

EFB Lockdown update 8 May 2020

There was I peacefully doing admin with the distribution session in full swing in the capable hands of the brilliant volunteer team, answering the interview questions, when suddenly we have police and ambulances all over Lancing street, so I went off for that, but back now, answering interview questions.

1. What is your organisation called and what does it do?

Euston Foodbank

We redistribute donated food to people on low incomes in our community.

Tuesday 12-4, Thursday 5:30-7, Saturday 11-12:30 and Sunday 2-3:30 at
Lancing St NW1 1NA

2. What are the biggest challenges your organisation faces – now and in the coming years?

Coronavirus pressures:

People are referred by frontline professionals, and many support agencies are no longer operating and able to refer.

The foodbank in the neighbouring borough, Islington, has felt they must close for the lockdown.

Many homeless people have been temporarily housed in nearby hotels, without provision for food.

Large numbers of people have suddenly lost their jobs.

We find we are supporting a rolling number of nearly 300 households, a trebling of demand compared to the previous month. Consequently we are distributing nearly three tons of food a week, and need urgently to ramp up our supply chains.

The vicar of St Pancras Parish church has set up assessing and referring for every session, and our amazing teams of volunteers have delivered all our usual four sessions a week.

Camden Council and the Trussell Trust have stepped up to support Euston Foodbank, as you would expect. And so have friends like Regent's Place and the local shops and supermarkets. Many individuals have donated via our website <https://euston.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/>

3. What is your organisation's relationship with Regent's Place?

Regent's Place has supported us in the past with a grant that enabled us to buy new chairs, train our volunteers in first aid and prepare for the impact of universal credit increasing food poverty with the long five week wait for benefits to start.

Really importantly though, every month since we can remember, Regent's Place has made a big groceries collection at the local Sainsbury's on which we can rely.

4. What impacts, if any, has your organisation's relationship with Regent's Place had – in recent years and during the current crisis?

Excellent networking with other local charities, and helpful contact with our big business neighbours.

5. Please can you describe something that you've learnt or that has surprised you during the COVID-19 crisis, if anything?

The generosity of people and their desire to help. Shops and hotels were having to close, but they thought to donate their food to Euston Foodbank.

And the wonderful resilience of our volunteers. I had to quickly train two new teams from the waiting list, as many of the existing volunteers had to draw back for health and family reasons, and our staff were temporarily out of action.

But everyone stepped up and we rapidly devised new procedures to continue our distribution sessions while keeping everyone safe with social distancing.

6. Thinking beyond financial donations, how can Regent's Place and the businesses based here best support you – now and longer term?

Our biggest worry is the oncoming winter. Economies are ocean liners and cannot be turned quickly. There will be desperate penniless jobless folk for many many months to come. Now we can have people queue in the street but in the chilling rains of winter we need to think through and plan ahead for better solutions.

7. What message do you most want businesses at Regent's Place to remember from your blog?

We are all part of our community, and we need to stick together to see an emergency like this through. The homeless, the chaotic, the oppressed and the unentitled: they are all us and need support now.

8. What are your hopes for the future?

That foodbanks are no longer necessary, we are a well-off nation and I would like to see everyone with enough income to buy their own food and necessities, and of course that would get our economy ticking over. But I hope we wouldn't go back to our old habits: we have a planet to save for future generations and roadmaps like the donut economy where London could lead the world again.

9. Is there anything else, not covered above, that you particularly want to highlight?

Take the opportunity to thank everyone at Regent's Place.

10. Top Tips to keep motivated and have fun at home?

We are lucky to be running a key public service: the foodbank; that keeps us so motivated and busy there is no time for boredom. No one in our community should go hungry on our watch. But we don't have to be grim! Keep exercising on the spot. Learn a new language