

## Referral partner guide

### Overview

The LBTH food pantry programme is operating a number of FOOD Stores across the borough, which you can refer into in cases of long-term food insecurity. People in need of support will be able to apply to be members of the FOOD Store, and in return for a small weekly fee will be able to access a significant quantity of repurposed food while also engaging with wraparound support.

### What are FOOD Stores?

FOOD Stores build on the food pantry model of delivering long term support to people who are food insecure. Unlike food banks, where people access limited free food to support them in a crisis, FOOD Stores work over a membership period (typically 6 months) and offer people £20-£30 of food per week in return for a £3.50p/w membership fee. As a condition of membership, members are also expected to engage with support provisions designed to improve their circumstances – including advice services in the THCAN network, health and wellbeing services and other means of improving the wellbeing of members.

The idea of the FOOD Store model is to meet the immediate need of people who are food insecure through weekly food, address the root cause issues that create food poverty through support services, and provide individual dignity by lowering the financial barriers to providing for themselves and their families.

The food provided is repurposed goods that would otherwise be destined for landfill, and as such may have a shorter shelf life than supermarket items. This includes fresh items and ready meals from the Felix Project and from local grocers, as well as long life goods. Some food may be past its best before date, which is an advisory measure, but FOOD Stores are advised not to give out spoiled food or food that is past its use by date.

### How does it work?

Each week a member will be able to go to their local FOOD Store. They will pay £3.50 and then shop from the items available (either browsing individually or with a volunteering helping them to select items) to a value of approximately £20-£30 dependent on stock.

When they join, FOOD Store members will be asked to fill out a questionnaire outlining their circumstances and what they need help with. This will be used to make referrals to support services covering debt, benefits, housing, health and other areas of need. Every three months FOOD Store staff or volunteers will check in to make sure members are getting the support they need and to ask if they need signposting to any alternative support.

### Who can access FOOD Stores?

FOOD Stores are designed to help people who are food insecure and will benefit from accessing additional support to improve their circumstances over a long period of time. **Unlike foodbanks they are not for immediate, short term crisis-support – instead they are to help support someone for a period of several months until they are able to be self-sufficient.**

Someone who is food insecure is unable to **regularly** access a **sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food**. In particular FOOD Stores are set up to support those who cannot access enough affordable, nutritious food because of their financial situation. A family or individual who is food insecure:

- May worry that the food they have in the house will run out before they get the money to buy more
- May rely on only a few kinds of low cost food to get by, or not be able to afford to eat nutritious, balanced meals (particularly when it comes to fresh fruits and vegetables)
- May reduce the size of their meals, skip meals, or eat less than they think they should because there is not enough money for food
- May not eat when they are hungry, or may lose weight, because there is not enough money for food
- May be unable to feed their children, or cut the size of their meals, because there is not enough money for food

### Where are FOOD Stores based?

FOOD stores have been set up in locations across the borough, and referrals will be made into people's nearest location based on postcode and capacity. Full addresses will be provided to members at the point of referral.

Locations:

<i>FOOD Store</i>	<i>Ward</i>	<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Burdett</i>	Mile End	E14 7AW
<i>Manorfield (school-based)</i>	Lansbury	E14 6QD
<i>Whitechapel</i>	Whitechapel	E1 1EY
<i>Bethnal Green</i>	Bethnal Green	E2 0NW
<i>Blackwall</i>	Poplar	E14 0GB
<i>Bow Cross</i>	Bromley North	E3 3EY
<i>Shadwell</i>	Shadwell	E1 0AF

### How do I refer in?

If you have a client or service user you believe will benefit from accessing the FOOD Store, please email [TheFoodStore@Towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:TheFoodStore@Towerhamlets.gov.uk) with the following details:

Name

Address

Postcode

Email Address

Phone Number

A representative will then email further details including their nearest FOOD Store address, opening times and any additional details they may need to access the service.

### Additional enquiries?

For any further information contact [vincent.wood@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:vincent.wood@towerhamlets.gov.uk)