

1. Background

1.1. This update is provided to agencies and partners of Southport Foodbank. It provides details of the work being undertaken by our organisations to a) keep people safe through the Covid-19 pandemic, b) continue to deliver emergency food to those in crisis, adapting to changing circumstances, and c) prepare and plan for long term recovery.

2. Accessing Foodbank

2.1. Southport Foodbank remains a key frontline organisation supporting Central and Local Government to protect people through the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2. The purpose and priority for the Foodbank is to provide emergency food for those in crisis. This means for those who haven't eaten and have no prospect of eating for the immediate future.

2.3. People do not self-refer to Foodbank – instead they are referred by a supporting agency who hold and issue vouchers which can be redeemed for 3-5 days' worth of emergency food.

2.4. We appreciate that accessing food is difficult in the current circumstances, but we are asking people not to attempt to access a Foodbank unless they find themselves in a crisis situation.

2.5. If a person has the means to purchase food, we would encourage them to follow Government guidance, which says people are permitted to shop for essential supplies; and friends, neighbours, or family members are able to help out those who are self-isolating or vulnerable.

2.6. If a person has received a Covid-19 letter from the Health Service because they are considered at particular risk, their individual food needs are being met by the Government. They should follow the instructions on their letter and someone will be in touch with them directly.

2.7. There is a network of over 150 Foodbank voucher holder agencies in Southport, and although many of them are working remotely, they are still able to refer to Foodbank. If a person is currently supported by an organisation but are struggling for food then they should speak to this agency first. It would be helpful for all agencies to establish who the principle supporting agency is in the case of crisis – ultimately a Foodbank parcel will only tide someone over for a short time, and a longer term solution will be needed.

2.8. There are some specific circumstances relating to coronavirus that may mean people will move from a position of 'managing' in to a position of 'crisis'. This includes an enforced period of isolation, or the lack of money caused by loss of earnings or change in benefits. In these circumstances it may be appropriate to be referred to a Foodbank. In this situation individuals should ask for help via their supportive agency, or in the absence of such an agency, we may be able to conduct a telephone assessment.

2.9. The response to the crisis by people across Southport has been fantastic. There are many forms of local support emerging as communities are helping to deliver essential supplies, meals, and food packages aside from the Foodbank. People may wish to connect with local community groups and churches for localised forms of support, as Foodbank is aiming to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

3. A note on food parcels

3.1. We are significantly changing the way we distribute food, as the coronavirus crisis escalates.

3.2. We have changed our Foodbank sessions and locations to allow us to better manage loss of volunteers and protect those who access the service, and volunteer. **We now operate on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays out of Lakeside Church and Tuesdays and Thursdays at Ainsdale Methodist Church. All session times are strictly 1pm-3pm. In other words it is NOT the schedule printed on the reverse of the vouchers.**

3.3. Our food parcels are being pre-packed at a central facility, following strict public health guidance by a team of dedicated volunteers.

3.4. We are integrating where possible toiletries, toilet roll and soap for hand washing in line with new guidance from Trussell Trust

3.5. We are offering a limited delivery service for those who are unable to access a session. We are working with third party agencies such as British Gas and the Salvation Army, but this should only be requested as a last resort. Our preference would still be for a client to attend a session themselves, or if they are self-isolating to send a friend or family member to collect the food parcel on their behalf.

4. A note to our voucher holders

4.1. Thank you for all of the work you do to signpost and refer to Southport Foodbank. We know that these are extraordinary times and you are changing the way you deliver your services to cope. Our aim is to support you to be able to issue Foodbank vouchers to people you support where they need emergency food.

4.2. Long term, we are hoping to move from a voucher based system to an e-referral system.

4.3. In the meantime, we are making the following provisions:

4.4. Where possible continue to use your current processes, issue vouchers in the usual way and give them to the client. Contact us to replenish these vouchers in the normal way.

4.5. In the situation where a voucher holder a) has access to vouchers but cannot physically give the voucher to the client, or b) does not have access to vouchers (e.g. because of working from home), the voucher holder will need to email us a referral for the person you are supporting. You will need to provide us with the basic information for the client, just as you would if you were filling in a voucher. This is primarily: Full name, address, postcode, main reason for crisis, year of birth, number of people in the household and ages for all. The voucher holder should also establish whether the person is able to collect or whether someone will be collecting on their behalf. This is an interim measure for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic and pending the rollout of an e-referral system.

4.6. Where possible, please do not give our mobile number to people needing food as we do not accept self-referral. We would prefer to keep our lines clear to help advise voucher holders. People are able to attend a session without a voucher where a team will complete an assessment of their

circumstances and issue a voucher if relevant. Please note that we may turn people away if they do not meet the criteria provided by the Trussell Trust.

Email: foodbank@compassionacts.uk

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