

Update April 17th 2020



The COVID-19 pandemic has created tremendous turbulence for us, necessitating the reinvention of most aspects of our work in the course of a few weeks! In West Cheshire Foodbank, we have also aimed to create new ways of working that reflect our core values and strategic aims, and which will offer a positive legacy beyond the crisis. Staff, trustees and volunteers have put in a **huge** amount of work, and coped with an enormous amount of change, in a very short space of time. This has included the implementation of an entirely new e-voucher system.

We also want to express our grateful thanks to individuals and businesses who have made donations of food and funds to enable us to keep going over the last couple of weeks – particular thanks to CF Fertilisers and Essar Oils amongst others for their substantial financial donations!

Local Community Groups

The biggest change is a new operating model based on donated food being distributed via trusted neighbourhood networks, headed up by local councillors. Some of these are substantial community projects that we were already in touch with through our community development work. Others are among the many local mutual aid groups that have emerged at this time of crisis. Groups will offer home delivery, collection or both options. Some will also register one or more individual voucher issuers so as to offer a complete neighbourhood-based crisis food service.

This week, we have signed a partnership agreement with **Blacon Beacon** which runs on Mon/Tue/Thu, complementing our own Friday morning food distribution session at Matthew Henry. An agreement is also now in place with a new hub in **Elton** which is operating a delivery service.

We will be accelerating the roll-out of this model over the coming weeks (and keep you updated via our website and bulletins) and our immediate priorities are:

- a partner to take on deliveries of our food parcels in the Chester area
- a specialist Chester delivery hub for those in B&B, hotels or temporary accommodation
- new hubs in priority neighbourhoods in Ellesmere Port
- a rural hub covering villages east and south of Chester

We are working closely with Cheshire West & Chester Council to map local mutual aid groups and food provision, which helps us both to see and contribute to the bigger picture.

Many of our long serving volunteers are self-isolating but we remain in touch with them as they help spread the word about our continuing operation. We have been able to keep four of our existing distribution sessions running in public venues using careful social distancing and sanitisation to maintain safety.

We still welcome donations of food mainly via our supermarket collection points or Trinity Ellesmere Port donation points but keep an eye on our website for additional drop off places. You can also take food directly to our [warehouse](#) during its newly extended (from 20 April) opening hours of 9am-2pm Monday to Friday. We also value ongoing financial donations [via our website](#) to help us buy food at a time when food donations are inevitably lower.

As we are likely to see an upsurge in people facing hardship, we are taking every opportunity this crisis affords to challenge local and central government to take responsibility for tackling poverty and protecting people in times of crisis.

With heartfelt thanks for your support,

The West Cheshire Foodbank team