



# Referral Agency Handbook



## **‘Fighting poverty at the point of need’**

Thank you for deciding to be one of our referral agencies, we are extremely pleased to welcome you to the team and look forward to working together. Without the help provided by agencies like the one you represent, Harlow foodbank would be unable to help people in need in our local community.

### **Provision of emergency food**

- The foodbank has been established to provide short term, emergency food to individuals and families in crisis.
- Our food parcels include cereal, milk, fruit juice, soup, pasta, meat, fish, vegetables and pudding, providing balanced and nutritional meals for a minimum of three days. The quantity of food given is dependent upon the number of adults and children in the family.
- Clients are consulted on their basic dietary requirements e.g. vegetarian, gluten free, baby food etc. Outside of these requirements, our parcels are prepared according to nutritional recommendations from the Trussell Trust (in consultation with dieticians) and according to our stock levels. We are unable to offer bespoke orders to individual clients.
- Food is donated by churches, individuals, companies, community groups or charities and by the public through collection days outside the major supermarkets in our local area. This is a project that involves the whole community!
- There is no charge for the food, but it is given on the understanding that it is not resold.

### **Referral process**

- Due to the nature of your work, we feel that you are well placed to identify people in a genuine crisis, using your professional judgement.
- As a registered referral agency, you will hold a supply of yellow vouchers which can be issued directly to an individual or family that you assess to be in a financial crisis leaving them with insufficient means to buy food.
- On receipt of a yellow voucher, the client should take it to their nearest foodbank centre - opening times and location(s) are listed at the end of this handbook.
- Volunteers at the foodbank centre will then exchange the voucher for a 3 day food parcel which the client can carry away in supermarket-branded carrier bags, giving them a degree of anonymity. Please note:
- The foodbank centre also stocks some essential non-food items which clients may benefit from such as household items, toiletries, nappies, tin openers, and pet food. We also stock a supply of fresh food (eggs, potatoes, salad items, bread) when available.
- In addition to giving food, foodbank centre volunteers also offer a free cup of tea/coffee, a friendly chat and ‘help in finding help’ by directing clients toward further support services such as debt counsellors, advocacy etc.
- In providing this ‘signposting’, we are happy to feedback any assistance or advice we have provided within the bounds of client confidentiality. Please note that each member of the foodbank centre team has signed the foodbank’s Confidentiality Agreement.
- For anyone unable to access our foodbank centre(s), we also have pre-packed emergency food boxes which can be delivered to clients when it would be unreasonable for them to collect the food themselves - i.e. clients who cannot get to the foodbank due to remoteness

or incapacity, or when food is required urgently outside of our foodbank centre opening hours.

- **Emergency food boxes have their own voucher attached to them (red voucher on single and family boxes) which must be completed instead of the normal yellow voucher. To re-order these boxes please email [efb@mrct.org.uk](mailto:efb@mrct.org.uk)**
- For justifiable home deliveries, your agency will need to collect the boxes from our foodbank warehouse and deliver them to your client. Alternatively, if your agency would like to hold a small supply of emergency food boxes, please contact the office to discuss your requirement.


## Vouchers

- We will supply you with yellow foodbank vouchers against a unique reference number so we can track them back to the agency and ensure vouchers are not duplicated.
- Vouchers are issued in sets of 10 to help us manage our stock levels. When you run low on vouchers you will need to email [hfbvouchers@mrct.org.uk](mailto:hfbvouchers@mrct.org.uk) for a further supply.
- Please keep vouchers securely stored, as the food represented on each voucher is currently valued between £25 and £100 depending on the size of the family referred.
- It is important for our auditing, accounting and statistical processes that all sections of the voucher are completed when issued to a client. The 'Nature of Crisis' box should be completed by ticking the most appropriate box or adding a brief explanation of their situation.
- Vouchers are treated in strictest confidence and no client or agency details will be divulged to anyone without their or your explicit consent. The foodbank is registered with the Data Protection Agency, and we comply with the regulations regarding the holding of client information on a database.

## Number of emergency food vouchers issued per client

- There is no limit placed on the number of times the foodbank can support a client; however, our model is designed to help those in a short term crisis rather than providing indefinite long term assistance.
- A core feature of our operating model is the three vouchers guideline which allows agencies to issue clients with up to three foodbank vouchers within a six month period, without contacting the foodbank.
- If the client's crisis has not been resolved within this timeframe and you would like to refer them to the foodbank again, you must contact us to explain the situation and discuss the possibility of issuing further vouchers to extend support.
- This enables us to be confident that the root cause of the problem is being addressed (which is in the best interests of the client) and/or that extended support is justified. On the basis of this knowledge, we can agree to continue providing emergency food to support the client during their crisis, at the discretion of the foodbank manager.
- A note of warning: it has become clear that some clients 'play the field' and obtain vouchers from various sources. If you become part of this loop, we will notify you and inform you as to which agency should be the single voucher issuer in any particular case.

## Guide to issuing a foodbank voucher

 <b>Food Voucher</b>		<b>NETWORK TEST Foodbank Office</b> Test site foodbank Test Towers West Street Testshire TE3 011 Tel: 01230 - 56789	<b>Distribution Centre Address</b> Please see overleaf for map of foodbank centres -	<b>Foodbank Centre Opening Times</b> Monday: 10.00am - 2.00pm Tuesday: 11.00am - 3.00pm Wednesday: 11.00am - 12.00pm Thursday: Closed Friday: 09.00am - 12.30pm Saturday: Closed Sunday: Closed	①	
<b>Please complete form in BLOCK CAPITALS</b>						
②	Distributor Name:		Authorised Signatory:		③	
	Distributor Organisation: Regional CARE team					
④	Telephone:		Date:		⑤	
	Client First Name:		Client Surname:			
⑥	Client Address: (Please include Post Code)		No. Adults: (In words e.g. 'one')		⑦	
			No. Children: (Under 16, In words)			
<b>Nature of crisis (please tick most appropriate box, one only)</b>						
⑧	Benefit Changes:	Benefit Delays:	Delayed Wages:	Debt:		
	Homeless:	Low Income:	Unemployed:	Domestic Violence:		
	Sickness:	Child Holiday Meals:	Other:	Refused STBA:		
<b>Ethnicity (please tick most appropriate box, one only)</b>						
⑨	White:	Mixed:	Asian:	Black:	Chinese:	Other:
	<b>Age Group (please tick most appropriate box, one only)</b>					
	16 - 24:	25 - 64:	Over 65:	<b>Voucher Number</b>		⑩
				<b>109-788</b>		
<small>This voucher has no monetary value, is not transferable, is only valid when completed by an authorised signatory, and must be exchanged for emergency food within 3 working days.                  registered charity 1234567</small>						

- ① Details of foodbank centre opening times and locations is provided so that clients know when and where to go to exchange their voucher
- ② The name of the authorised signatory (person issuing the voucher) should be written here
- ③ The same authorised signatory must also sign the voucher here
- ④ Best contact number for authorised signatory
- ⑤ This is the date that the voucher is issued - clients need to exchange their voucher at a foodbank centre within 3 working days of issue (if reasonably possible)
- ⑥ Client's full address, including the postcode
- ⑦ This is the number of adults and children in the household facing short term crisis. This information should be written in words, as opposed to numbers, which could easily be altered
- ⑧ Nature of crisis - only one box, the most appropriate, should be ticked. We need this for statistical information
- ⑨ Age and ethnicity of client being referred (optional)
- ⑩ Unique voucher number to prevent vouchers from being fraudulently copied and assist the foodbank in validating vouchers

## Register of Authorised Signatories

- The register of authorised signatories lists all the people in your organisation who are authorised to issue yellow vouchers or red emergency food boxes. This is an important part of the voucher authentication process, enabling us to validate vouchers when presented.
- NB: only colleagues who have attended our induction and/or have been briefed directly by Harlow foodbank are authorised to become signatories and only registered signatories should complete the voucher.
- In the event of personnel changes, please contact the foodbank office to arrange an induction for new signatories.

## Queries

- If you have any queries or wish to discuss any of the information in this handbook further, please contact Gary Knott 01279 724515 or by email: [garyknott@mrct.org.uk](mailto:garyknott@mrct.org.uk)

## FOODBANK CENTRE OPENING TIMES & LOCATIONS

Foodbank Centre	Day	Session Times	Location/Address
St Paul's Church Upper Room	Monday Tuesday Thursday Friday	12 noon - 3pm	St Paul's Church College Square Harlow Town Centre Harlow CM20 1LP
Salvation Army (Associate Partner)	Wednesday	12 noon - 3pm	Tendring Road Harlow CM18 6RN

*If you ever have time to pop in to one of our foodbank centre sessions to see first hand how we look after and support clients, please do feel free to drop by - we would love to see you!*