shop vouchers and emergency fuel provision were provided. 9 households were given emergency support at Christmas (blankets/heaters). We have helped over 450 people, including at least 100 households, where over two thirds were families, single person and single parent households. We fundraised £15,868 directly for the Cambridge City Foodbank and £5,500 during the Month of Ramadan (April-May 2020 - Covid-19 Muslim Response).

Our Stay Warm Stay Safe Campaign raised £2,373 and we purchased 218 items of good quality clothing and footwear for service users at Wintercomfort for the Homeless.



The Cambridge Housing Society Ltd

Since we started delivering Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS) in 2017, demand for CLAS support has been consistently high as a combination of factors including high rents, low wages, benefits freeze and the roll out of Universal Credit have pulled more people into financial hardship.

However, with the emergence of Covid-19 we experienced an overwhelming increase in demand – requests for help tripled in the first few weeks of lockdown 1.0 as many people who were furloughed or lost their jobs struggled to make ends meet. In financial year 20/21 we processed a total of 2,369 CLAS awards- a total value of £381,954.91 – more than a quarter of these awards went to households in Cambridge City. 40% of the total number of awards were for supermarket vouchers: 1,262 vouchers with a total value of £159,275. This was an increase of 340% compared to previous years.

Demand is still double what it was pre Covid-19 and, at the very least, we expect it to remain at this rate during FY 21/22. However, it's safe to assume that demand is likely to increase again at the end of September as the end of the furlough scheme is expected to cause a rise in unemployment, and the removal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift will also result in more households struggling to make ends meet.



The Red Hen Project

For the past 23 years, we have provided vital community-based 'early-help' for families in North Cambridge who face a wide range of often complex issues. Food poverty has always been on our radar. For many years we have run 'Cooking on a budget' for families as well as collecting and redistributing Fareshare donations.

At the start of the pandemic, we were quick to respond with food and other household essentials making sure we were able to safely deliver to peoples doorsteps. We also started delivering boxes of fruit and vegetables donated by customers of The Cambridge Fruit Company.

In December, Cambridge Fruit Co customers donated Christmas boxes containing ingredients for more than 1000 turkey dinners which we shared with partner charities Kings Hedges Family Support Project, Romsey Mill, and Abbey People, and delivered to families in need. A year later, and after more than 2000 boxes, the donations are still coming in and providing children living on the breadline with healthy fresh fruit and vegetables.

Throughout, we have worked hard to connect families to other available help, encouraged them to attend community fridges and food hubs, and ensure they registered for the Holiday Lunch scheme.

Our planned cooking project, delivered in conjunction with Cambridge City Foodbank, was moved online - and the new virtual 'Club-Cook' was born. Following the 'Hello Fresh' type model - typical foodbank ingredients were delivered to families, along with recipe cards and links to videos, so families could cook at home with their children. A WhatsApp group connected them, reducing the isolation of lockdown and building new friendships. The first cohort of 'Club-Cook' families inspired a 'lockdown survival meal planner and recipe book' incorporating a shopping list for the supermarket vouchers the government provided to those children eligible for free school meals.

THE RED HEN PROJECT



Over the past year, the supply of food and supplies from Red Hen as well as a quick hello and chat on the doorstep with staff and volunteers has been crucial for many of the families we work with. There is no question that the food poverty work that the project has done has helped build the resilience of both families and communities and prevented families from falling into broader crisis.



“The fruit and veg boxes encouraged me and the children to try new things and it helped me cook new healthy meals for us. I now continue to cook healthy homemade dinners more than I did before lockdown.”

Cambridge United Community Trust

In March 2020, Cambridge United and the Community Trust launched Here For U's, providing practical, emotional and physical support to its local community. Over the next few months we partnered with Cambridge Sustainable Food and Cambridge City Council to provide meals to those most in need three days a week. Ringing seniors on a bi-weekly basis ensured they were supported and connected. We also knew we had the expertise to support parents with home learning activities. With our Community Careline opened for all over the age of 70 to ring for support, we managed to deliver regular shopping & pharmacy essentials to over 50 different individuals. In everything, we were determined to be there for our community. Overall we delivered 1717 meals to families in need, made over 1200 phone calls to seniors and delivered over 300 educational activity packs.

Our Activate Holiday Lunch Programme has also been a great success. Last summer, 150 young people from the Abbey, North Cambridge & Trumpington wards engaged in fun football & multi-sport sessions and received a free takeaway lunch.

1717 meals to families



The scale of the emergency food response in Cambridge would not have been possible without the support of all our funders and donors, so to them **thank you**. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, our funding streams have increased in comparison to 2019/2020.



Education Services 2010



CAMBRIDGE SUSTAINABLE FOOD



CAMBRIDGE
Food Poverty
Alliance



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www.cambridgesustainablefood.org

For all queries please contact sam@cambridgesustainablefood.org