



REFERRAL AGENCY HANDBOOK



Our vision is to inspire and grow communities of HOPE in Nottingham, working with The Trussell Trust to stop UK hunger and poverty.

www.hopenottingham.org.uk

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WELCOME



Thank you for registering with Hope Nottingham. We are extremely pleased to welcome you to our community of referral agencies and look forward to working with you. Without the help provided by agencies like the one you represent, Hope Nottingham (also known as East and West Nottingham foodbank) would be unable to help people in our local community.

Through our vision of '*inspiring and growing communities of hope*' we aim to show hospitality to everyone who comes to us for support, therefore please be aware that we refer to everyone using our services as 'guests' rather than service users or clients.

A B O U T H O P E N O T T I N G H A M



Our Christian charity began as a small drop-in café with a dozen volunteers in 2010 and has now grown to encompass 14 foodbanks supporting communities across the Nottingham area, with two community hubs in Beeston and Carlton. Our small team of staff and community of around 350 volunteers seek to offer holistic and life-changing support for hundreds of people every year.

Hope Nottingham holds the East and West Nottingham Trussell Trust Franchise and partners with various churches and organisations including Citizens Advice. You can find out all about our Vision, Mission & Values, our team and our activities on our website at www.hope-nottingham.org.uk

Please note we also operate a seeded Trussell Trust website which can be accessed via our home page by clicking on the foodbank button on top right or by going directly to <https://eastwestnottingham.foodbank.org.uk> This website provides all the information you and our guests will need about our foodbank locations, opening times and the general process.

Within Nottingham, the other Trussell Trust foodbanks are :

- Arnold: <https://arnold.foodbank.org.uk>
- Bestwood and Bulwell: <https://bestwoodbulwell.foodbank.org.uk>
- Clifton: <https://cliftonng11.foodbank.org.uk>

We work in partnership with these and all Trussell Trust foodbanks via the E-Referral system and they also have Trussell Trust seeded websites like ours, but please be aware they are not part of Hope Nottingham and may have their own policies and ways of working. You should visit their websites or contact them directly if you wish to discuss any referral to them or to check their location or opening hours.

If you are already registered with us or any of these other Trussell Trust foodbanks you will not need to re-register to refer people to them. Please also note if a guest turns up at a different Trussell Trust foodbank, each foodbank will accept a voucher issued from or for another foodbank in the Trussell Trust network.

OUR REFERRAL PROCESS

Why we operate a referral system

We believe strongly in The Trussell Trust referral system for important reasons:

- As a registered charity, we rely heavily on food and funds donated by the public and other organisations, including supermarket collection points, churches, corporate groups, schools, charities, local councils and grant makers. This requires us to be good stewards of our resources.
- Our referral and data system means that we can share information across other Trussell Trust foodbanks. Working with The Trussell Trust also enables us to feed into national data, helping to provide a true picture of food poverty in the UK and we support The Trussell Trust in their campaign to end the need for foodbanks.
- Most importantly, we believe agencies such as yourselves are best placed to determine whether someone is in genuine crisis. Using the referral system means we can work efficiently and effectively in partnership with organisations like yours, to ensure emergency food support gets to the right people, in the right way, at the right time and for an appropriate length of time.

Who can be a referrer?

We work with welfare and benefits advice providers, local schools, colleges and universities, local councils, housing associations, housing patch managers, support/social workers, medical practitioners including health visitors, police and PCSOs, DWP/Job Centres, Children's Centres and mental health teams. This is not an exhaustive list.

Registration can only be with a professional not personal email address. We are unable to set up accounts with Gmail, Hotmail or similar accounts.

The organisation and individual registered as a referrer **must** be providing some form of practical support to the guest. We are unable to issue your office or admin staff the ability to issue food vouchers, as we have found this can lead to repeat or long-term referral without proper assessment and / or impact on those staff members being put in difficult positions without proper knowledge of the individual requesting support.

PROVISION OF EMERGENCY FOOD

Our foodbanks have been established to provide **emergency food** to individuals and families in crisis. The service is **not** intended as long-term food provision and we would not be able to resource this. **Foodbanks are not a solution to food poverty.**

Our emergency food parcels provide a minimum of 3 days' worth of food basics including cereal, milk, fruit juice, soup, pasta, rice, meat, fish, vegetables and pudding, providing balanced meals. Food is ambient temperature, packaged, tinned or long life. We are generally unable to provide fresh food due to the storage and safety requirements and the potential wastage, due to the ever changing and unpredictable nature of referrals.

The quantity of food given is dependent upon the number of adults and children in the family. Where our stock allows, we will also give out toiletries and household items such as cleaning or laundry products and occasionally pet food. When guests arrive at the foodbank they are consulted on their basic dietary requirements, such as if they are vegetarian, halal, vegan, gluten free. We will also check with them to make sure they highlight any allergies or intolerances.

In line with guidance issued by the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative, we do not accept donations of infant formula (Stage 1 or 2) or distribute infant formula for babies. If a family is in urgent need of infant formula, please refer them to your local health visitor, children's centre or social services for immediate support and information. How babies are fed in the early months of life can have a profound effect on their short and long term health, which is why health professionals such as health visitors and midwives are trained to support families to feed their babies as safely as possible depending on individual need and circumstance.



SHARED VISION AGREEMENT

When any organisation or individual becomes a referral agency with Hope Nottingham, they will be committing to share in our vision to ensure that everyone in our community facing financial hardship is able to access the right support at the right time.

Together we are committed to:



Ensuring local people are aware of the cash based support that is available to them, prioritising our services for those facing poverty and hardship



Equipping our teams to understand what support is available for local people so that they are able to signpost and refer to appropriate support services effectively, rather than just issuing emergency food, without trying to address the root cause;



Empowering local people to access the advice and support they need as soon as possible including:

- Ensuring receipt of all the social security benefits that they are entitled to
- Seeking employment, education or training
- Supporting their mental and physical health and well-being
- Accessing specialist advice and support on areas such as housing, immigration, or domestic violence as just some examples;



Treating everyone referred to our services with respect and dignity, including ensuring the voices of people with lived experience of poverty and hardship are shaping our work;



Using our collective voice and influence to call on local decision makers to ensure that everyone in our community can afford all the essentials we all need in life;

Most importantly, is our shared recognition that poverty is a complex issue that cannot be fully resolved by welfare systems or by local authority social services, and includes poverty of resources, relationships and identity. These latter aspects of poverty can only be fully addressed in the context of a supportive community where it is possible to build constructive relationships and help restore people's identity. Community projects like Hope Nottingham and the many other community initiatives play an essential role.

We are better as a society when we seek to bless others and when we discover that those whom we seek to help can also be a blessing in return.



REFERRER RESPONSIBILITIES

Due to the nature of your work, we feel that you are well placed to identify people in a crisis, using your professional judgement. However, with this referral comes various responsibilities.

We no longer issue paper foodbank vouchers. Our E-referral system is much more efficient and ensures accuracy of data. Please note the following:

1

Each person referring on behalf of your organisation must have their own login to the system. Once signed up, you will be asked to agree to a Data Statement, so you are fully aware of the information you're processing and your GDPR responsibilities.

2

All E-vouchers can be tracked back to the unique referrer. It is essential that you do not share your login to the Trussell Trust referral system as you are responsible for any referral under your name. This would be considered a breach of agreement for using the system and would lead to removal as a referrer.

3

Each referral agency will have an identified 'lead' person who can add or delete users under your referral agency. It is the lead's responsibility to ensure that the user list is kept up to date and that only organisation (not personal) emails are used.

4

The current value of basic food parcels are increasing each week and at July 2023 were: £30 for a single person; £40 for a couple; £60 for a small family. We would therefore ask you to consider each voucher number issued in these terms.

5

Voucher issue must be treated in strict confidence. The date and location of a person's visits to foodbanks may be visible to other local foodbanks and some agencies in order to prevent misuse. Other data is not divulged to anyone without their explicit consent. Our foodbank is registered with the Data Protection Agency, and we comply with the regulations regarding the holding of personal information on a database.

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ISSUING AN E-VOUCHER (1)

- ✓ The system is very intuitive, however if you need further assistance we are happy to support, and you should contact us at hope@hopenottingham.org.uk or on 0303 040 1110. For ease of use, we recommend bookmarking the login page when you first log in.
- ✓ When you speak to an individual or family, either in a face-to-face setting or on the phone, you will fill out a handful of questions within the system, such as name, date of birth, family size and reason for referral.
- ✓ Mandatory fields will be marked with red star. However, it is important for our auditing, accounting and statistical processes, that all sections of the E-voucher are completed when issued. The 'Main cause of Crisis' box should be completed by ticking the most appropriate box or adding a brief explanation of their situation.
- ✓ Once the details have been filled in, you will be asked to select the foodbank. Local Trussell foodbanks, including those not in the Hope Nottingham network, will be shown. Check which foodbank location is most suitable for the guest (usually nearest their home) and refer them to the opening times and addresses on our website (<https://eastwestnottingham.foodbank.org.uk/locations/>).
- ✓ Provide the guest with their unique referral code. You can print the E-voucher for the guest if you choose. The nearest food bank centres will be printed on the back of the voucher. Or if not face-to-face you can email or text the E-voucher number to the guest, or tell them over the phone. Follow your own organisation's policies for handling the guest's personal details.



ISSUING AN E-VOUCHER (2)

- ✓ The guest should take this unique E-voucher number to the foodbank to be redeemed for a food parcel. Our opening times and location(s) are listed on our website <https://eastwestnottingham.foodbank.org.uk/locations/>
- ✓ Please be aware our foodbanks are run by volunteers. Very rarely they may have to amend their hours at short notice. Also we rely on donated food, and therefore on occasion we may also run out of items. However, we do our very best to avoid both scenarios.
- ✓ If a guest misses one foodbank session, they can take the E-voucher or E-voucher number to any other Trussell Trust foodbank to be redeemed.
- ✓ Each E-voucher number you issue is valid for a single foodbank visit only and you should explain this to the guest. The E-voucher number cannot be shared with others, nor used in multiple foodbanks, and any attempt to share or re-use the number could lead to a refusal from our foodbank.
- ✓ You cannot issue multiple vouchers to the same guest, at the same time, to use over a period of time. One voucher should be issued at a time, and only to aid with a short-term crisis.
- ✓ With regret, we are unable to offer delivery of food parcels. However, you or the guest's friend, family member or neighbour may collect on their behalf. Our aim is always for guests to visit the foodbank, as in most cases this helps them connect with their local community, and can help them be signposted to other useful services.
- ✓ Unfulfilled E-vouchers are automatically deleted off the system after 90 days. However, as the voucher is for emergency food, we would normally expect a voucher to be fulfilled within a 3-5 day period after its issue.
- ✓ You do not need to contact us by email or phone to confirm a referral. The system informs each foodbank who has been referred to them. This also ensures there is no unnecessary emailing or repeating of guest personal data and reduces workload for us all.
- ✓ Please be aware food parcels include tinned items and are heavy. We would therefore encourage you to tell the guest to be prepared. Wheeled bags or suitcases can be very helpful for the journey home, if not travelling by car. We also often run low on carrier bags, so bringing those is also appreciated.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE FOOD BANK

“I had nowhere to go
and i found hope, not
just hope in the
word, I mean
HOPE
- this place.
it really inspired me.”

We are blessed to have wonderful teams of volunteers across our network of foodbanks, many of which are very experienced and long-serving. All are trained to provide a warm welcome to guests and treat everyone with the utmost respect, compassion and dignity. Without them, Hope Nottingham simply could not operate.

Volunteers at the foodbank will check the E-voucher number on our system, and then exchange the voucher for a 3-day food parcel, which the person can carry away usually in supermarket-branded carrier bags, or their own bags as preferred. We try to ensure a smooth service, but occasionally there can be delays during busy times.

In addition to giving food, most of our foodbanks also offer a free cup of tea or coffee, a friendly chat and ‘help in finding help’, by directing people towards further support services, such as debt counsellors, advocacy etc. In providing this ‘signposting’, we are happy to feedback any assistance or advice provided, within the bounds of confidentiality. Please note that each foodbank volunteer is required to sign the foodbank’s Confidentiality Agreement.

At our Beeston hub, we offer a free breakfast, and at our Carlton hub, a light lunch. Some of our foodbanks have on-site advice provision, currently Beeston, Carlton, Broxtowe and Aspley. This is funded by Trussell Trust and is specifically for foodbank users, to help them out of crisis.



NUMBER OF EMERGENCY FOOD VOUCHERS ISSUED PER GUEST

There is no set limit placed on the number of times our foodbanks can support a guest; however, our model is designed to help those in a short-term crisis, rather than providing indefinite or longer-term assistance.

It is very important that we work together to ensure that food parcel recipients do not become dependent on the service, that they are helped out of their financial crisis, and that they are engaging with the right support agencies.

- A core feature of Hope Nottingham's operating system is the three vouchers guideline, which allows agencies to issue guests with up to three foodbank vouchers within a six-month period without contacting us. This particularly applies if you are a referral agency who does not have clear knowledge of a guest's financial situation e.g. you are a church, school, health worker.
- If the guest's crisis has not been resolved within this timeframe, and you would like to refer them to the foodbank again, you must contact Hope Nottingham (not the individual foodbank) to explain the situation, and to discuss the possibility of issuing further vouchers to extend support. This enables us to be confident that the root cause of the problem is being addressed, (which is in the best interest of the guest) and/or that the extended support is justified. This also enables us as the food bank, and you as the agency referring, to review whether there is anything else that can be done to address the underlying cause(s) of crisis.
- Dependant on the information provided, we may be able to agree to continue providing emergency food to support the guest during their longer-term crisis, but this is at our discretion. We do understand that there may be genuine situations, requiring more than three food parcels, such as being in significant debt, waiting for a benefit payment, under a benefit sanction, having no recourse to public funds, or homelessness.
- As an alternative to contacting us, particularly if you are not able to assess the guest's financial situation, you can ask the guest to call the Trussell Trust Help through Hardship line (operated in partnership with Citizens Advice) where they can receive a full benefit check and further foodbank referral if deemed appropriate. It is a freephone, confidential helpline 0808 2082138 open Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. Please advise the guest it can take time to get through and for the in-call check.
- With regret - a note of warning: it has become clear that on rare occasions some guests 'play the field' and obtain multiple vouchers from various sources. If you become part of this loop, we will notify you and inform you as to which agency should be the single voucher issuer in any particular case, and / or which foodbank needs to be used to fulfil the voucher. This enables us to properly support and manage the foodbank use.

CONTACTING US

Please contact us centrally at Hope Nottingham via hope@hopenottingham.org.uk or 0303 040 1110 with any queries, but please be mindful of limiting any guest data shared by email.

Please do not contact any of our individual foodbanks to discuss individual guests, as they may not be aware of a bigger picture of a guest's foodbank usage. Please also be aware that many of our foodbank volunteers do not have access to our secure email system, and you should never contact our volunteers via personal email addresses.

If one of our volunteers does share a personal email or contact you via one, please do raise this with us, and we can explore if a Hope Nottingham email address is required to support that person's volunteer role with us. This is very important to ensure that our volunteers are not disturbed outside of their volunteering hours with us, and also to ensure no accidental sharing of guest data via a non-secure email.

GDPR & DATA PROTECTION

Guest data from referral is stored securely in an online database. This data is only used to monitor guest visits, and to generate aggregate data to analyse patterns and trends at local, regional or national level. The date and location of a guest's visits may be visible to other foodbanks and some referral agencies, to monitor repeat visits. A data privacy statement for guest data is available from the foodbank on request.

When issuing an E-voucher there is a 'notes' section. Please ensure this is used appropriately, being mindful that any guest can make a 'Subject Access Request' at any time to view the information stored about them.

Your organisation's contact data will also be stored in the foodbank data system. It will only be used to contact you regarding foodbank activity and guests. It will not be shared with any third parties. We aim to send out a 'Referrers Newsletter' occasionally and ask that you read any updates in it.

We hope you will also sign up to Hope Nottingham's General Mailing list so that you can stay up to date with our news and activities. Sign up [here](#). You can unsubscribe from this list at any time by clicking on the unsubscribe button in the newsletter, but please be aware that as a referrer, you will need to consent to us contacting you about foodbank referral.

A data privacy statement for referral agency data is available from Hope Nottingham on request.



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

We are a registered charity and rely on the generosity of individuals, churches, businesses and organisations to provide food and funds to continue our work.

Please do consider donating to us or holding a permanent food collection point or ad hoc collection at your place of work.

For up to date information about how to support our foodbanks please visit <https://eastwestnottingham.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/> or our main website <https://www.hope-nottingham.org.uk/ways-to-give>

QUERIES & FEEDBACK

If you have any queries or wish to discuss any of the information in this handbook further, please contact us by email at hope@hopenottingham.org.uk or call us on 0303 040 1110.

Hope Nottingham is committed to delivering a high standard of service to anyone who engages with our work.

We believe the best way to improve our services, is by learning from the people who use them. We welcome comments, compliments and complaints from the people who visit our food banks and community hubs, from our referral agencies, volunteers and anyone else we connect with through our work. These help us see what we do well and where we can improve.

You can find our feedback form [here](#) or contact us directly as detailed above.

For full details of our feedback policy please visit <https://www.hope-nottingham.org.uk/compliment-complaints-concerns>

THANK YOU

Thank you for joining the Hope Nottingham referral team and for helping us to support local people in crisis.

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord “plans to give you hope and a future” Jeremiah 29:11

OUR CONTACTS



www.hopenottingham.org.uk



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