

JULY 2020



SOLVING TOGETHER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

PARTNERSHIP IMPACT REPORT



The Trussell Trust and British Gas have worked in partnership to respond to the unprecedented challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. This Impact Report describes how the partnership has worked and the difference it has made so far.



FOREWORD FROM THE TRUSSELL TRUST

Emma Revie, CEO

Our partnership with British Gas has played a vital role in sustaining and strengthening the Trussell Trust's support for people in crisis during the coronavirus pandemic. We have seen an unprecedented increase in need at food banks in our network over recent months and the hard work of British Gas volunteers has been crucial in enabling them to rapidly adapt to the changing situation.

We are deeply grateful for the way the British Gas team have listened to the challenges we've faced, worked with us to develop solutions and been generous with their time, skills and resources as we've served people in communities across Britain together.

The regular staff and volunteers at our food banks have really appreciated this extra support, and we know it has made a huge difference to people facing poverty across Britain by helping keep food banks stocked and food parcels distributed at such a challenging time.

On behalf of the Trussell Trust I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved.

At the Trussell Trust we are committed to working towards a future where food banks are no longer needed, and we are looking forward to continuing to work together with our friends at British Gas towards that important goal.



FOREWORD FROM BRITISH GAS

*Matthew Bateman,
Managing Director*

When the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic began to hit home, for many of our colleagues their first instinct was to go above and beyond and help in their local communities and it was this desire that inspired the beginning of our relationship with the Trussell Trust. The lockdown has been challenging for everyone and for many in our communities; it has been important for our British Gas Team to be able to support through our volunteering partnership with the Trussell Trust.

I am really proud of the generosity and commitment of our teams, who have used their resources and skills to adapt to support food banks and make a difference to those that need the help of the Trussell Trust. I also know there are many examples where helping others has made a difference for our colleagues as it has been a hugely rewarding experience - giving a sense of pride and providing mental health and wellbeing benefits. Most importantly, it's great to see the difference we have been able to make to people facing crisis at this time and has been a truly eye-opening experience to many of our volunteers as they are made more aware of the issues facing so many people who are dealing with challenges in their lives.

I'm really energised to see the new relationships built as a result of this partnership, both with the Trussell Trust team, and between local volunteers and food bank managers. This is a cause that is now close to me and the hearts of many of our colleagues, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Trussell Trust to support those in need in our communities.

ABOUT THE TRUSSELL TRUST

The Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food bank centres, and together they provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

In the UK, more than 14 million people are living in poverty – including 4.5 million children. During the pandemic, food banks in the Trussell Trust network saw an unprecedented increase in need, with the number of emergency food parcels supplied increasing by 89% in April 2020 compared with the same month the previous year.

HOW FOOD BANKS WORK

Food banks rely on the support of local communities to help end hunger. Non-perishable food is donated by the public at a range of places, such as schools, churches and businesses, as well as supermarket collection points. It is then sorted into emergency food parcels by volunteers, to be given to people in need.

Professionals such as health visitors, schools and social workers identify people in crisis and issue them with a food bank voucher. This means people can receive a food parcel of three days' food from their local food bank.

Research has shown that the average weekly income for people referred to a food bank is just £50 and 94% of people referred are facing destitution.¹

Food banks also provide additional support to help people break free from poverty, and the data they collect helps inform national campaigns for long-term change.

THE SITUATION

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the Trussell Trust and its food bank network faced a series of challenges that needed to be overcome in order to sustain support for people in crisis in a rapidly changing context. These included:

89%

increase in need for emergency food parcels reported by Trussell Trust food banks in April 2020 (compared to the same period in 2019).



- Maintaining **sufficient supplies of donated food** to food banks at a time when people were out shopping less, supermarkets were struggling to maintain stock and limiting bulk purchases, and an increased need for emergency food support was anticipated.
- The need to **get emergency food supplies to people in crisis** without compromising the health of those requiring support, or the volunteers and staff involved in providing it. Social distancing measures were going to necessitate a major shift in operating processes for food banks, which normally welcome visitors to the food bank in person, with a hot drink and a chat.
- A potential **shortage of volunteers**, with regular volunteers who were older, and those with underlying health conditions, or coronavirus symptoms, needing to shield or self-isolate and those with school-age children having to stop volunteering in order to provide childcare.

It was in this scenario – and with a view to solving some of these challenges together - that the partnership between British Gas and the Trussell Trust was born.

¹ www.stateofhunger.org

HERE TO SOLVE

The scale and coverage of British Gas's operations meant they were in a strong position to help food banks rise to the challenges they were confronted with.

Taking a solutions-oriented, collaborative approach, British Gas offered valuable infrastructure support as well as human resources, and were keen to deploy these in a way that would make a real difference to people in local communities.

Together with their willingness to give their time as volunteers, furloughed staff had valuable problem-solving skills, people skills, and experience of serving vulnerable households, all of which could be put to use in helping food banks continue to reach people in crisis with emergency food supplies at a challenging time.

Furthermore, British Gas vans could provide a means of transport for getting supplies to food banks across Britain and distributing them to local households safely and in a dignified way.



OUR SOLUTIONS

Working together, we identified a set of practical solutions to the challenges identified. British Gas volunteers and resources were deployed both to boost volunteer numbers and help meet the specific logistical challenges posed by the pandemic. This included the following key areas of activity:

- transporting food supplies to food bank warehouses, including the unprecedented nationwide distribution of a major bulk food donation as well as assisting with the delivery of local donations to food banks
- delivering emergency food parcels from food banks direct to local households in crisis
- helping sort and parcel up donated food in food bank warehouses, ready for distribution

These were supplemented by a range of other volunteering activities that British Gas volunteers could take part in with colleagues, as individuals, or with their families. These included opportunities to organise food collections and fundraising activities, as well as creative challenges and ways to learn more about poverty and food banks, and share this with others.

“Everyone had the same common goal, so things just got done as they were willing to support and help. We could solve things really quickly because the common goal was - we just need to get the food to the food bank. It's probably one of the best things I've done at work. To be able to do this sort of project within your role at work and to provide such a benefit to other people. There is a huge feeling of satisfaction to know you have contributed to something that is such a worthy cause.”

Richard, British Gas volunteer

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

391 FOOD BANKS

across Britain supported by British Gas volunteers.

The equivalent of 4 MILLION MEALS

for families and individuals in crisis provided through bulk deliveries of £7.5 million worth of essential supplies.

58,656 HOURS

contributed by British Gas volunteers to making a difference to people experiencing acute poverty in communities across Britain.

More than 1,700 VOLUNTEERS

from British Gas were involved in supporting Trussell Trust and its food bank network in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

98%

of British Gas volunteers surveyed said their volunteering made them proud to work for British Gas.²

95%

of British Gas volunteers surveyed said they feel they've contributed something to their community through their volunteering.³

"We are extremely grateful to British Gas who are providing an outstanding service delivering food parcels to vulnerable and shielding residents in Stockport as well as delivering stocks to our food bank centres."

Stockport Foodbank

² Based on responses from 318 British Gas volunteers.

³ Based on responses from 363 British Gas volunteers.

BULK DELIVERIES: KEEPING FOOD BANKS STOCKED

Food banks normally rely on locally donated food, meaning that local people are supporting one another through their giving. In these exceptional circumstances, however, a nationwide approach was taken to boost food bank stocks and make sure that they could continue to serve households that needed their help.

The unprecedented nature of this approach, together with the crisis response context, meant that logistical support was crucial. British Gas volunteers and vans played a vital role in making this possible by facilitating the nationwide distribution of a bulk donation of food provided by Tesco.

Working collaboratively with other partners, including Palletforce, XPO and The Entertainer, British Gas volunteers coordinated the rapid set-up of a distribution network serving England, Wales and Scotland. This involved working creatively to repurpose existing resources and processes, adapting to unexpected challenges and leveraging support from other businesses too. Each food bank was allocated a British Gas 'local lead' volunteer and together the team packed and transported food and other essentials from 22 regional storage locations to 391 local food banks over a period of thirteen weeks.

At the food bank, British Gas volunteers worked with food bank volunteers and staff to unload and store the food safely. Food banks typically have limited storage space so being able to deliver the food supplies on a weekly or fortnightly basis, and to respond in an agile way to food banks' needs as they changed in real time was crucial to the success of this operation.



391
food banks
across England,
Scotland
and Wales
supported with
bulk deliveries
by British Gas
volunteers.

36,000
hours of support
with bulk deliveries
provided.

2,170
tonnes of
food delivered,
enough for over
190,000 three-day
emergency food
parcels.⁴

1,023
British Gas
volunteers
involved in
transporting
urgently needed
supplies to food
banks, sustaining
provision for
people in crisis.

"Last week was great and we were thrilled with the amount of food and with our British Gas driver. He was a real ambassador for British Gas. The delivery set up is superb. The guys always ring to give us an idea of when they are coming. Last week's drivers were delightful. The actual food items are great too. So, this is really helping to keep our stocks up."

Cromer and District Foodbank

⁴ Based on a two-person three-day emergency food parcel using the standard pick list.

GETTING FOOD TO PEOPLE IN CRISIS

Food banks partner with a wide range of care professionals such as doctors, teachers, health visitors and social workers to identify people in crisis and give them a food bank voucher to access emergency food.

Usually, they would then visit the food bank with a voucher, where they would receive a warm welcome from staff and volunteers, and have the opportunity for a chat and signposting to further support while they wait for their food to be prepared.

“Can I just say at the end of week 2 that we wouldn’t have managed this changeover to deliveries without you [British Gas], you have all been amazing! Your team are so helpful and lovely to work with, nothing is too much trouble. Thank you so much!”

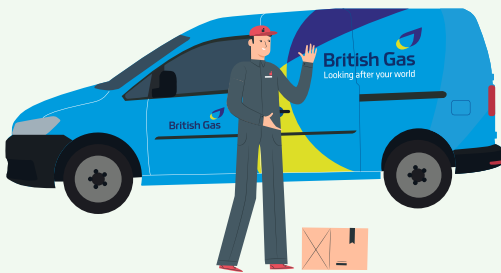
Bath Foodbank

However, in order to keep people safe and minimise the spread of coronavirus during the pandemic, most food banks switched to home deliveries.

British Gas’s support played a huge part in making this possible across a large and diverse network of food banks.

British Gas volunteers not only had local knowledge and training and experience in lone working and in engaging with vulnerable households, but they were also able to deploy vehicles and route planning software normally required for their day to day work, helping make the rapid transition to home deliveries work smoothly.

Most food banks had never done home deliveries until the start of the pandemic, so the support and experience of the British Gas team was greatly appreciated and made a significant impact on food banks’ ability to sustain their services without putting staff, volunteers, or people needing their support at unnecessary additional risk.



784
British Gas
volunteers
provided 21,000
hours of support
with home
deliveries to food
banks across
Britain.

118
food banks
supported with
home deliveries
by British Gas
volunteers.

44,486
food parcels
delivered to local
homes by British
Gas volunteers.

“Having the drivers has been amazing! They’re so happy to get stuck in and help with anything, are really friendly and good-natured, and it’s been especially helpful to have them help with home deliveries. Particularly for drops that were a bit further away, or to especially vulnerable people, as we know they have experience of this.”

Waterloo Foodbank

GIVING GENEROUSLY

British Gas volunteers also got involved in supporting the Trussell Trust and local food banks through fundraising and food donation activities. This enabled them to get families and neighbours involved in making a difference in their own communities – something that will continue to be really important once the initial crisis response to coronavirus has subsided.

The food donation challenges taken up included:

- **UHT amnesty:** Panic buying of long-life milk at the start of the pandemic meant that many food banks found it very difficult to source this important component of their emergency food parcels. The UHT amnesty involved volunteers inviting their friends, neighbours and family to donate the supplies they no longer needed, making them available for food banks to give out.
- **Home donation stations:** Some of the usual food donation points were inaccessible during the pandemic, so - with social distancing measures in place - setting up a home donation station was a great way of enabling neighbours and friends to support their local food bank at this time.
- **Toiletries and baby items:** In addition to food, food banks also supply other essentials that households may be unable to afford when they are in crisis, such as nappies, baby wipes and toiletries. Collecting these items helped ensure that food banks could provide a more holistic package of support for people, even during this time of increased need.
- **5 foods challenge:** For this activity, participants had to identify the top 5 items that their local food bank needed by visiting their website, donating the items and also sharing this need on their social media pages.

The British Gas team also took on fundraising challenges, raising money for the Trussell Trust or their local food bank both amongst colleagues and in the community.



More than
18,200
items donated to support
 people in crisis as a result of
 British Gas volunteers' efforts.

"I organised a collection from my team on the Isle of Wight, raising £100 which we then spent purchasing boxes of wipes, multiple bulk packs of different sized nappies as well as 50+ food snack items for little ones. As well as the financial collection two additional carrier bags were contributed from team members including wipes, nappies and food."

Paul, British Gas volunteer

LEARNING ABOUT POVERTY AND SHARING THE MESSAGE

The Trussell Trust's vision is for a UK without the need for food banks. Everyone should have the dignity of being able to afford to buy food.

Learning about the extent of poverty in the UK, and understanding more about what causes it, is an important building block in bringing about long-term change. The more we are aware of the problem ourselves, the more we can help other people understand its importance, and build support for long-term solutions to poverty and hunger.

“It was brilliant really because you could just see the difference it made. The first time I went there, you could see that everyone was really pleased and really grateful. And it just opens up your eyes really to people who do need that support.”

Lewis, British Gas volunteer

Through this partnership, the British Gas team were able to learn about food banks and poverty, and to share these messages with others both in person and via social media. British Gas volunteers used their own social media accounts to share their experiences, joining in with the Trussell Trust's #ThisCanChange campaign. Meanwhile, British Gas's social media posts about the partnership reached an audience of 15.6 million people, gaining 31.5k likes or reactions across Facebook and Twitter. A British Gas TV advert featuring their work with Trussell Trust food banks generated a positive response, and across TV and social media British Gas reached over 24 million people.

Trussell Trust CEO Emma Revie contributed to two 'Seeing is Believing' events, together with representatives of local food banks and British Gas volunteers who had been involved in the partnership. These helped raise awareness and understanding of food banks amongst over 475 members of the British Gas team who took part, as well as highlighting the benefits of volunteering for wellbeing, motivation and mental health.



A photography competition, 'Life through your lens', gave participants the opportunity to capture images that conveyed what fairness and justice looked like to them. There was also a chance for families to try cooking some recipes together, reflecting on some challenging questions about people's experience of poverty and food banks in the process.

*One of the winning photos,
by Brian Mitchell*

“Every morning I drive over to the depot in Eastleigh to pick up the Tesco food deliveries, load all the vans and then drive to a food bank to deliver the food donation. I have really enjoyed the experience and it has opened my eyes to people's struggles. I will definitely be looking into volunteering longer term.”

Dan, British Gas volunteer

COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT

As well as making a difference to people in crisis in local communities, British Gas volunteers found that they also benefited from getting involved in the partnership. These included gaining a sense of having contributed something to their communities, as well as having pride in working for British Gas because of the volunteering they had done.

“Going into lockdown, I don’t know how I would have got through it myself without doing something like this. But that’s not just myself, that’s 1,500 people who volunteered. I think we would have seen a far greater problem brining people back into work if we hadn’t done this sort of initiative. People are used to being part of a team.”

Richard, British Gas volunteer

“Volunteering with the Trussell Trust really helped me during lockdown. My wife and kids were stuck in India for five months due to the lockdown. It was very difficult to come back to an empty house, and volunteering at a food bank gave me a sense of satisfaction knowing that I was helping my community.”

Binoy, British Gas volunteer

“I have really enjoyed my time volunteering. I was set up every Tuesday and Thursday and it felt really good to give something back to the community. I met a lot of lovely people working at the food bank in Brixton that all work very hard getting these food boxes made up.”

Michael, British Gas volunteer



98%

of British Gas volunteers

surveyed said that volunteering has made them proud to work for British Gas.⁵

95%

of British Gas volunteers

surveyed said they feel they’ve contributed something to their community through their volunteering.⁶

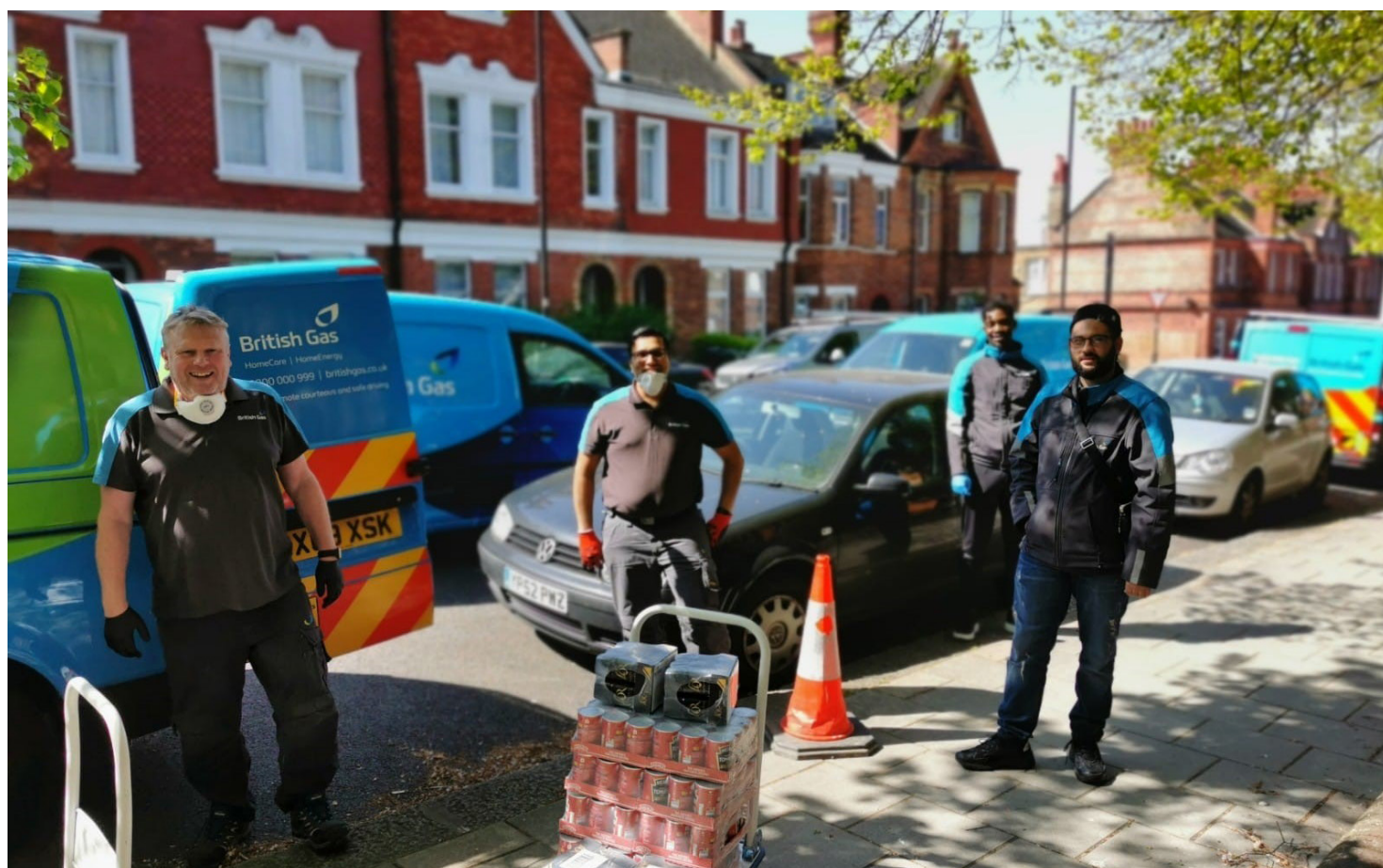
⁵ Based on responses from 318 British Gas volunteers.

⁶ Based on responses from 363 British Gas volunteers.

NEXT STEPS

An astonishing amount has been achieved through this partnership in a very short amount of time. A collaborative, problem-solving approach – together with the resourcefulness, professionalism and generosity of British Gas volunteers – has made a huge difference to food banks and the people they support at a time of significant challenge.

A mark of the partnership's success are the foundations it has laid for ongoing collaboration. As attention shifts from crisis response to recovery, British Gas and the Trussell Trust will continue their partnership in new ways including through an innovative Community Champions programme; providing direct support to food banks; fostering stronger links between Trussell Trust, Carers UK and British Gas Energy Trust; and joining our voices to amplify the message that our combined hope is for a UK without the need for food banks.





www.trusselltrust.org