

Manchester Central Foodbank

End of Year Report 2020



What a whirlwind of a year it has been! Let's take a whistlestop tour down memory lane:

In **January** we started our year with an exciting project called *Can You Hear Me Now?* We worked with artist collective Get It Done, to begin gathering testimonies from foodbank clients to campaign for change in Manchester. The focus of this project was to amplify the voices of those who needed to use the foodbank, and listen to the reasons why they were struggling, to raise awareness around food poverty, and campaign to end hunger. We spoke to a number of individuals at the start of the year, and are continuing to have ongoing conversations about the injustices of hunger in our community.

In **February** and **March**, we worked with The Vegetarian Society on a UK-wide project to provide vegetarian meal kits for foodbank clients. We had important conversations about what people would need to make healthy and tasty meals at home, and made sure that the meal kits recipes were accessible for people with extremely limited cooking facilities and ingredients. In the pilot of this project, we received 150 recipe boxes to trial, which went down great with our clients! This project has now been rolled out across the UK, and has provided over 24,000 meals to people experiencing food poverty. We feel incredibly lucky to have been a part of this incredible project!



In **April** we adapted our methods of service in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We swapped our cafe style, walk-in foodbank to an at-the-door service to protect clients, volunteers and staff, whilst ensuring we were still able to provide our essential services to the people we support. We are still operating in this manner, but are looking forward to welcoming people back indoors when it is safe to do so. We also set up a delivery service for clients who couldn't leave their homes during the first lockdown. We thought this would be a short term solution that we'd run for a month or so but over 8 months later we're still running two delivery sessions a week, and we don't expect that'll stop any time soon.

"We really enjoy volunteering at the foodbank and we are lucky to see how grateful the service users are when we deliver their food parcels."

"The recipients we deliver to couldn't be nicer or more appreciative... we are inspired by their optimism and warmed by their smiles."

"It is very rewarding work, and the appreciation shown by the recipients only makes you want to do it more."

Quotes from our volunteer drivers

May was our busiest month on record, with 1011 parcels distributed. We had the support of British Gas engineers, to assist us with delivering food parcels to our vulnerable clients who were unable to collect their food parcels in person. In total this year, our volunteer delivery drivers have donated around 560 hours of their time, to ensure that we are providing an accessible service to everyone in our community who is experiencing food poverty. We couldn't run this vital service without them!

Due to the increased demand for our services, in **June**, our two Assistant Project Managers, Patsy and Freya, who were previously working part-time, began working full-time at the foodbank. Their roles include managing our volunteers, social media, and assisting in the running of our foodbank sessions with Project Manager, Lauren.

In **July** and **August**, we held the first sessions for our Holiday Help Scheme, which aimed to provide replacement lunches for children who would otherwise be experiencing holiday hunger. Over the summer holidays, we provided the equivalent of over 1500 lunches to children from five local primary schools. One school we worked with noted that *“food poverty is a crucial issue for our children. Having worked with children for several years in Manchester, it is clear to see that food poverty is worsening. The most important thing to mention here is the voices of our children who have shared that they are worried that there will be no food in the house for them to eat. The growing number of children who worry about food is growing rapidly. The impact of this on their mental health and well-being is life changing. As a result, children are unable to concentrate on their education, for the worry of hunger and when they will next eat is constantly on their mind. It must be recognised that not only does this concern children who are entitled to free school meals but children from low income families and families who will be affected by the current pandemic for years to come. Without urgent intervention, this is going to be a problem that will not go away on its own”*.

In **September**, we launched our fundraising campaign to raise money for the distribution of creative arts pack, made in collaboration with artist collective Get It Done, to help provide our foodbank clients with an opportunity and resource to entertain, engage and challenge themselves.. Alongside our fundraiser, we opened an online store, where our supporters are able to purchase a creative pack for themselves, and sponsor another for a foodbank user. With the funds donated, we have been able to start distributing these creative packs to our clients, and look forward to seeing the artwork they produce!



In **October**, we sent a letter as part of our continued campaigning efforts to Chancellor Rishi Sunak, to urge the government to #KeepTheLifeline, and refuse to cut £1,040 per year from the incomes of over 330,000 households in Greater Manchester by removing the current uplift of £20 per week on Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits. We also asked him to extend the uplift to recipients of Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, and Job Seekers Allowance. You can read the full letter on our website.

In **November**, we opened our second foodbank centre at No. 93 Wellbeing Centre in Harpurhey. From this site, we have provided 139 3-day emergency food parcels since our opening session on 19th November. We also welcomed a new team of volunteers at this centre, without whom we wouldn't be able to support our north Manchester community.



Throughout the year, we have been working with Greater Manchester Citizens, to raise awareness for the growing levels of child poverty in Greater Manchester, and campaign for the introduction of child poverty proofing measures throughout Manchester City Council's Poverty Strategy. This month, GM Citizens held their Delegate's Assembly, where we were able to present our campaign asks and research to other Citizens associates. In the new year, we will be continuing to work with GM Citizens, schools, children's services and local Counsellors and political figures to ensure that child poverty in Greater Manchester is a thing of the past.

In **December**, we continued our Holiday Help Scheme, and provided a further 403 food parcels to children from seven local primary schools. One of the schools we worked with said *“many many thanks for all of the donations of food you have sent for our families. What a difference this will make to their Christmas. How you all have managed to do this under such challenging circumstances is nothing short of a miracle. Thank you”*.



Despite peaks and troughs in our demand this year, the scale of our operations in general has grown rapidly, and we have welcomed another member into our team in a brand new role. Rahul is working with us as our Warehouse and Logistics Coordinator, and will be working with donors and our foodbank centres to make sure your donations are sorted and distributed as quickly as they come in. We are extremely lucky to have Rahul on board!

Over the course of the year...

- We distributed 7884 3-day emergency food parcels. Of this total, 4847 parcels went to adults and 3037 parcels were for children.
- This equates to 70,956 meals distributed in 2020.
- The total weight of the food we distributed this year is over 62 tonnes.
- Our volunteers donated 3210 hours of their time this year, with 560 of those hours spent delivering food parcels to our vulnerable and isolated clients.
- This year, the main trends we saw in the reasons for referral were chronic low income, with just under half of people using our foodbank stating this as their main cause of crisis. Following this, we supported a large number of families and individuals who had no recourse to public funds, and another growing group of people who were experiencing homelessness.

Next year, we have lots of big plans! We will continue to provide support for people experiencing food poverty in Manchester through the provision of food parcels, but we also want to focus on our charity mission, which is to end the need for foodbanks. We will be continuing our campaigning work, and working with a number of organisations to promote Local Welfare Assistance Schemes as a form of support for low income families and individuals, as well as pushing for Manchester City Council and the Mayor to prioritise child poverty reduction. Thank you to everyone who has made what we've done this year possible, and we hope we'll earn your continued support through another busy and exciting year!