

Inclusive Exeter CIC

Coronavirus Hardship Relief Project (CHRP) – Project Report



Introduction

Inclusive Exeter CIC is a community interest company (CIC) that manages Exwick Community Centre, where groups run a range of activities including fitness sessions and social events which help reduce isolation and improve mental and physical health.

While our normal operations were on hold due to the Coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic, we distributed nutritious frozen meals and food parcels to 998 people facing a tough time. This project operated for three months and proved to be a real success with hundreds of beneficiaries and requests. All communities benefited, which is reflective of requests from social services, Community Builders, Community Connectors, key workers, the Police and NHS. This is in addition to members of the diverse communities – including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) – we work with.

Some of the key individuals overseeing the project have said the following:

I feel really privileged to be a part of an organisation/project, as a volunteer, that is completely community-led and grassroots. The Inclusive Exeter Covid-19 food project had a force of very dedicated volunteers and partner groups from very diverse backgrounds, who have in-depth understanding of the needs in their communities and through the food project they are fulfilling their communities' needs. Inclusive Exeter doesn't provide service or run activities "for the people" - their activities are run **by** the people from the resilient communities. One of the things really highlighted through this project is that there are myths about BAME groups in that they can't and won't work together, and that there is a lack of community cohesion among BAME communities. The project has proven these are myths, and sets an example in the city that a BAME project could be a real asset for the city who can not only reach out to BAME people – in fact we can reach out and support people from all backgrounds regardless of race, faith, gender, class, age, disability, learning disability and sexuality. – **Mahi Ahmed (Chair and Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC)**

This has proved to be a much-needed project with people all across the city who have been affected in so many ways by the outbreak of Covid-19, having been able to access wholesome food. We have received many compliments regarding how tasty the meals have been. The project has also brought together a wonderful group of volunteers, all with different skills, using those skills as a team. Heartfelt thanks to every one of them, be they shoppers, chefs, drivers, co-ordinators, planners – each has played their part and shown great dedication. It's been such an honour to work with them. – **Kate Hannan (Secretary and Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC)**

It has been a pleasure and privilege to have used my cooking skills in a charitable way, and deliver bulk food items to residential homes, to support people in such challenging times. To assist and take part in this excellent project has been a great experience. – **Shahar Lashkor (Vice-Chair and Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC; Chair, Devon Bengali Association)**

I am really proud to have been part of the team involved in the Inclusive Exeter CIC Coronavirus Hardship Relief Project. In just a short space of time we set up a scheme which has helped so many people in need. Our project has delivered many hundred frozen meals, prepared by our chefs, which were then delivered by volunteer drivers right across Exeter. On occasion, when there has been an urgent need, we have even delivered as far as Tiverton. Individuals and families have been directly supported when they most need it and we are pleased that we have been able to deliver food to all who have asked for it. Referrals have come through statutory channels and from our own publicity on social media and in the press. The demand for food cupboard items has also been another successful aspect of the project. We must particularly thank Morrisons of Crediton and the charity, FareShare, for supplying food items on a weekly basis. We also thank Crediton Dairy, Exeter Morrisons and Exeter Tesco for also supplying items. Hundreds of people and families have been helped and these deliveries of food parcels have proved invaluable to so many people. It is heart-warming that many of those we helped were placing an order once a week to get them through the difficult times. One of our delivery drivers reported that after delivering the food and cupboard items to one person, the recipient burst into tears of joy. It transpired that that person had not eaten that day and was in a desperate situation. It was just one example of how important our service was. There are so many people who should be thanked for making the project possible when it was most needed. This includes our sponsors, the volunteer chefs, volunteer delivery drivers, those charities and supermarkets and businesses who gave the food items, which we were then able to distribute. Also thanks to those who supplied us with PPE and to our committee and administrator, Exeter City Council Environmental Health department and both Exeter City Council and Devon County Council. In addition, we were able to supply food items to many different communities in Exeter with food items, groups from the BAME community and others as well. I am truly grateful to all those involved because by coming together we have really helped people in our community. – **Alan Quick (Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC and CHRP Publicity Coordinator)**

The Filipino Community Association were absolutely blown away by the CHRP Covid food project. It's an amazing work of the Inclusive Exeter CIC team helping people in need during the difficult time of lockdown. Inclusive Exeter CIC based at Exwick Community Centre has now opened to continue sharing food to support the community. Marvellous job! – **Arlene Lewis (Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC; Lead, Filipino Community Association)**

It's been an honour to be a part of this project and to help some of those most vulnerable within the Exeter Community. – **Fayaaz Choudhury (Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC; Management Team Member, Exeter Mosque)**

The project came in a moment in which I felt the necessity of helping people, due to the circumstances that we were all experiencing. Therefore I welcomed the chance to be able to do something valuable for the community. It was also a great way to see how necessity had facilitated different community members could work together harmoniously so to achieve a common good! – **Valentina Todino (Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC; Lead, Italian Cultural Association Exeter)**

The CHRP provided a lifeline for people who couldn't leave their homes during the lockdown. I saw this first-hand, as I spoke to people while delivering food to them. For me, the project also exemplifies how minority communities can self-organise and work together to help the wider community. Working with the CHRP has therefore been an immensely rewarding experience for me. – **Raj Prashar (CHRP Volunteer)**

It has been a humbling journey to be part of the CHR Project and to see what amazing things can be achieved when people from diverse backgrounds come together with the simple ethos of making a better world for the vulnerable in our society. The project has made us realise how effective we can be when we work to fill gaps and overcome obstacles in order to achieve the objectives of the project. The positive vibes have been amazing and inspirational! – **Neomi Alam (Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC)**

Being part of this project has been an incredibly positive experience for everyone involved. It is amazing how people from all walks of life could come together and put on an initiative which supports so many people. I am keen for food support to continue for the foreseeable future. – **Prem Sivilal (Treasurer and Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC; President, Exeter Hindu Cultural Centre)**

Members of the Afghan community really appreciated the help at this hard time. We are pleased to have been part of it. – **Fasihullah Hakimi (Lead, Afghan Community Association)**

Exeter Malayalee Association (EMA) really appreciate the support we got in terms of the supply of grocery items through Inclusive Exeter CIC. We made 64 bags and given them to 64 of EMA's families. They all conveyed their gratitude via our official WhatsApp group. – **Roby Varghese (Director, Inclusive Exeter CIC; Project Coordinator, Exeter Malayalee Association)**

I was one of the many who volunteered with Inclusive Exeter CIC to deliver frozen meals & food parcels during the Covid19 emergency lockdown. I also had the good fortune to be invited to attend a few of the Steering Committee meetings. I was really struck by the friendly atmosphere & a real sense of camaraderie amongst the steering group members underlined by enthusiasm, motivation and professional approach. These weekly meetings were impressive in the detailed examination of resources & needs and had rigorous transparent reporting of accounts. The whole experience was inspiring & enriching. The work is a shining example of how communities working together can help & support one other to the advantage of all. – **Councillor Amal Ghusain (Portfolio Holder for Equalities, Diversity & Communities, Exeter City Council)**

The project didn't just have direct impact in terms of reducing the stress of organising meals faced by those going through a tough time. There was also a knock-on effect in terms of key workers not needing to worry about organising meals, which allowed them to focus on their roles which are crucial in ensuring society continues to function at a challenging time. – **Muktar Ahmed (Exwick Community Centre Manager)**

What Beneficiaries Have Said

Thank you so much
for my food package,
it's helped me loads
as my income is
really low at the
moment

Thank you so much
for the books, my 3
grandchildren will
really enjoy them

Thank you for Bill's
groceries!!! You have
all done an amazing
job keeping people fed,
cared about and
protected

Thank you very
much for the
curries and food
which were
delivered today-
much appreciated

Just want to say
thank you for
the food parcels,
it has helped I'm
so grateful

People Involved



The team meet weekly via Zoom to review progress

A range of people played critical roles to ensure the CHRP succeeds:

1. Shahar Lashkor (Devon Bengali Association) – preparing/cooking meals, Steering Group member
2. Prem Sivlal (Exeter Hindu Cultural Centre) – preparing/cooking meals, Steering Group member
3. Neomi Alam (Devon Bengali Association) – packing meals, Steering Group member
4. Arlene Lewis (Filipino Community Association) – taking orders, Steering Group member
5. Valentina Todino (Italian Cultural Association) – preparing/cooking meals, Steering Group member
6. Fayaaz Choudhury (Exeter Mosque) – Steering Group member
7. Roby Varghese (Exeter Malayalee Association) – Steering Group member
8. Fasihullah Hakimi (Afghan Community Association) – Steering Group member
9. Councillor Amal Ghusain (Portfolio Holder Equalities, Diversity & Communities) – advisory member
10. Raj Prashar – taking orders, Steering Group member
11. Alan Quick – publicity, Steering Group member
12. Kate Hannan – taking orders, Steering Group member
13. Mahi Ahmed – Steering Group member
14. Exeter City Council Environmental Health Team – advisory member
15. Muktar Ahmed – managing IT systems, collating/analysing data, Steering Group member

We had 33 volunteers in the CHRP, many of whom undertook the role of delivering meals to beneficiaries.

Funder and Donor Acknowledgement

The CHRP was only possible because we received funding and donations, as outlined below, and we are grateful for these contributions.

- Exeter City Council – COVID-19 Community Action Fund: £976.58
- Devon Community Foundation - Devon Coronavirus Response and Recovery Fund: £2,500.00
- UNISON Exeter City Branch: £500.00
- Monetary Donations Received from Individuals: £1,055.00
- Online Fundraiser by Tim Fairhead: £180.00
- 'In-Kind' Donations from FareShare – ambient/cupboard food items
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Morrisons Crediton – ambient/cupboard food items
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Morrisons Exeter – ambient/cupboard food items
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Tesco Exeter – ambient/cupboard food items
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Crediton Dairy – lifelong milk
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Goa Spice – meals for on-duty police and NHS staff
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Exeter Food Action – commodities
- 'In-Kind' Donations from Shillingford Organics – commodities
- Publicity 'shout-outs' from Radio Exe

Ambient Food Parcels and Future Continuity

The CHRP initially focused solely on frozen ready meals but observation, conversation and 'in-kind' support quickly showed us there was need for ambient/cupboard items. This helped us greatly enhance our positive impact on communities.

- FareShare made weekly donations of ambient/cupboard items in substantially large bulks. Morrisons Crediton also made a number of donations of ambient/cupboard items, often once a week. We used the items received to prepare and distribute food parcels that went out with frozen meals, as well as fulfilling requests without frozen meals. These have been distributed to:
 - Members/Communities of our Partner Organisations – covering 655 members
 - Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital
 - Exwick Health Centre
 - St Matt's Church
 - Court Retirement Residence, Cranbrook
 - Dartmouth Caring
 - Red House Homeless Shelter
 - Exeter City Football Club (who distributed collected items further)
- Crediton Dairy have donated a substantial amount of lifelong milk, which we distributed.
- We collaborated with Goa Spice to provide meals for on-duty police and NHS staff.

While the CHRP has ended, we are exploring the possibility of continuing some form of food distribution moving forwards, as part of running Exwick Community Centre.

Photographs



Milk from Crediton Dairy



Delivery to Exwick Health Centre



Delivery to RD&E Hospital



Another delivery to RD&E Hospital



Goa Spice delivery to RD&E hospital



Another Morrisons donation

The Statistical Data

1. Total Number of UNIQUE Beneficiaries: 998

(NB: This incorporates the total number of people that benefitted from frozen meals or food parcels, even if requests were also for/on behalf of other people – e.g. other family members. As such, children are counted towards this number. Recurring orders from the same people have been excluded from this number, to ensure the total number of **UNIQUE** people benefiting is captured accurately and not over-stated. This includes mass distributions to our own Partner Organisations, residential homes, a homeless shelter, junior doctors and nurses, and a church group.)

2. Total Number of Requesters: 108

(NB: This represents the total number of individuals that requested frozen meals or food parcels, but does not incorporate the total number of people they have requested for. This is found in the first headline number above. This figure excludes mass distributions as these were organised differently to bespoke requests from individuals.)

3. Total Number of Requests: 378

(NB: This is representative of requests from individuals, even recurring ones. It excludes mass distributions as these were organised differently to bespoke requests from individuals.)

4. Among the numbers above, this includes not just individuals but also mass distributions to members/communities of our own Partner Organisations, a group of junior doctors and nurses, residential homes, a homeless shelter and a church group.

Areas Delivered To

The CHRP reached beneficiaries right across Exeter. We covered a range of wards/areas including Alphington, Exwick, Heavitree, Pennsylvania, Pinhoe, St Thomas, Topsham, Whipton and Wonford. It is clear that the CHRP was much needed in a range of communities. The CHRP's coverage was mainly concentrated to the Exeter area, but a few beneficiaries reside further afield. We have also delivered ready meals and food parcels to Cranbrook, Dartmouth, Exminster and Tiverton.