

## Family Action FOOD Clubs

### **Background**

Family Action's first FOOD (Food On Our Doorstep) Club was created in a Manchester children's centre in 2018. It was set up in partnership with the national charity Fareshare to prevent perfectly edible food being sent to landfill and reduce food waste, while also enabling local low-income families to access good quality food at a very low cost. Before the Covid-19 outbreak, Family Action had 9 FOOD Clubs up and running. We now have 30 FOOD Clubs in Manchester and Bristol, 12 opening in Southend-on-Sea in June, and we have plans to open a further 36 clubs across London, Birmingham and Cardiff over the coming few months.

### **FOOD Clubs**

Families pay £1 for membership for the year, and a £3.50 weekly charge thereafter. Each week, every family receives a mixture of fresh meat, fresh vegetables, dairy products, bakery and store-cupboard essentials worth at least £15 (in excess of £780 per year). This saves each household at least £600 per year through the FOOD Clubs scheme. This frees up the families budgets, enabling them to spend their money on other essentials, and also saves a huge amount of food from going to waste. The weekly charge covers the cost of running the clubs which ensures that once the clubs are established and families are signed up, they are able to become self-sustaining in the long term.

In addition to food provision, FOOD clubs work in partnership with other local services and are often placed in community venues delivering additional services such as Children's Centres. Therefore, families are also able to access additional support and/or can be signposted to other services in the local area to support their additional needs. Before the Covid-19 outbreak, the clubs themselves were offering additional support around cooking and nutrition sessions, which is something we would like to continue again when possible.

### **Reach**

There is no set criteria for who can join the FOOD Clubs, other than that someone must be able to prove that they live or work within 15 minutes' walk of the Club. There is not an income limit on membership, however we do have an emphasis on supporting low-income families. There are c.50 spaces for membership at each FOOD Club.

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Registered as a Charity in England & Wales no: 264713. Registered as a Charity in the Isle of Man no: 1206.  
Registered Company Limited by Guarantee in England and Wales no: 01068186.

Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cambridge. Chair: Mary Fulton. Chief Executive: David Holmes CBE.

Vice Patrons: Christine Davies CBE. Dr Andrew McCulloch. Dame Denise Platt DBE. Katie Vanneck-Smith. Professor Harriet Ward CBE.

## **Impact**

With a focus on wellbeing, FOOD clubs provide vital support to families with low household incomes, who would otherwise struggle to eat well on a budget and in some cases may be faced with skipping meals or eating cheap food with low nutritional value. FOOD clubs provide these families with low cost, healthy food every week.

In the short-term, the service can help alleviate stress and anxiety around household finance, ensure families are able to eat healthy food and don't have to make decisions around skipping meals or poor nutrition. In the medium to long-term, reducing these financial pressures can help improve family relationships, reduce stress and anxiety, improve life-chances, free up money and thus reduce risk of other financial challenges such as debt or rent arrears, and improve overall diet and nutrition (with associated long-term health benefits).

FOOD clubs also offer access to additional support, information and signposting to other services, which can help with any other issues/challenges households may be facing. They also offer volunteering opportunities, training and support to access further education/employment - which in the long-term can help increase their household income and improve their life chances.

The below quote is from a member of one of our Manchester FOOD Clubs:

*'The food club is amazing for me and my granddaughter. I've received a lot of fresh produce. It's a very reliable and accommodating for families especially with the current situation going on. They have a good range of foods that is not always available at the shops at this moment in time. The staff are very caring and generous. The food club don't make you feel embarrassed and they are not judgemental for using the club. They don't look down on you and they have helped me lots, sign posting me to other services.'*

Once established, FOOD clubs offer a range of volunteering opportunities for local communities. Beneficiaries are particularly encouraged to volunteer with the clubs, and all volunteers are provided with a guaranteed training offer around food hygiene and preparation, and dedicated support to explore further training and employment opportunities.

## **Update on the FOOD clubs coming to Leeds**

Funding has been secured to run FOOD clubs in 12 locations, twice per week, but this will be rolled out in different phases, with the first hopefully opening early into 2021. The areas and venues have been proposed as a result of some mapping work done by public health in Leeds to identify community need and gaps in provision. The Implementation Lead is in the process of contacting identified venues and partner

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agencies to negotiate agreements. If people have any particular queries, they can contact the Implementation Lead Nick Godfrey on 07816 403347.

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