

EPPING FOREST FOODBANK



END OF YEAR REPORT
FOR 2020

Helping local people in crisis



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Epping Forest Foodbank is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered charity number 1182270. Registered in England and Wales

HANNAH'S STATEMENT



2020 has been Epping Forest Foodbank's ninth year operating as a foodbank and second year as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

We have a great team of committed volunteers, support of the local community and Trussell Trust to work with our network of referral agents to identify and support people in crisis with nutritionally balanced food. This year has brought with it the additional challenges posed by Coronavirus.

We supported more people in crisis than ever before, increased our number of volunteers, extended our reach across the district with doorstep deliveries, moved to a bigger warehouse, distributed more donated food, and saved more surplus food from landfill in a safe, socially distanced way.

Our track record and experience has equipped us for the impact that redundancies, business closures, sickness, furlough and short hours have presented to our community. Our service works to support people who are in financial crisis to provide them with emergency food and work with referral agents to support people facing hardship.

Hannah

HANNAH HENLEY

Interim Project Manager



VOLUNTEERS

Epping Forest Foodbank is a volunteer-powered organisation. Now numbering over one hundred, our volunteers come from a diverse range of backgrounds, religious beliefs and none, employment experience and ages.

We are fortunate to have creative and resourceful volunteers that made use of technology and resources provided by Trussell Trust to help reshape the operation and provide a socially distanced, delivery service in response to lockdown guidance and restrictions.

Those with life experience and time to commit volunteering are often older. The first lockdown restrictions and the guidance to over 70s, clinically vulnerable and pregnant to shield had a big impact on several of our team.

We are hugely grateful that they kept safe, volunteered from home and additional willing volunteers stepped up to fill the gaps to maintain and extend our service.

There are numerous roles and responsibilities that keep an operation like this running smoothly, including warehouse, governance, collection and delivery drivers, office and admin, social media, training, communications, centre volunteers, health and safety, liaison with

donors, referral agents, premises, recruitment, accounts, research and keeping records of local services. We are fortunate and grateful to have a committed, enthusiastic, dedicated group who work as a team to provide the best service we can to the people we serve and support.

We have worked creatively to support people remotely, to signpost and understand what to include in their food parcels. We are looking forward to new guidance and the protection that Coronavirus vaccination will bring to enable us to re open our centres, including our newest centre at St Martin's Church Rooms, Chipping Ongar. It has been great to see the volunteers and church there support their community through their Porch Pantry. Other projects like Saved! in Loughton, make fresh, good quality surplus food available to people at no cost and have helped stretched household budgets to go a bit further and save food from landfill.

We keep our volunteers updated with weekly Volunteer Mail - this has been a valuable tool to share information, guidance and rota information. Thank you to all that contribute to putting this together.

"Volunteering at the Foodbank is always a pleasure, a great team approach whilst helping to deliver an essential front line community service. My only real frustration is the nagging question why in 2020/21 is a food bank still essential within our Epping Forest community."

"It was the worst and best of times. We have never worked harder to meet the needs of families since that first lockdown – all our amazing volunteers pulled together to get those food parcels packed and delivered in difficult times. But we also have such fond memories of those times of beautiful weather and operating in the lovely environs of St. Marys. It has been a non-stop year for our operations – coping with social distancing, receiving record levels of donations, shifting to online referrals, moving to a new warehouse and opening the new venue at Debden Broadway. It's been a blast!"

"Staying home and saving lives is right, but helping people in need is too. I was a little late to the party when I volunteered with the foodbank in June, but since then I've been able to assist with deliveries (fastest finger!) and at St Mary's and Chigwell Lane both of which have been enlightening, and a little daunting too. The scale of organisation is huge, checking sorting and weighing of donations is endless let alone getting it to the people in need, made more difficult by social distancing which slows the process up, especially at Chigwell Lane. On each occasion I have volunteered I have felt valued however, and would gladly do more if required."

REFERRAL AGENCIES

We have over 150 partner referral agencies that support people during a time of crisis who can make a referral for a food parcel. These front line professionals have knowledge of a person's circumstances to understand and support them with more than just food during a crisis.

We have built this range of referral agencies to enable all who need help in a difficult time to access help and for that help to be more than just food. We are proud of the deep knowledge we have built up about local support and services to signpost the individuals and referral agencies to tackle issues like benefit claims, debt, housing issues, visa issues and domestic abuse.

During 2020 our referral agencies transitioned from a paper-based referral system to emailing referrals and now using Trussell Trust's E-referral system. This has helped us give remote access to the foodbank service while these staff work from home. We have built stronger communication with our referral agencies. Where one might touch the tip of an iceberg of issues going on for an individual or family, it plays a part in linking them up with holistic support. We are proud of the impact this support is having on people in our community and that these professionals rate highly our professional, helpful, kind, collaborative and efficient approach.

The following feedback about Epping Forest Foodbank is from some of those agencies.

"Epping Forest Foodbank is an invaluable organisation within the community and we are very fortunate to work in partnership with them. The staff and volunteers provide a wonderful service, always in a cheerful and supportive manner, and will go the extra mile for people in need. They offer flexible delivery services when clients are unable to collect food and always have emergency food parcels available. They will ensure clients are given help in finding advice and practical help with the problems they are facing. They are always looking to expand their services and make them accessible to as many people as possible. We, and our clients, cannot recommend them highly enough and thank them for their ongoing support."

–Epping Forest Citizens Advice

"It has been a privilege to work alongside Epping Forest Foodbank to help support refugees in the local area. The team are incredibly organised and responsive and are exceptionally creative and thoughtful when it comes to anticipating and understanding the needs of those we support. Receiving parcels from the Foodbank has so clearly been transformative, both physically and mentally, for those we support; and even just knowing that a food parcel is on the way can bring focus and instant happiness to someone who might have lost hope. We are so grateful for everything the Foodbank and its wonderful volunteers have provided!"

–Care4Calais

"We found the demand for food parcels very high from March 2020 through to Christmas and the food bank referral service was very easy and efficient and we could arrange urgent last-minute deliveries thanks to the delivery service and also being able to collect directly. We also had emergency food parcels over Christmas from the food bank which was extremely helpful due to staff being on leave and only having duty staff, the food bank has been a fantastic support to Peabody and to many customers throughout the district"

–Essex Outreach Support

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED

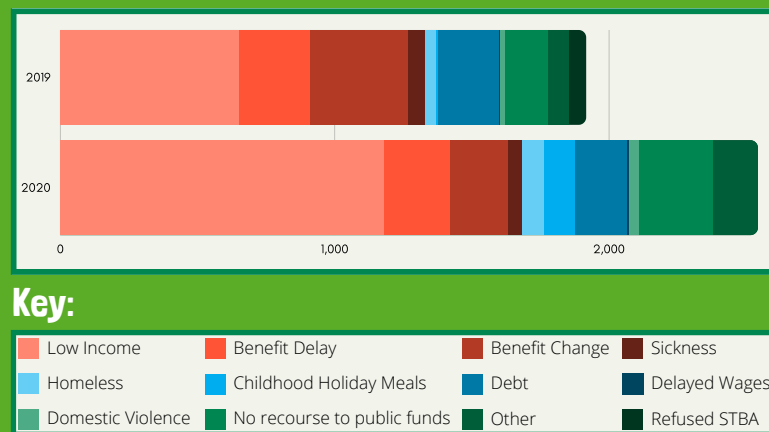
Our emergency supplies can come in several forms;

- A food parcel of at least three days of nutritionally balanced food collected from a distribution centre in exchange for a voucher or code
- A food parcel delivered to a doorstep from a voucher or code issued by a referral agent
- Where we have supplies of fresh food from supermarket surplus and donations from catering establishments this is in addition to the food parcel
- An emergency foodbox.

We have 13 of these boxes with Children's Centres/medical practices/community groups, 19 with churches, 20 in schools. These on-site boxes contain a small family equivalent food parcel.

We are grateful to the venues that host our foodbank sessions. We work collaboratively with

FIGURE 1. Cause of crisis affecting people in households redeeming a foodbank voucher at Epping Forest Foodbank in 2019 and 2020



them to make them safe enough for our volunteers and people using the Foodbank at this challenging time. Particular thanks to St Mary's Church, Loughton who have allowed us extended use for socially distanced packing and dispatching, St John's Church, Loughton for the centrally located space on The Broadway we occupy on a Saturday and The Box in Epping.

In the autumn we reopened our Loughton and Epping centres and our new Saturday venue at St Johns On The Broadway in Debden. It was really rewarding to serve people face-to-face while maintaining our delivery service supporting people across the Epping Forest District for people more than three miles from a centre or unable to travel. At the end of the year with new tier guidance and COVID rates climbing rapidly we returned to delivery only.

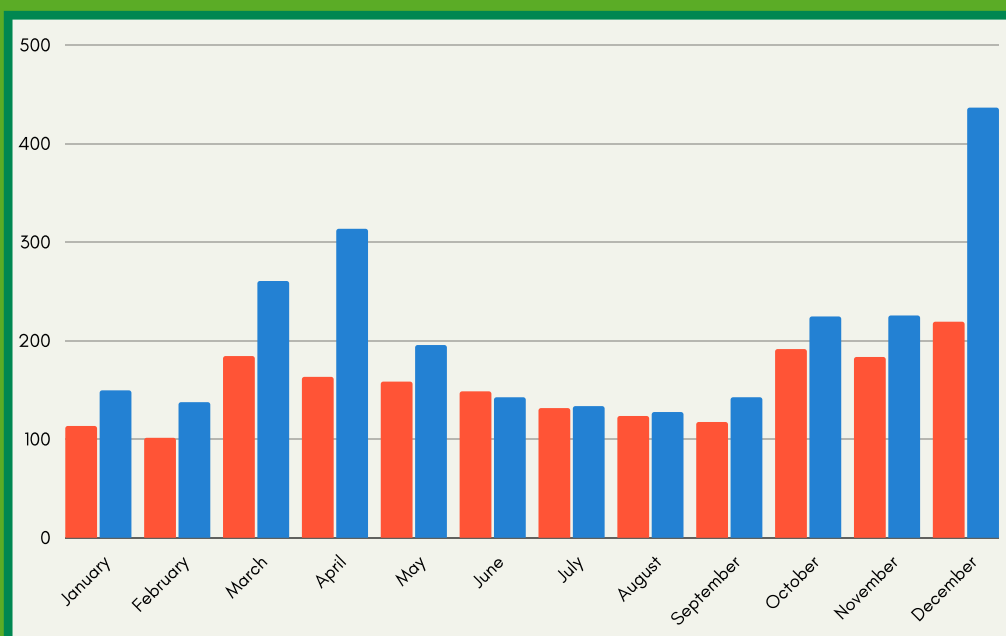
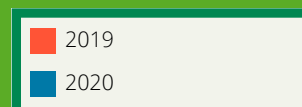


FIGURE 2.

Total people fed from food parcels issued by Epping Forest Foodbank by month in 2019 and 2020

Key:



DONATIONS RECEIVED

There have been some challenges with retail and food supply this year, but that has not impeded the generosity of the local community to donate food and household basics for our food parcels.

37.7 tonnes of items were donated, a 77% increase on last year. We take our responsibility and stewardship of these donations very seriously. We sort and organise all donations so as much as possible is used in food parcels before its use-by date. We are always grateful when people check use-by dates carefully and save us the job of disposing of food we cannot use. Some food resources we share with other projects supporting people facing food poverty, including other foodbanks within the Trussell Trust Network.

Thank you to Waitrose Buckhurst Hill, especially Maxine, their community champion who is a loyal foodbank supporter; Tesco in Epping and Co-op in Woodford Green for hosting our donation points. Phil the Trolley at

St Mary's Church deserves an honourable mention. Jackie is at the warehouse every Wednesday and Friday morning to accept donations with the hard-working warehouse team that sort, order and organise efficiently and effectively. If there was a foodbank Olympics they would be gold medal winners.



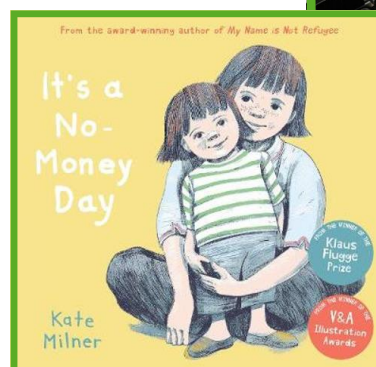
FUNDRAISING

People's generosity during a challenging year has been humbling and very affirming. Individuals, churches, community groups, companies, local councillors and school PTAs have given very generously and spoken loudly and clearly of the value and trust that we have in the community to meet the needs of people who find they are having a difficult time.

Through regular giving via our Fellowship 200 scheme, grants, donations through our website, cash in envelopes and cheques we are in the fortunate position of covering our costs and have money to invest in strengthening and

growing our service to support more people and work strategically to reduce the need for emergency food, hunger and food poverty.

We raised money to provide resources to help our community empathise with what is like to be using the services of the foodbank. We know it isn't easy to reach out for help and treat all people who use the foodbank with kindness, respect and dignity.



STRATEGY

Epping Forest Foodbank is proud to be part of the Trussell Trust, a nationwide network of food banks that provides emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK. There are more than 1,200 food bank centres in the network, about two-thirds of the food banks in the UK.

We would like to introduce you to the overarching strategy Together for Change that we are part of and will take into account in all of our work and future plans:

We want to ensure everyone can afford the essentials in life. We are working towards a compassionate, just society without the need for large-scale emergency food distribution. Our goal is a fairer society where nobody wonders where their next meal is coming from or must rely on the kindness of their community in order to put food on their table. We'll be doing this in three ways:

- In **Changing Communities**, we'll be working to reduce the need for our services locally, helping people to access targeted support that addresses the underlying reason for their crisis.
- In **Changing Policy**, we'll be working alongside partners to provide stronger evidence of the drivers of extreme poverty (or 'destitution') and pushing for positive solutions that will help tackle these.
- In **Changing Minds**, we'll be increasing levels of understanding and empathy amongst the general public, locally and UK-wide, to build a movement that is willing to take action to create a just and compassionate society without the need for food banks.

How we will do this;

- Increase engagement locally among the general public - especially to strengthen understanding, to deepen empathy, to build the number and range of people willing to take action, and to partner with other organisations and individuals to hold local policymakers to account and call for long-term change.
- To provide access to specialist, personalised advice and information, focusing on income maximisation to address the underlying causes of crisis and reduce the need for future food bank support.
- To use capacity and bring in new resources to develop plans to support the need locally with a view to reduce the need for our services locally.
- To increase capacity and public-facing premises and services that enable food bank teams to provide the most dignified response while we're working together for a future where those services are no longer needed.
- Bringing foodbank services closer to the communities we serve enables us to better fulfil these strategic objectives, providing a more holistic service to families in need so that they are better equipped to effectively target and overcome the underlying causes of poverty.



CLIENT QUOTES



"My family and I are perhaps one of the few fortunate people to have access to the rather life-changing service from Epping Forest Food Bank. From absolutely wonderful customer service, very person-centred interaction and support, making us feel at home to listening and offering emergency help etc have been some of the amazing experiences we have had. The team have been brilliant especially Hannah, who constantly checks on us and always cares to ask for an update on our family circumstances and offers help, referrals etc where possible. This Christmas would not have been the same for my family without the timely help and support of Hannah. Through her initiative, contact and network my family was able to receive a free gift of turkey for Christmas – an experience which we very much cherish. To the team, we say THANK YOU so much for being there for the vulnerable and needy in our community."

"I wanted to use this opportunity to thank you, the volunteers and the charity that run the foodbank. My children and I were at breaking point after we had to flee our home due to domestic violence. Losing my job and having to fend for 2 children, I decided to seek help with Citizens Advice Bureau. With no money for food as I waited for my universal credit application 5 week processing period, I was offered my first food parcel. I remember waiting and not knowing what to expect as we literally had nothing to eat for the day. Our food parcel arrived with 2 volunteers delivering it straight to my door (a text message alerting me they were on their way).....Bags and bags of food, fresh vegetables and fruit, diapers, toiletries and toys for my children. I was told it was a three-day food parcel but I was able to stretch it out for a week! I have gone on to receive several food parcels and was referred by our local health visitor. This has helped financially as I am able to cope with the winter gas bills and fuel to transport my children to school as we were rehoused at a refuge far away from their school. Receiving the food parcels have been a lifeline and, in turn, given me a break from anxiety attacks to be able to focus on a short and long term plan on how to sustain my family and get my life back on track. Words cannot express our gratitude and I hope in the future we are able to help others like you have helped us. Thank you."

"Thank you so much for helping me out. If it wasn't for the foodbank volunteers I wouldn't have known what to do. Thank you again and I really appreciate all the help."

"Thank you so much for the food delivered to me today. I can't thank you enough and wasn't expecting all of that."