



Bromley Borough Foodbank
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Dear Bromley Borough Foodbank supporters.

I wanted to take the opportunity to update you on the work of Bromley Borough Foodbank during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by outlining some of the challenges we have faced and how we are continuing to resolve them.

Challenges we have faced in the past few months:

In adherence to government guidelines, and for the safety of our volunteers, we asked those over the age of seventy to temporarily withdraw from service and self-isolate. This required us to recruit new volunteers as quickly and safely as possible to ensure that we could continue to serve the community efficiently.

In the first few weeks, our supply stock dropped drastically as supermarket shelves were cleared out and donations became fewer as people began to self-isolate. This made dealing with an increased demand for aid particularly difficult, especially as schools had to close which meant that families found themselves struggling to provide for their children without the support of school meals.

Furthermore, to prevent the spread of infection, it was necessary to strictly limit the amount of people allowed to attend our centres. Our referral agencies began operating remotely, which initially affected access for those in need, as they were no longer able to collect food vouchers or parcels in person.

And, as you can imagine, our telephone lines and email inboxes alike have been extremely busy throughout this time. We have received overwhelming support from restaurants and local businesses who wanted to donate produce in large quantities, and it was our job to figure out how to process, store, and distribute this influx of stock effectively.

A large amount of vulnerable people who had the financial resources to purchase food but were not able to get out and buy it have also been contacting us for support.

How have we at Bromley Borough Foodbank responded?

Thanks to Bromley Council we were able to receive the critical transport that we needed to ensure that stock could continue to flow in from local supermarkets. These vehicles also allowed us to begin safely delivering pre-packed food parcels directly to our centres in need, which has become a crucial part of our service during this time.

Foodbank have been blessed with huge volumes of volunteer applications, and our staff soon got to registering and organising applicants so that we could place them into the necessary roles as quickly as possible.

We reached out and contacted members of Bromley council and local churches who had access to wholesale food stores and could provide us with essential but limited-availability stock this way. Regular discussions with the local council took place as we worked together ensure that after schools closed, the correct information was provided to families that relied on school meals so that they could continue to receive support and food parcels when necessary.

By reaching out to a wider-community of church members, we came in contact with individuals who equipped us with a new system for answering our emergency phone line using Google voice, which increased our capacity to provide support to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

And, with the assistance of Trussell Trust software, we were able to implement a new e-voucher referral system to be rolled out to over two-hundred referral agencies so that they could continue to provide vouchers to the community. This requires a lot of training and we, alongside our agencies, are still learning and adapting to this method.

Thanks to this online system we were able to temporarily close all of our centres and since the 20th of April we have been able to rely exclusively on the delivery of food packages straight to the doorsteps of those in need. This was made possible by Octopus engineers who volunteered their time and vehicles to fulfil these deliveries. Our new delivery system has not only allowed us to continue to assist those in self-isolation but has minimised contact amongst our volunteers and therefore enabled us to play our part in keeping everyone safe.

During this time, Trussell Trust has continued to build partnerships with various supermarkets to ensure that stock could still be received. Both Tesco and Morrisons have provided us with huge quantities of stock directly from their warehouses, which has been invaluable.

Our supporters have displayed true determination in maintaining their donations in a variety of ways, using alternative food donation drop off points to ensure social distancing and protection of our warehouse, donating through our website and raising funds through our newly registered just giving page. The public response has been phenomenal and such an encouragement during this challenging time.

What is next for us here at Foodbank:

Unfortunately, there is no time for rest as circumstances surrounding COVID-19 will continue to change daily, and we are committed to adapting to whatever new challenges it has yet to bring our way.

As it becomes possible for some of our valued volunteers to return to work, we are working to fill the positions they leave behind.

We have implemented a new freephone number so that those without access to the internet, a smartphone, or credit remain able to reach our help remotely now that many public service buildings have had to temporarily close.

With the support of Trussell Trust, we can collect Foodbank data which allows us to track and measure the need in our community. The data will allow us to present evidence of this

need to the government, and we plan on using it to push for the creation of a COVID-19 Income Support Scheme, the aim of which will be to provide even greater support to those locked in poverty during this pandemic, and release some of pressure on our local Foodbanks.

As the school summer holidays always puts a significant strain on family finances, we are utilising our data in plans to develop a new scheme that will be specially designed to support families during this six-week period. The government's recent announcement to continue free school meals during the summer should help ensure no children within our Borough will go hungry and we are delighted with this turn around.

We have been translating our Foodbank leaflets into a wider variety of languages to ensure that our help can reach as many people as possible, and are pursuing a grant which will enable us to work in partnership with agencies such as Citizens Advice and debt charities to provide financial advice to those who need it, broadening our reach within the community.

As we are a charity founded on Christian principles, it is important for us to encourage those who come to us for support to also contact a local church and access the online services they have to offer. We always provide our clients with a copy of magazine-style Gospel of John in New Living Translation (NLT). It is during difficult times like these that the support of the church and the message of the Gospel becomes more important than ever.

Please continue to uphold all of us working here at Bromley Borough Foodbank in your prayers as it is this support that gives us the strength and endurance that we need to weather this storm together. Thank you!

I have included some photos of the work we have been doing in the past few months:



We have been keeping our staff, volunteers, and clients safe through clear signage that help maintain social distancing.



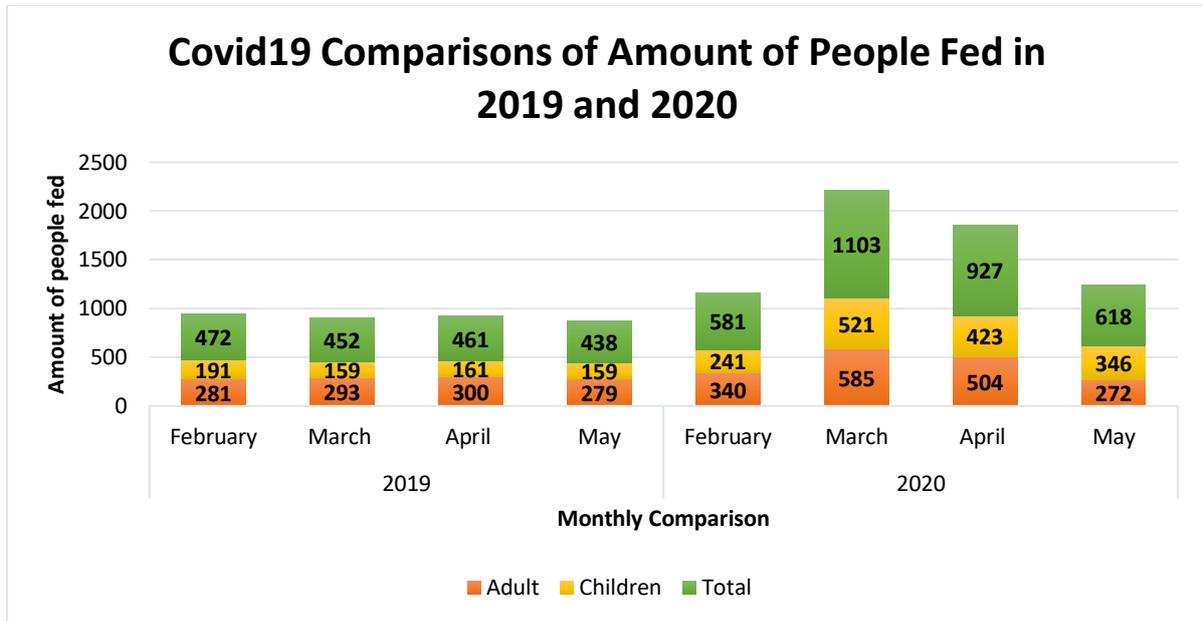


Mountains of stock at our warehouse, which is then packed into curated food parcels based on the size and needs of different households and delivered straight to them.



A typical nutritionally balanced, 7-day emergency food parcel for one person who also has a cat.

And for those of you are interested in our Trussell Trust data, here are some of our figures for comparisons:



On the 30th April the TBB Food Hub opened and began assisting with the distribution of food, along with other temporary food distribution services as many began to outreach during this crisis. This is reflective in our Trussell Trust figures in May 2020