



Hunger: The Lasting Covid Legacy

April 18, 2020

Many of you have asked to hear reports from out in the community where City Harvest drivers are considered essential workers. Here are some notes from the frontlines.

View From the Driver's Seat

"While working on the frontline for City Harvest during this COVID 19 crisis I have learned how together the world as a whole can be. I'm delivering to hotels that have opened up to support homeless people. These people only get a small meal provided for them and our food tops up their meal, along with fresh fruit for them to snack on when they are feeling peckish.

***When I pulled up last week some of the people who are living there were outside and gave me a round of applause as I pulled up.** This gave me such a warm feeling inside knowing that they are very appreciative of us turning up and ended up leaving there with tears in my eyes.*

Driving around London and seeing all the queues for all the various different shops is something out of the ordinary-- who would have thought that this situation could have affected the whole world in such a short amount of time.

*I guess what I'm trying to say is that **I'm proud of what we are achieving at City Harvest.** Things have changed drastically in such a short amount of time and every one of us is just carrying on with no doubt in our minds - **after all it's what we do best --get good food out to people who need it most"** Moe Gentle, Driver, City Harvest*

Millions Now Need Food Aid

It's no surprise, given the expected ramifications of the Covid-19 crisis, to see recent news about the growing level of need since lockdown went into effect. According to Food Foundation research this week, over 1 million people in the UK have lost all their income, and **1.5 million people have gone a whole day without food since lockdown.**

The Issue of Hunger Preceded the Crisis

Even before this crisis which resulted in millions losing income, the need was great, and City Harvest were on a high growth trajectory in response.

In the year ending March 31, 2020 we delivered 4.2 million meals to London's most vulnerable. To put this in perspective **we delivered 5 million meals in total during the previous 5 years!** Despite 54% compounded annual growth, we currently deliver **only 3.4% of the need in London**. 190 charities were on the City Harvest waitlist before the COVID-19 crisis and we had identified more than 700 other charities that could benefit from our food donations. **Our goal was to deliver 16 million meals annually by 2030 and deliver to more than 1,000 charities.**

But now we recognise we need to accelerate our growth plans to ensure London is a city where no one goes hungry.

IN LONDON EVEN BEFORE THE CRISIS:

- 9.2 million meals are missed monthly by individuals experiencing food insecurity
- 13.3 million meals are wasted by businesses
- 190 charities were on our waitlist to receive food
- 37% of children live in poverty

Bain & Co research

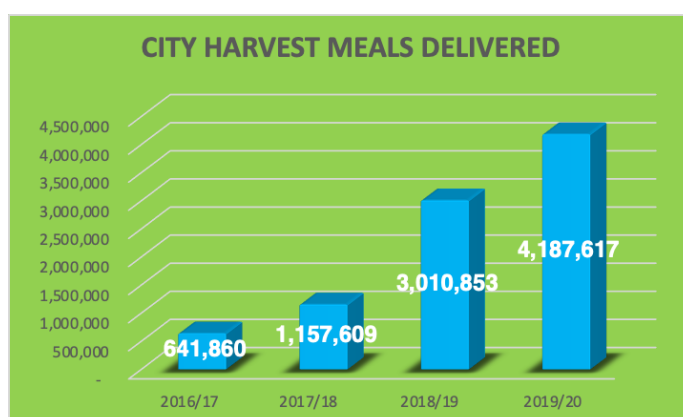
IN THE WEEKS SINCE THE CRISIS STARTED:

- 14 million people in the UK have lost income as a result of Covid-19. 1.1 million have lost *all* their income
- The number of adults who are food insecure is estimated to have quadrupled under the COVID-19 lockdown.
- 1.5 million people have gone a whole day without food since lockdown
- 500,000 children eligible for free school meals are now out of school and not receiving them.

Food Foundation research April 2020

City Harvest Volumes Doubled to meet the Spike in Need

City Harvest has responded to this rapid increase in demand, **delivering 651,346 meals since lockdown began almost one month ago**, a 100% increase over the same period a year earlier. This spike is happening even as more than 40 of our community partners have been closed because of the virus. Many of our food recipients which have stayed open have seen a 300% spike in demand and are struggling to meet the need. Half of the almost 300 different organisations we serve each week support children and families at risk of hunger, where we have reports that the surge is greatest.



A Magnified Look at What's Happening

While statistics about shocking levels of food poverty are featured in the news, what we've seen on the ground will give you a magnified look at what is truly happening to individual people in London since the crisis grew more severe.

Rapid Community Adaptation and Response

Within days of social distancing rules going into effect many of our food charity partners who served meals to groups of vulnerable people in community centres, afterschool programs, youth centres, soup kitchens and other venues were forced to close down.

Since then, **the City Harvest team has been awed by the incredible dedication of the managers of our charity partners.** They are resourceful people, attuned to their communities, used to feeding thousands of people on budgets that have been slashed, whilst knowing the needs of each individual that crosses through their doors.

We were not surprised when days later many began to spring up again, often in different venues, with food aid services adapted to the statutory rules preventing the spread of the virus. With deep knowledge these local heroes adapted to suit the hyperlocal needs of the communities they were serving.



We estimate that 30% of our partners are now preparing food parcels (some just ambient food items, others individual cooked meals) to hand out from the front doors or outside of the halls from which they are now operating. Here, from behind tables lined with food to take away, staff and volunteers can have brief conversations with those collecting food, whilst respecting social distancing rules. For many of the people arriving to collect food, this is the most interaction they will have with another human for days at a stretch. Community meals which offered them their only relief from endless social isolation are sorely missed. Often these individuals also collect for a neighbour who is unable to leave their home.

An estimated 70% of our partners adapted to prepare meals and parcels and deliver to the doors of the people

they previously served on site. These groups harnessed the energy of their regular volunteers plus a multitude of people throughout London eager to help their less fortunate neighbours by delivering meals. Chefs from local businesses have helped prepare meals and local police have been assisting and volunteering to deliver food. As an example, City Harvest supports a large youth centre in South London which normally serves hundreds of young people with a range of engaging activities on site and is now preparing hundreds of meals and distributing to the homes of vulnerable young people and their families.



*"Thank you for very kindly delivering to us. I cannot tell you how happy it has made us - I shall try. Although we are in the midst of this awful crises, your deliveries have been like Christmas. It has meant that we are struggling less to put together nutritious meals for our most vulnerable. The bulk of our meals go to vulnerable children who will otherwise not be fed. I deal directly with schools who have children with very vulnerable needs for whatever reason life has thrown at them. We currently feed 180 children daily, Monday to Friday. We would eventually like to put together weekend care packages for them. We also feed homeless - 100 meals per week, and some vulnerable adults. **Manager, foodbank in Kensington**"*

Models Shifting from Nourishment to Lifesaving

What all these City Harvest food recipient partners have in common is a deep understanding of their local areas, the specific needs of people usually within a 1-mile radius. Armed with this wealth of knowledge and experience, many of these community organisations which have been receiving food from City Harvest for several years are saving lives. At City Harvest our work is to keep these formidable, but often unheralded, charity leaders supported so they can keep their communities together, saving lives with our food and their hyperlocal knowledge.

Every single project to which City Harvest delivers food are finding overlooked people. **These people are the invisible who are suddenly becoming visible.**

They are not on their council's radar, not fitting age or medical parameters but nevertheless are starving in isolation. If they are not known by doctors or social workers or teachers, they might remain invisible but for these heroic volunteers. Often the people that work at the community centres to which we deliver food know many local individuals from regular drop in centres, but upon visiting homes with parcels of food are reporting horror stories of poverty and neglect.



New Crisis/Old Fashioned Communication

At a very basic level, in this digital age, the solution to rescuing people in this crisis relies old fashioned word of mouth. It involves local organisations asking the people in the community about who needs help. In many instances when deliveries are made, vulnerable individuals refer volunteers to a neighbour who isn't already known to need food but is actually in crisis.

In Hammersmith and Fulham, a very resourceful leader of a local community organisation with a very limited budget was able to begin producing and distributing 3,000 meals each week with City Harvest ingredients. Volunteers help her get the meals to people's homes where vulnerable people are known to reside. In one instance her volunteer delivered to a man who had not eaten in almost 2 weeks. His wife became ill and it was only when the couple became known by the NHS that they were registered as in need.

At another community centre in Brent, where meals are made with City Harvest ingredients and distributed to homes of vulnerable people, a stop was made at the home of an individual with disabilities who had not eaten for days. The volunteer learned that the person's freezer was frozen shut, and proceeded to break into the freezer, defrost it and prepare it to receive a supply of meals. One volunteer found a blind woman with no food because she couldn't access the council's referral number to request food.

In certain communities various organisations to which we deliver food have specialised in their efforts to meet the needs of vulnerable people. In one area we deliver to, there is a centre that is getting food to the elderly, a youth centre getting deliveries to at-risk young people and their families, a foodbank at a school to help young children and their families and one which supports those with cognitive impairment and is making sure food gets delivered to homes. Volunteers ask at each delivery if there might be other vulnerable people who might be going hungry.

Coronavirus has revealed how unprepared London is for an emergency

As a founder of the London Food Alliance, City Harvest are building relationships in each borough to determine their emergency food needs during the crisis.

Councils and social services are gearing up, many asking City Harvest for support for new boroughs food hubs from which individuals and other charities can collect food. However, no one organisation has the ability to deal with the scale of need that this crisis presents. Councils often

don't have the infrastructure such as refrigerated units to accept the perishable food in which we specialise. Councils are overwhelmed with calls and requests by those who are even able to find the right person to contact. Their staff has been depleted in recent years due to budget cuts. Often times it requires web access to get a referral to food aid and many vulnerable people are not connected. If they even have access to a device, they rely on cafes and libraries, which are now closed, for Wifi. As it is often so onerous to get a referral for emergency food provisions, and many destitute people have no public recourse, City Harvest is making an effort to deliver food to partners open to anyone who asks us for support. This is a different model than council supported foodbanks which require a referral from the council.

We know that efforts are being made to better organise food aid in London and we hope that the legacy of this crisis will be to have in place new mechanisms for monitoring needs, agreeing accountabilities, understanding the many participants in addressing food crises, clear communications and alignments between the government, businesses and the voluntary sector to enable future crises to be tackled effectively.

Efforts to Feed NHS Workers

Two weeks into the crisis, it became evident that the NHS workers were unable get nourishing food on site at hospitals because caterers were closed. With restaurants also closed and supermarkets emptied by panic buying, NHS workers depleted from their shifts were going hungry.



Since then a large number of new groups have started using commercial kitchens to prepare meals on an industrial scale and deliver them to hospitals. City Harvest immediately directed food to several of these efforts and continues to do so as these supplies are needed. We've heard that the goodwill of the community has resulted in many hospitals being deluged with food, in some cases

unable to cope with the quantities they are receiving.

City Harvest Response in Numbers

Increase in City Harvest emergency food assistance to partners, year over year meal growth: **100%**

Number of charities on City Harvest waitlist before Covid Crisis: **190**

Number of charities that have been added on a Covid Crisis Waitlist: **76**

Number of Covid Crisis charities that we have already added to routes in last 3 weeks: **45**

City Harvest: Adapting to the Crisis

City Harvest has rapidly adapted our provisions to our partners new needs. As designated essential workers amidst this global pandemic, we require even greater resourcefulness, resilience and the rethinking of how those in need can be served. Our drivers, many of whom have been with us since the beginning, have deep community knowledge, getting to know the needs of the groups they visit each week, and they try to deliver the ingredients they most likely will need for their meals. In this current crisis, we've adapted the types of food we deliver to their revamped food delivery programs.

Organisations ranging from city government, local government, large, and small charities and individuals trying to feed their communities are requesting emergency help from city harvest. We are in the middle of an unprecedented scaling up effort. We're rapidly adapting to changes in our food sources, operational footprint, recipient base and funding sources. We're making sure our

management team is strong and operations team has the support it needs to deal with the stress of performing work amidst a global health crisis.

Since the COVID 19 City Harvest has had to make major changes to its operations at its warehouse to meet this rising demand, navigating the challenges of distributing food safely amid a deadly pandemic. We have added storage capacity with a temporary unit in Acton. We have been operating 7 days a week, for longer hours each day, since the crisis began, practicing social distancing, whilst getting food out into the communities and into the hands and stomachs of people in desperate need. In the first few days of the crisis our team worked round the clock to receive food donations from shuttering businesses and locate additional storage space.

With 50% of the City Harvest team self-isolating, we quickly found new drivers to hire on a temporary basis.



We've had to quickly adapt and are reaping the benefits of many furloughed individuals from the restaurant and hospitality industries who have volunteered to be part of our key worker team. Working in the depot we have head waiters, maître d's, food company founders, and mixed in some parents who need a break from their children at home! These volunteers are leading to new food company relationships. There is tremendous enthusiasm for our work and our volunteer shifts are oversubscribed. Volunteers have to work extra hard as we have taken the decision to decrease shifts to max of 6 volunteers at one time.

In terms of new food sources to meet the spiralling need, the visibility we received in the media for remaining open and serving London during this period has also resulted in many new food partners joining our network. More than 220 food donors gave us food since the lockdown started, including many of our existing partners as well as new ones.

Scaling Up for growth

- We are operating out of 2 depots, having doubled in size during crisis.
- Our original depot is now only for fruit/veg and chilled and this has given us the opportunity to completely redo working lines to maximise productivity.
- We have rented an additional chiller for large amounts of perishable food donated
- A temporary depot has been generously donated by Segro which gives us more space, the ability to accept large deliveries of pallets of food and the facilities to be able to distribute the food to existing projects and the new ones.
- With 2 depots in use, more warehouse shift leaders need to be hired
- We've needed additional team members to deal with the vast levels of complex information regarding which charity partners are open, which ones have shuttered but re-opened in new venues and which new projects have been launched solely as a response to the Covid Crisis.
- Daily logistics, which have always been complex, are moreso. Our team basically has shifted from what was a set schedule and predictable routes to what is now completely unpredictable.
- Many of our drivers had underlying health conditions so replacement drivers had to be brought in and trained. There is a significant amount of information to convey on top of the app that guides them on deliveries.
- More food is needed, and a food sourcing coordinator needs to be hired.

Our Work Is Just Beginning

At City Harvest, our work is only just beginning. We know even after the worst of COVID-19 has passed, hunger will be an enormous challenge in London. The economic fallout from this crisis will require the ongoing support of our partners to ensure our services continue to be available to our most vulnerable communities. Without any hyperbole, we now believe our work has changed from nourishing vulnerable people to actually saving lives. This is a daunting task, but we are rapidly scaling up and City Harvest will rise to this challenge.

Thank you to all our friends and supporters who have enabled us to carry on with our important work.

Laura Winningham
CEO, City Harvest