

Changes to obtaining a food parcel



Dear Client or Support Worker,

Here at Sparkhill Foodbank and our satellites at Tyseley, Balsall Heath, St Johns, Hall Green and Stechford, we are seeing unprecedented demand for our services that unfortunately are becoming untenable to continue as they are. While some in positions of authority recognise the need and advocate for us, the same factors that have impacted you as our clients and referral agencies are impacting ourselves, in our running costs and overheads; we rely solely on donations and receive no government or council funding whatsoever.

We are now at a point where we have to look at what we are doing, and how we best manage the resources, staff and volunteers that we have. The first thing to note is that we want to maintain as much support for you all as we can; it is imperative that you are our driving force in making decisions, hard as they may be. However, changes need to be made and procedures have to be readjusted to ensure that we can continue to support everyone that we can.

Before the pandemic, everyone who attended the Foodbank needed a referral voucher to attend the Foodbank; given that there is a return to pre-pandemic practices across wider society, we are also returning to what was in place previously.

From 1st April 2022, everyone who attends a collection session must have an e-voucher issued by a referral agency; we will no longer be able to accept self-referrals.

We realise that this may place more difficulty on some of you, but there is also far more availability to obtain vouchers than ever before. We have worked incredibly hard to promote the use of e-vouchers among our referral agencies, which include schools, children's centres, housing providers, council departments, support agencies, NHS providers and more. Because of this, we believe that the vast majority of our eligible clients are able to obtain a voucher prior to attending the foodbank.

As an example, if you have a child who attends a local school, the Pastoral or Family Support teams there are able to issue vouchers; if you are in supported accommodation, your support worker should be able to issue a voucher; if you are under the care of the NHS community practices such as mental health or health visiting, they can also issue vouchers. There is an ever-increasing amount of referral agencies, not only with us (250+) but also with the other Trussell Trust Foodbanks across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

We know that attending the Foodbank is not something that anyone does through choice, but we are determined to try our best to ensure that it is as welcoming and helpful as possible. Sparkhill Foodbank is run by Narthex Sparkhill, a charity

whose aim is to end destitution in the local area; some of the other services it provides are Money Advice, Information and Signposting to services and benefits, as well as a Resource Centre. You can connect with them on [0121 753 1959](tel:01217531959), or visit narthex.org.uk for more information.

It isn't right or fair that in what is supposedly one of the wealthiest countries in the world, foodbanks even exist; worse still, that they seem to be looked upon as a social necessity, despite the fact that they are all run as a charity not a civic agency. As if it wasn't severe enough, we are all seeing the approaching devastation of increased fuel costs, rising food prices and more draconian measures to the welfare system.

We will continue to advocate for an end to the need for Foodbanks in this country; we will continue to work with Trussell Trust and others, to ensure that those in power and authority can hear from those most affected by austerity and rising costs; and we will continue to ensure that we help support as many people and families as we can.

With Warm Regards and on Behalf of the Sparkhill Foodbank Team,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Wiseman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Wiseman

Support and Advice Centre Manager