



# 'Cracking The Crisis' – Impact Report

## March 2020-March 2021



### About Cracking Good Food

Cracking Good Food is a not-for-profit social enterprise. We launched in 2010 with the aim of encouraging and supporting more people to cook affordable, seasonal and nutritious homemade food from scratch.

Driven by our belief that EVERYONE deserves good food, our mission is simple: to work collaboratively with others to eradicate food poverty and increase food sustainability in Greater Manchester.

We enthuse, encourage, and teach individuals and groups how to source and cook affordable, healthy, and tasty food from scratch, whilst minimising both food waste and our environmental impact. We do this by delivering accessible and empowering cooking courses and training, as part of a wider campaign for affordable, sustainable & healthier food for all. During Covid we have harnessed over 10,000 volunteer hours to cook & distribute over 76,000 meals for people in need of support across Greater Manchester.

Throughout all of our work, we strive to show by example that eating sustainably and seasonally is both possible and affordable.

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## 'CRACKING THE CRISIS': THEORY OF CHANGE

### What is the problem you are trying to solve?

Our aim is to solve the problem of hunger amongst people experiencing poverty, isolation, physical/mental illness or other difficulties exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic, combined with the chronic problem of food waste.

It is important to note here that pre-Covid there were already serious levels of poverty in Greater Manchester resulting from poor housing rates, poor quality housing, low wages, rising rents and savage cuts to public services and welfare as a result of austerity. 'Food swamps' (areas with limited access to fresh ingredients but a high density of take-aways and fast-food providers) and food 'deserts' (areas with limited access to healthy, affordable food) are also a cause of hunger and poor diet.

Graham Whitham, Director of Greater [Manchester Poverty Action](#) said, "The Poverty Monitor highlights the worrying scale of poverty across our city region. Even before the pandemic, Greater Manchester was home to some of the highest rates of poverty in the country. COVID-19 has hit the poorest communities hardest, and so will the economic fallout. It is vital that tackling poverty is put at the heart of the recovery."

### Who is your key audience?

Our key 'audience' is anyone experiencing a lack of appropriate, safe and nourishing food whose circumstances have been exposed or exacerbated by the Covid 19 Pandemic.

### What is your point of entry to reach your audience?

We currently cook and distribute meals to many local community-based organisations, including homeless prevention hostels, church groups and community grocers. We also support directly a small number of individuals.

### What steps are needed to bring about change?

The provision of free, healthy and culturally appropriate meals, made with ingredients sourced from intercepted waste, to alleviate hunger. The delivery of these meals also allows opportunity for a welfare check.

### What are the measurable effects of your work?

The number of meals cooked and distributed, the number of households/individuals receiving the meals, the self-reported health and wellbeing benefits of the meals and the volunteer opportunities (via feedback), the amount of food intercepted from waste, the number of volunteer hours harnessed.

### What are the wider benefits of your work?

- Meal recipients get more than 'just a meal' – our healthy meals have helped people to manage illnesses including diabetes and have supported people to eat healthily whilst experiencing mental health problems
- Meal recipients are visited by a delivery driver who can check on their welfare and inform support services if concerned.
- The creation of new networks of emergency food providers and related support groups has led to sharing of knowledge, best practice and resources.
- Volunteers and team members experience improved mental wellbeing and learn new skills

### What is the long term change you see as your goal?

Healthier, more resilient communities where ALL people have access to nutritious, affordable and sustainably sourced food.

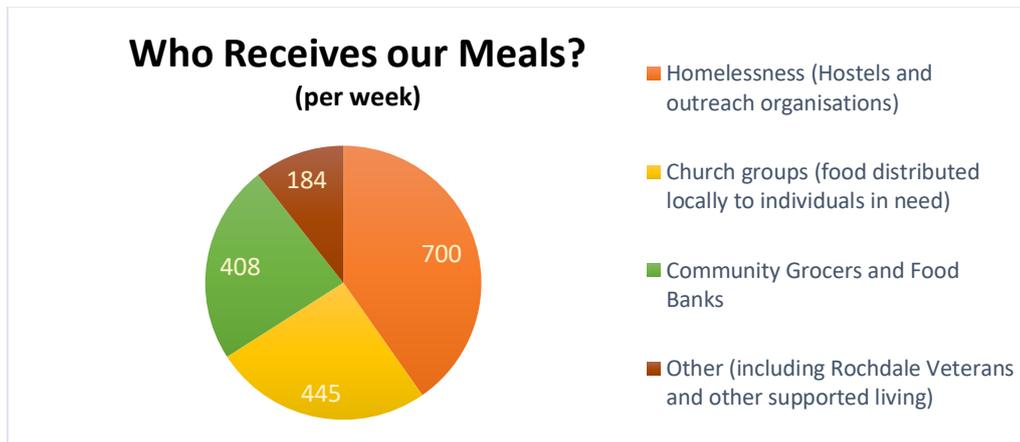


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## IMPACT ON HEALTH AND HUNGER

Since March 2020, we have cooked and distributed 76,971 nutritious meals for people in need of support all across Greater Manchester.

Who receives our meals?



33 community partner organisations receive and distribute our meals on a regular basis, including Emmiline’s Pantry, Rochdale Homeless Network, Reach Out To The Community, The Message Centre, Rochdale Veterans, Bury Soup Kitchen and Gorton Churches. Each of these organisations provides support for their community in specific ways, but most of them largely fit in to one of the following categories:

### Homelessness Support Organisations

40% of our meals reach people who are experiencing homelessness or insecure housing, often along with other challenges such as addiction, trauma, mental illness and poverty. These are all issues which lead to poor diet, which in turn accelerates poor health; our nutritious meals come in ‘ready meal’ form, making them a convenient way for people with limited access to cooking facilities to eat a healthy meal. Our meals support many people living in temporary emergency homeless prevention hostels as well as outreach organisations such as Reach Out To The Community.

### Local church groups

445 of our meals per week are distributed by local Church groups to people experiencing illness, isolation, poverty, seeking asylum and other disadvantages which have been exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic.

One Church group we support with meals told us, ‘These meals are feeding a 95-year-old man who lives alone on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of his building. He was getting no help from anyone – I suspect he had fallen through every crack there is until his brother living 150 miles away contacted us. There’s a 19-year-old woman looking after 3 young siblings because their Mother is in hospital on a ventilator with Covid, and then there’s a 21-year-old woman with autism who can’t go out because of social issues. These sadly forgotten people send their massive thanks for your work in supporting them.’

### Community Grocers/Pantries

We provide more than 400 nutritious ‘ready meals’ for local Community Grocers and Pantries, also sometimes referred to as ‘Social Supermarkets’. The Community Grocery/Local Pantry model has been applauded for enabling people experiencing financial hardship to shop at heavily discounted rates; customers pay a small fee per shop and can choose their own items from a range of fresh produce, non-perishables and other non-food items.

In this setting our meals provide a healthy yet convenient alternative to other less healthy and heavily packaged convenience foods. Many of the shoppers may not have the time, skills, equipment, confidence or motivation to cook



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from scratch. The Message Community Grocery in Sharston, to whom we provide 100 meals per week say, 'the feedback has been excellent; the meals are very popular and families really appreciate being able to get nutritious tasty food'.

## Individuals, with individual needs

Another person who receives our meals is Dennis\*, who we support directly. Dennis has Type 2 diabetes and has been shielding throughout the pandemic. He receives our meals as they support him to eat more healthily which helps control his Diabetes.

'This service provides the support I personally need to guide myself back into a more healthy eating regime. This is especially important as I'm a Type 2 Diabetic. I'm the kind of person who on many occasions needs a gentle push to gather momentum, and Cracking Good Food have indeed given me the motivation that has this year led me to join a Diabetics group and cook healthy very low carb meals to accompany my deliveries. Early days but because of this I've asked for less food to be delivered to encourage me to cook healthy meals for myself. I do recognise that I could "fall of the wagon" and resume my unhealthy diet so still need Cracking Good Foods' support.

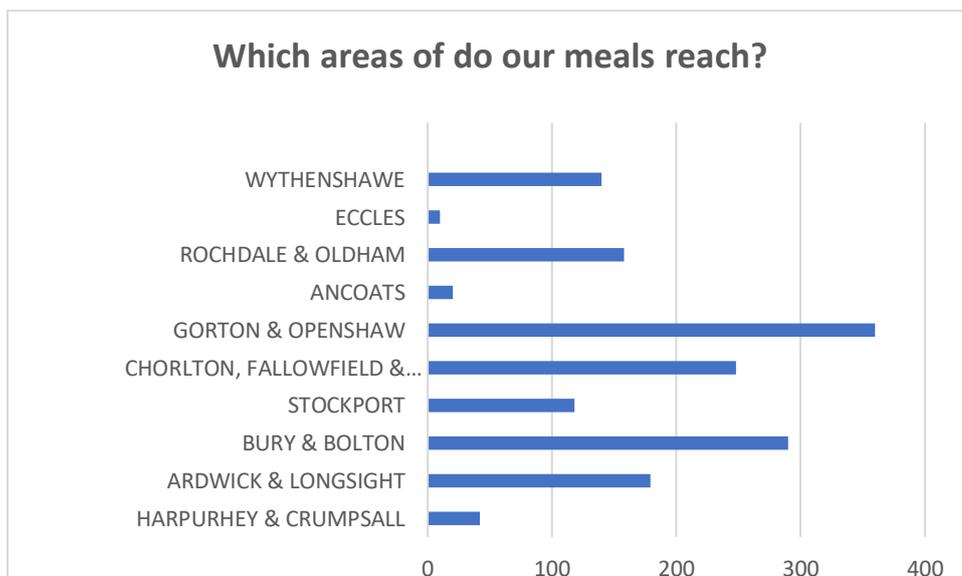
'It's more than a food service. The volunteers who deliver were, and still are, a welcome link to the outside world. When dropping off the food they take their time to chat, even though its through a closed door due to my personal Covid concerns. This was especially true during the first months of the service where I was not able to venture out due to my knee replacement issues. My regular delivery person always has a sunny disposition (even after didn't hear her buzz and left her out in the rain for about 5 minutes!) Another delivery person also sent me a map of local nature walks after a discussion about me having the courage to take a walk in a nature reserve the previous week. Both delivery people go beyond.

'I also like the flexibility shown by Cracking Good Food. I don't feel like a "number". They have been very flexible in their accommodation of my dietary requirements and feel whenever I email or talk on the phone I'm seen as an individual.'

As Dennis's quote shows, we are supporting people with a range of mental and physical health problems to eat well. We also tailor our meals to different cultural and dietary requirements such as vegan, vegetarian and Halal.

## Where are our meals distributed?

Since March 2020, we have distributed free meals to 9 of the 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester. This graph shows how many of our meals are now distributed weekly in different parts of Greater Manchester.





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### Spotlight – Gorton

Since March 2020, our meals have been distributed to people in 9 out of the 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester. Currently, almost a quarter (23%) of our regular meal orders are distributed in East Manchester around Openshaw and Gorton, which falls within the bottom [3% of local areas in England in terms of health](#).

Local Gorton MP Afzal Khan: "The coronavirus crisis has driven many more of my constituents into hardship, often forcing them to choose between eating or heating their homes. Organisations like Cracking Good Food are invaluable in ensuring those struggling do not go hungry and are supported during this difficult time. I am immensely proud of the community spirit we've seen displayed throughout this crisis, and I commend Cracking Good Food for all the amazing work they have done over the past ten months to support local people."

### Spotlight – Rochdale Veterans

Every week, we supply Rochdale Veterans with 60 meals to distribute amongst the many Armed Forces veterans they support in and around Rochdale, and area which has [been hit particularly hard by Covid 19](#). Many of the people they are supporting are experiencing intensified poverty and isolation as a result of Covid 19 and most have been shielding since March 2020. Our Co-ordinator Paul recently conducted some qualitative interviews with some of the people supported by Rochdale Veterans. These interviews have shone a spotlight on to the many complex challenges people are facing when it comes to eating well. Severe mental health problems such as PTSD and anxiety, chronic illness in the form of COPD, grief, poverty, visual and other physical impairments and a lack of cooking skills were all cited as reasons contributing to their need for support.

By learning more about the people receiving our meals, we have been able to reach out and offer extra support. For example, Frank\* told us that he has stopped cooking as he has difficulty standing for too long so he generally only makes meals that he can do in the microwave or he buys 'take aways'. His use of takeaway food has increased dramatically especially as he is shielding and doesn't go out. This is having a negative impact on his diabetes. Having found this out, we have offered Frank more of our healthy meals to support him throughout the week and our in-house Nutritionist has offered him guidance and support on how to make healthier food choices within the options available to him.

## VOLUNTEER IMPACT

10,770 of volunteer hours

£102,315 – value of these hours if paid National Living Wage

More than 200 dedicated and selfless volunteers have supported us to set up and operate from safe and efficient workspaces within a range of community spaces. From identifying suitable kitchen spaces, to setting them up as clean and safe cooking spaces, to cooking and distributing thousands of healthy meals – our volunteers supported us every step of the way. Two of our Kitchen Assistant Volunteers, Debbie and Tracey were taken on as paid part-time Cooking Leaders and both now work in our Community Kitchen at Brunswick.

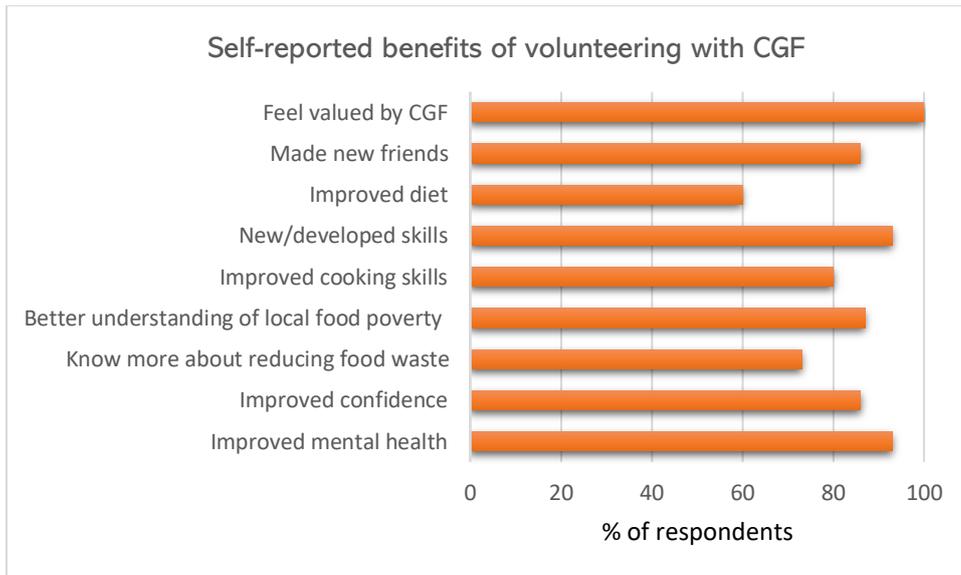
We asked our regular volunteers to reflect on their time volunteering with CGF and asked them some questions to find out more about the impact of volunteering for 'Cracking The Crisis' on them. The respondents reported many benefits of volunteering including:



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- Improved mental wellbeing
- Enhanced cooking skills
- Making new friends
- Healthier and more varied diet
- Heightened awareness of how to reduce food waste
- Increased confidence.

Every one of the respondents said that they feel valued by Cracking Good Food, which we were thrilled to hear.



### Spotlight: Improved Mental Health

Our volunteer roles tick each of the NHS's '5 Steps To Mental Wellbeing' which are to 'connect with other people', 'be physically active', 'learn new skills', 'give to others' and to 'pay attention to the present moment'. 93% of our volunteers agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering for Cracking Good Food throughout 'Cracking The Crisis' has improved their mental health. The following quotes help to illustrate how volunteering has helped improved peoples' mental wellbeing:

'It has definitely helped to keep me sane as well as I felt I was doing something during the pandemic, something that helped and supported the community where I live. I have felt bad during the pandemic as it has been a lot harder on more vulnerable people and volunteering was a good way to channel my frustration and improve the situation.'

#### Volunteer Kitchen Assistant, aged 47

'[At the end of my volunteering shifts I feel] satisfied and fulfilled, the work lifts my mood and makes me feel happy and grateful for what I have.'

#### Volunteer Kitchen Assistant, aged 63



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### Spotlight: Improved Skills and Knowledge

80% of respondents reported that their cooking skills and knowledge of food has improved due to volunteering with us, and 60% said that their diet has improved as a result of these skills and knowledge. Furthermore, 73% of respondents reported that they have improved knowledge on how to reduce food waste. Not only have volunteers had opportunity to learn specific cooking skills such as 'Indian spicing taught by Kala', 'how to cut a pepper properly' and 'how to prepare some super good vegan food' but there has also been a noticeable increase in food safety knowledge and 'industry' skills which will certainly improve peoples' employability in the catering/food sector going forward. These skills, as reported by the volunteers, include 'allergen issues', 'good stock control', 'importance of personal hygiene' and 'health and safety issues.' Kitchen volunteers have also been given the opportunity to complete their Basic Food Hygiene Level 2 qualification.

### Quotes from our volunteers

Further comments from the volunteers go further towards conveying the breadth and depth of the impact volunteering has had on their lives. It is very clear that volunteering increases peoples' wellbeing in a multitude of ways, but it was really interesting to hear first-hand. Furthermore 93% of respondents said that their understanding of food poverty in Greater Manchester had increased as a result of their volunteering. By increasing awareness of the devastating situation within many communities across the region, we can hope that more and more people will become galvanised to campaign and vote for change in the long term.

'I was quite nervous when I first came to the kitchen, but people were so incredibly nice. The head cooks are brilliant at giving the assistant cooks tasks we are comfortable with. My first day I was peeling potatoes and chatting with the others, and was a really enjoyable day. The people being so lovely is my lasting memory.' - **Kitchen Assistant, aged 26**

'Happy and inspired, because I was helping people and interacting in the kitchen with some lovely humans. It also gave me self-confidence because everyone was so lovely and it was such a good environment.' - **Kitchen Assistant, aged 20**

'Laughter, exchange of ideas, learning - all part of my lasting memory volunteering for CGF' - **Packing Assistant, aged 34**

'Sharing a good meal with my co-workers, something that we all appreciate as it felt like eating out with friends rather than a break at work. Leaving the kitchen with a smile and saying no need to thank me, it should be me thanking you to have this opportunity. Great food memories, new ingredients, new recipes and some good friends! And very good music too. Also, last week we got a message from St Aidans Church, praising our work and explaining where some of the food goes. It left me in tears, I felt very touched, proud of our work and sad, with a more personal resolution to continue working to reduce social inequality.' - **Kitchen Assistant, aged 47**

'As an asylum seeker, I am not allowed to work, but the pandemic has made me feel stressed and anxious. Volunteering was a good opportunity to show gratefulness to this country and be useful to others as well. I am sure that volunteering has made me more aware and sensitive to others' needs. It feels so good to see people smiling when saying thanks for the meals I help prepare. It is a way for me to give back all I have got from others.' - **Kitchen, Cleaning and Packing Assistant, aged 49**



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## IMPACT ON FOOD WASTE

Our meals are cooked with surplus ingredients destined for waste, which are sourced from through 3 main channels.

### 1. Fareshare Greater Manchester

We have used over 28 tonnes of surplus food redistributed to us by Fareshare. Using calculations based on [research conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) of the United Nations (FAO) this will have saved 70 tonnes of unnecessary CO2 emissions from being released into the environment.

### 2. Mutual support networks

Since October 2020 we have focussed on developing strong links with local businesses, food retailers and other local emergency food providers. As a result, we have become an instrumental part of a wide network of organisations all working together to ensure that short-dated surplus is redistributed and used. We use WhatsApp groups to ensure that surplus food is shared and redistributed safely, efficiently and according to need. By working collaboratively with other organisations including The Bread & Butter Thing, Open Kitchen and Chelwood Foodbank Plus we have been able to share not just food surplus but also skills, knowledge, fridge space, volunteers and numerous other resources. We have been fortunate to benefit greatly from these networks, but have also given back by redistributing any excess ingredients to other organisations in need, such as Cre8 in Macclesfield and Knowing Africa in Wythenshawe. These networks are a powerful new tool in the world of food redistribution, with reach to organisations all over Greater Manchester and beyond.

### 3. Building links to local businesses and retailers

We have also sought and received huge support from the local business community including Morrisons supermarkets, Organic North fruit and veg wholesaler, the Individual Restaurant Group, Unicorn Grocery and Destiny Foods. In many of these cases the businesses were adversely impacted by the covid-19 pandemic either through short notice lockdown announcements or by loss of trade through the widespread closure of hospitality.

#### Case Study: Destiny Foods

Our contact with Gorton-based pastry and dessert producers Destiny Food came through the alert action of one of our cooking volunteers and they have become our most important donor – the scale of their frozen stocks was so great that it was crucial also for CGF to bring in larger organisations Fareshare and The Bread & Butter Thing who were able to support its mass redistribution. In the case of all these businesses it is likely that the food we recovered would have been disposed of without our interception; many of our donors have found themselves in situations where their businesses have been hugely compromised by the pandemic but have still wanted support people in need with available food. Part-baked bread rolls, festive quiches and delicious desserts were provided by Destiny to support our Christmas project with Lifeshare Charity, which supported 280 people experiencing poverty and homelessness with festive food on Christmas Day.

#### Case Study: Chelwood Foodbank Plus

Since September 2020, we have been cooking meals from a kitchen provided to us for free by Stockport Homes. Throughout this time we have forged a strong, mutually beneficial relationship with Chelwood Foodbank Plus in Stockport. When Chelwood receive donations unsuited to the needs of the people they support (e.g. catering sized packs of ingredients or short-dated fresh produce, they exchange these good with us in return for some of our nutritious ready meals. As a local foodbank they are often offered donations from businesses that they cannot manage and will pass our contact details on – in January, when the schools were closed at short-notice, we collected produce from a school meals



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caterer Dolce Catering via Chelwood. We also provide meals to support the volunteers who are working at Chelwood, meaning they get a nourishing meal as they support others.

### IMPACT ON THE TEAM

The Covid 19 pandemic brought to an abrupt halt the work of the Cracking Good Food Team. Our dedicated team of freelance Cooking Leaders and Co-ordinators were left without work, following the cancellation of CGF's Cookery School sessions, foraging expeditions, team building events and community-based projects. However, our 10 years of experience working within hard-to-reach and vulnerable community groups meant we were hugely aware of the crisis about to unfold for so many. Our emergency food provision project, 'Cracking The Crisis' was established in March 2020 in response to this crisis. We acted quickly, and changed from our usual role of cooking WITH communities to cooking emergency meals FOR them. In the past year our incredible team of cooks, co-ordinators and volunteers have cooked and distributed over 75,000 meals for people in need of support across Greater Manchester. Furthermore we have been able to provide part-time freelance employment to our team of otherwise currently out of work cooks, enabling them to support themselves as well as the wider community throughout the crisis. Our cooks have also learned new skills; they are now expert in using a 'Ready Steady Cook' style approach to creating nutritionally balanced, healthy meals in accordance with the NHS guidelines using whatever ingredients are available to them.

The following quotes from the team provide a first-hand insight to how 'Cracking The Crisis' has impacted them and the team:

#### **Tracey -Co-Director:**

'Our team tirelessly and continuously gave of themselves, often forsaking time with their families to ensure our communities were being supported. Their ability and willingness to seamlessly adjust to the changing situation has been both impressive and heart-warming.'

#### **Adele – Founding Director:**

'Despite the existing challenges we faced in getting communities to access healthy food, with the help of emergency funding that required comparatively little time to access, we were able to turn our model around to provide emergency food provision, rather than the teaching of how to cook, in a relatively short time. Our team responded to the emergency and still are. Many communities rely on extremely poor quality, cheap, processed food, which in the middle to long term will have an impact on their health and the NHS.'

#### **Amanda – Nutritionist and Project Manager:**

'Thinking back - It was like a car crash – I went from plodding along in my own little world to trying to find people to cook donated food, to in turn to find organisations that would distribute the meals and people to get it there!! It was complete adrenaline rush MADNESS ...My hours tripled and CGF's Covid 19's meal response consumed my world for the first few weeks. A year on and it is a much slicker operation, and I am proud to have been part of the team that set down the foundations.

I'm astonished & amazed (a tad humbled) by people's kindness and willingness to give up their free time and volunteer for CGF – many of our original volunteers still cooking, packing and driving a year later. I have also recently realised that we are fulfilling a void in some of the volunteers' Covid lives and giving them a sense of purpose, belonging and fulfilment – which in turn can only aid their mental health and wellbeing. This is for a me a double whammy as whilst we are cooking, packing, and delivering meals to those in need we are also as a by-product helping those who help us! What a team - you rock CGF!'



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### **Ngwafu – Community Cooking Leader:**

Covid changed my employment by me becoming more responsive. I realised I wanted to help more in the community as I saw how much was needed in and around Manchester. I took up more freelance work; working with Cracking good food enables me to provide food for the community and teach volunteers how to cook. Working for Cracking good food has given me a tremendous sense of purpose and fulfilment. It has also help me build on my skills as a chef and experiment more with new ingredients. I'm very proud to work for Cracking good food and looking forward to the future and a return to teaching post-pandemic.

### **Kala – Community Cooking Leader:**

'Working with Cracking Good Food has been totally soul satisfying and immensely rewarding in so many ways, knowing that my skillset is benefitting the most vulnerable. The CGF Community Kitchens have created a fun learning platform for so many selfless, inspiring volunteers wanting to make a difference to so many in the community. Just love doing what I do!'

### **Sam- Project Manager and Bid Writer**

'Using my skills and experience in catering and managing projects, whilst being able to support people through a pandemic has been hugely rewarding. I've felt a real sense of purpose, worked with the most generous and wonderful human beings, and despite the crisis we have found ourselves in I have so many fond memories to look back on. There have been challenges along the way, but these have resulted in opportunities for personal growth and being able to pass this new founded knowledge onto others has been especially important for me.'

## **OTHER IMPACT**

### **Stronger communities**

The impact of cooking from 3 Community Kitchens has meant that we have developed strong links within the communities surrounding each of these Community Kitchen bases. The rent we pay to hire the kitchen space at both Brunswick Church (Ardwick) and Collier House (Gorton) has been helping to support the currently otherwise unused community spaces in some of Manchester's most deprived areas, helping to ensure they are in good working order for when the community can return to using them. By supporting local people with our meal provision and volunteer opportunities, we have been able to gain a deeper understanding of the specific challenges faced by the local communities, including vast poverty, homelessness and high levels of isolation. By getting to know local people and other local support providers, we have gained the trust of the local communities, many of whom have expressed a desire to learn cooking skills with us once it is safe to do so.

We have also gained a huge amount of experience in quickly and safely setting up and registering Community Kitchens. We have used this knowledge to produce a 'how-to guide' which can be shared and used by other community groups needing to set up kitchens in the future.

### **Spotlight – local business support from Apex Storage**

Our existing relationship with Apex Storage from whom we hire a storage unit increased hugely as they supported us at every opportunity, from donating cold storage items to freely donating storage space and enabling us to have extensive use of their facilities at multiple sites. Their support has meant we were able to store more food and equipment, and provide a more flexible service. Apex have really shown us the huge value which can be provided by the support of local businesses; we are extremely grateful for their kindness.



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## Increased awareness – more connected communities

As a result of ‘Cracking The Crisis’, our team has become even more galvanised to reduce food poverty and mitigate its damaging effects on the health and wellbeing of communities. The project has raised awareness amongst our team members and our volunteers, meaning that people are now more inspired and driven to help those in need of support. Our wider understanding of the many barriers which stand in the way of people eating well and the many complex factors which prevent people from cooking healthy meals for themselves and their families will inform and improve our future work.

‘My main memory will be the insight into food poverty in the city, and how co-operation responded to this crisis. It was wonderful to belong to something like this, at a time when I was also personally experiencing a low point. It was/is a great insight to the fast-paced, decisive interaction between like-minded emergency response providers in different organisations.’ - **Kitchen Assistant Volunteer, 53**

‘Humbled by the cause. I hadn’t realised so many people local to me were and are going hungry so one lasting memory is to think local and to stay connected to my local community and the great people who helps others’. - **Volunteer Kitchen Assistant, 63**

## WHO HAS FUNDED ‘CRACKING THE CRISIS’?

### Local businesses

At a time when so many businesses were experiencing financial hardship and uncertainty, they freely and willingly donated equipment to enable us to deliver our meal service. From donating mountains of food which otherwise would have gone to waste, donating cold storage equipment to giving us 100s of new ice cream tubs, cool bags & blocks to allocating us free storage space and waived utility charges! We remain indebted to their kindness and generosity and thankful that like so many others, they put community first.

### Funders

Our immense operation was designed organically from scratch. The expertise and flexibility of our team along with an army of volunteers, responded daily to the changing situation. However, without the financial support from our funders, none of this would have been possible within the rapid and challenging timeframe we needed to deliver. With sincerest gratitude we send our thankyou’s to each of our funders for their financial support.

Action Against Hunger	Manchester City Council Manchester Guardian Society	The Charity Service
Action Together	National Lottery Support Fund	We Love Manchester
CAF Emergency Fund Duchy of Lancaster	Neighbourly Community Fund	Unicorn Grocery
Forever Manchester	One Manchester	WRAP Resource Action Fund
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Social Enterprise Support Fund	500 Acts of Kindness
Green Chorlton	The Antonio Trust	

### Public Donations

We have been overwhelmed by the response individuals across the city have shown, many donating their time to bake, cook and deliver our meals. A great number of people were able to support us through financial donations which has been gratefully received and currently amounts to £18,114. Every penny has been used to respond to the emergency as we really could not continue to support our communities without the goodwill and support they have given at every stage of the pandemic. We would like to say thank you for everyone’s generosity, kindness and the efforts they have gone to support our work.



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## Summary: The crisis continues

For almost 11 years CGF have been on a mission to foster a love of affordable, healthy and sustainable cooking-from-scratch across ALL communities, in particular amongst people experiencing poverty and other disadvantages. Poverty is intrinsically linked to inadequate income, poor dietary and lifestyle habits, and health inequalities, placing people at higher risk of developing chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Before Covid 19, our priority had always been to upskill and empower people to make healthy food choices, whilst embracing the many therapeutic and social benefits of cooking and eating. As lockdown restrictions begin to ease, we are looking forward to returning to this activity; our next project will see our team working with shoppers at [Stockport Pantries](#) to provide cooking demonstrations using healthy produce available in the Pantry, along with affordable and accessible recipes and the redistribution of pre-loved cooking equipment from our ['Kitchen Kit Call Out'](#).

However the problem of hunger and poor diet caused by poverty, homelessness, isolation, illness or other disadvantage is still not only highly visible but also rising noticeably in the communities we support. The most recent figures (November 2020) from Greater Manchester Poverty Action show that there are 620,000 people living in poverty across Greater Manchester. We have recently been funded by Make Some Noise via [Lifeshare](#) charity to provide a further 150 meals per week to plug 'the weekend gap', a lack of food provision for people experiencing homelessness and other disadvantage at the weekends as identified by Lifeshare through their outreach work. Furthermore, when surveyed, not one of the organisations we support with meals could foresee a reduction in need for them amongst the people they support in the near future. Despite a possible end of lockdown being in sight, the long-term economic and social repercussions of the Covid 19 pandemic are likely to be vast, and swathed in uncertainty. Vitally, the huge challenges faced by the majority of our meal recipients will not be changed by the ending of lockdown and the fact remains that our nutritious, tasty and popular meals are a healthy and convenient way to ensure that people in need of support have the opportunity to eat well.

Throughout this report, we have shown the wide-ranging impact that 'Cracking The Crisis' has had on our meal recipients, our team, our volunteers and on reducing food waste. Without further continued funding we will soon be unable to continue this provision, We will fight to keep this provision going for as long as we can, so long as there is such evident pressing need and such huge value in the project.

It is extremely clear that we have a broken system, whereby it is possible for people to 'fall through the cracks' and experience hunger/poor diet, isolation and illness as a result of poverty. We need systemic and meaningful change to support people out of poverty and to alleviate its often debilitating and harmful consequences along the way.

We give our full backing to the following recommendations made by [Greater Manchester Poverty Action](#):

### National government

- Introduce a UK wide anti-poverty strategy
- End the two-child limit on benefits and the benefits cap
- Boost Child Benefit payments
- Make permanent the Universal Credit uplift introduced at the start of the pandemic.

### Local government

- Employers should pay the Real Living Wage and improve terms and conditions for employees.
- Promote benefit take up and financial inclusion so that people get the financial support that's available to them.
- Taking a 'cash first' approach to local welfare provision. This prioritises giving people monetary rather than in kind support such as food parcels and energy vouchers.