



Food Glorious Food

Twenty weeks of COVID-19

The Storehouse

The Storehouse distributes food and meals to community groups across Bradford, who use it in their provision to communities and groups across the District - whether that be afternoon snacks for activity centres working with disadvantaged children, lunch clubs for refugees and asylum seekers, or community meals for the elderly and isolated.

We also provide pay-as-you-feel mini markets to community centres and groups around the city, to enable people to shop with dignity for fresh fruit and vegetables at whatever price they can afford.

The Storehouse is part of Inn Churches, a registered charity #1149792.

A crisis hits

In early March, as the stark reality of COVID-19 hit, Inn Churches took stock of where we were and anticipated being forced to close towards the end of March as lockdown was imposed. Our Winter Shelter closed two weeks early and guests were put into B&B accommodation supported by the local HOP (Homelessness Outreach Partnership) team.

In mid-March we were approached by Bradford Council to ask whether we would support Bradford's COVID-19 response, purchasing and supplying food to local Foodbanks. So after some careful (and quick) planning and discussions between staff and Trustees, we accepted the challenge and remained open.

Our response

Our work over the following five months included:

- liaising regularly with the Council to coordinate emergency food to 21 foodbanks across the Bradford District
- purchasing stock to sufficient levels to fulfill orders from all 21 foodbanks, processing, sorting and delivering it
- liaising with VCS services and foodbanks to ensure demand was met
- preparing meals and food parcels for homeless guests placed in hotels
- delivering food to NHS workers and other emergency services
- liaising weekly with Feeding Bradford to ensure strategic supply of food and accurate reporting of data.

Start: 15th March 2020

Finish: 21st August 2020

Special thanks...

...to FareShare Yorkshire, Morrisons and Feeding Britain, for their generosity of supply and funding in support of the Council work.



"We are so very grateful for the food we have received via you which has been invaluable as we seek to support out local community in food crisis. In the early days when food was difficult to get hold of, knowing we had a source of supplies was a lifeline. As time has moved on, with the implications upon our own church finances, having access to the food from Inn Churches has been fantastic. The prompt delivery and friendly staff have also made the whole experience fantastic! Thank you so much. Keep up all your good work!"

Bradford Citadel Salvation Army

"First of all thank you so much for all you have done to keep things going from the Storehouse and to Gary for his efficiency with delivery. Bingley people have been good at donating food but at the beginning when it was difficult to get things in bulk, and when demand was high or when things were not available on the shelves, a central supply was invaluable. If we bought things in bulk from the shops when there was a shortage other shoppers were not best pleased! The supply of sanitiser and masks and gloves was also greatly appreciated."

Bingley Foodbank

"Lockdown was immensely challenging for our 'Share Table' at St John's Great Horton, just as it was for all food banks in our city. Normally, we welcome people into the building for soup and bread, and enable them to have dignity by buying their own food and household goods for incredibly cheap prices (though of course we would always give emergency food to those presenting as destitute). With the advent of COVID-19, our dedicated team went into full 'emergency mode'. No longer could we welcome people in, but instead we pre-prepared emergency three-day food parcels to hand out freely at the front of church. Additionally, whereas pre-COVID our numbers averaged about 60, at the height of lockdown we averaged 100 food parcels per week, and some weeks well exceeded that. When it became obvious to us at the start of lockdown that we needed to significantly change our mode of operation, we wondered how we would manage - both in terms of the stocks needed, and the cost required. This is where huge gratitude goes to our partners at The Storehouse, Bradford Council, and Feeding Bradford for supporting the increased demand we faced. The Council grant funding, and the way in which Storehouse consistently met our increased food orders, meant that we could respond to the crisis - and the way it compounded the needs our community already faced - in ways that would otherwise have been impossible. On behalf of St John's Church and our work in the community of Great Horton and surrounding areas, I cannot state our appreciation of our aforementioned partners clearly and abundantly enough."

St John's Great Horton

What we did

Stocking up

Alongside Feeding Bradford (now Feeding Bradford and Keighley), Bradford VCS and the Council, we coordinated the foodbank operations.

As purchasing food in volume is not our usual business, we set up a new stock recording system to ensure that we could effectively monitor the food supplies and maintain their integrity. Initially Feeding Bradford collated orders centrally, but as it became apparent these needed to be managed internally we took over collating the orders alongside managing and monitoring the stock. Feeding Bradford monitored food parcel data collection from foodbanks.

Initially there were stock issues as panic buying had depleted stock and staff were furloughed across the country, so it seemed at times as if 20% of the country were doing 80% of the work. Some food lines were impossible to get such as tinned meat, flour and pasta sauce. As DEFRA provided food parcels for shielded groups, a lot of stock was purchased by the big companies supplying them. Fortunately, an amazing effort from Fareshare (10%), Morrisons (30%) and Feeding Britain (25%), along with our regular partners and our existing stock, meant that we were able to keep supporting as many projects as possible. In addition to the purchased stock we were overwhelmed with generous responses from the local catering and restaurant industry, to whom we are very grateful.

We were also able to work closely with the temporary Broadway Food Hub to help them set up and to coordinate supplies.

We rapidly became very familiar with Zoom meetings until we stabilised in our new orbit.



Monitoring processes

1. Purchased quantity and weight
2. Foodbank control sheet
3. Council expenditure sheet
4. Line-by-Line product distribution by supplier and recipient
5. Line by line distribution overview

Staffing: bringing in the army

We knew when we took on the project that our existing staffing levels would not be sufficient to deliver sufficient food to those groups who required it. Four of our eight staff were either furloughed, isolating or working from home, and many of our regular volunteers were also isolating.

Mindful of the need to minimise contact and keep our 'bubble' as small as possible, the Trustees approached our project manager's son, formerly of the Coldstream Guards, to recruit three colleagues to volunteer to assist with the safely-distanced operational work supporting our existing logistics team. They helped with collecting and sorting stock, delivering food to foodbanks, and fitting out and stocking our new social supermarket (more on that later). We also recruited two additional warehouse and delivery staff.

We are very grateful to Participate Projects who supported us with a 'man and a van', and Hendersons who provided another van - in the first six weeks of lockdown we quadrupled our throughput and needed four extra vans. The team all worked overtime, including five evenings a week between them collecting food, and we put in over 6,000 safely-distanced staff hours (8 staff) and 3,000 volunteer hours (12 volunteers) over the length of the project.

Hot Dinners

Guests from our Winter Shelter, as well as homeless guests from other shelters across Bradford, were placed by the Council in hotels. We were called upon to cook and serve freshly-made meals for up to 60 guests each day on two days each week, plus providing a weekend's worth of food each Friday, for fourteen weeks - around 1,550 nutritionally balanced meals.

We also provided 80 recipe bags, each containing recipes and ingredients for six people, to a local community organisation, and a further 210 recipe parcels for three local schools.

Guests had often been given a microwave and kettle so were able to reheat the food, and our Cooking @ The Storehouse team were able to make a day's cooked food and snacks, which was supplemented by fresh sandwiches donated by The CPU, and ready meals and other food donated by Feeding Britain and the

Community Shop. It often took the HOP team two car loads to deliver them.

This meal provision encouraged homeless guests to stay safely inside, and meant that feeding projects were able to manage their clients and workload. We also supported the Immanuel Project with extra food as they were supplying up to 500 meals a week.

More than Food

Alongside food, we were asked to support Bradford VCS by delivering other items:

- MIND leaflets
- Feeding Britain Leaflets
- PPE and other non-food items
- Thousands of activity packs from several different organisations.

Business as usual?

Although many of the groups we regularly support suspended their services - at least initially - our team still processed 136 tonnes of donated and intercepted food (completely separate to the food purchased for the council). As groups began to resume services, this food allowed us to support our regular client groups as and when they needed food, including community groups, faith groups, asylum and refugee projects, homeless provision, schools and other organisations.

Our Cooking @ The Storehouse team had to cancel our Easter classes, but they were kept busy preparing meals (see earlier), and also found time to create a set of online educational 'cook along' videos for some of the groups and schools they regularly work with. They also joined the Healthy Holidays programme again and from the start of the summer holidays ran socially-distanced open air kids' cooking classes at our new Shaw House venue (see over). In total 46 workshops are planned, with 31 completed so far, at which 119 children and 99 adults cooked a satisfying meal together, each taking home their meal and a goody bag at the end.

Whilst we had to suspend our welfare support work at the start of lockdown, we worked with some of our referral agencies to support half a dozen individuals with emergency household items and furniture, and reconfigured our support services to reopen safely at the beginning of August.



Shaw House

Back in November 2019, Feeding Bradford were approached by Shaw Moisture Meters who had an empty building and wanted to give back to Bradford. As we were looking for a central venue and no one else in the network was able to take up the offer, we agreed to take on the premises, which we had initially hoped would open in March.

When the crisis hit, the building and refurbishment work which had already started ground to a halt, but once we had got over the initial weeks of planning and reconfiguring our service, our CEO was able to continue project-managing the transformation of the former brewery building into a new social supermarket, cookery school and homeless outreach centre. Funding from Feeding Britain allowed us to fit out the supermarket, and a Homeless Link grant allowed us to install a shower and washing machine for homeless guests to use.

Work completed has included:

- clearing the building, removing the bar and pumps area and replacing the flooring
- creating disabled access and making the site secure with a new gate
- installing a new kitchen,
- fitting out the supermarket area and working with Fareshare and Morrisons to stock it
- creating an outside socially-distanced cookery school, with thanks to Bradford Markets for the loan of marquees and to Participate Projects for creating the planters
- ensuring all health & safety, pest control and fire safety measures are in place
- implementing COVID-19 safety measures.

“We're delighted to have supported Inn Churches in their social supermarket project! This supermarket is going to open soon, a well stocked shop selling fresh and long-life goods.

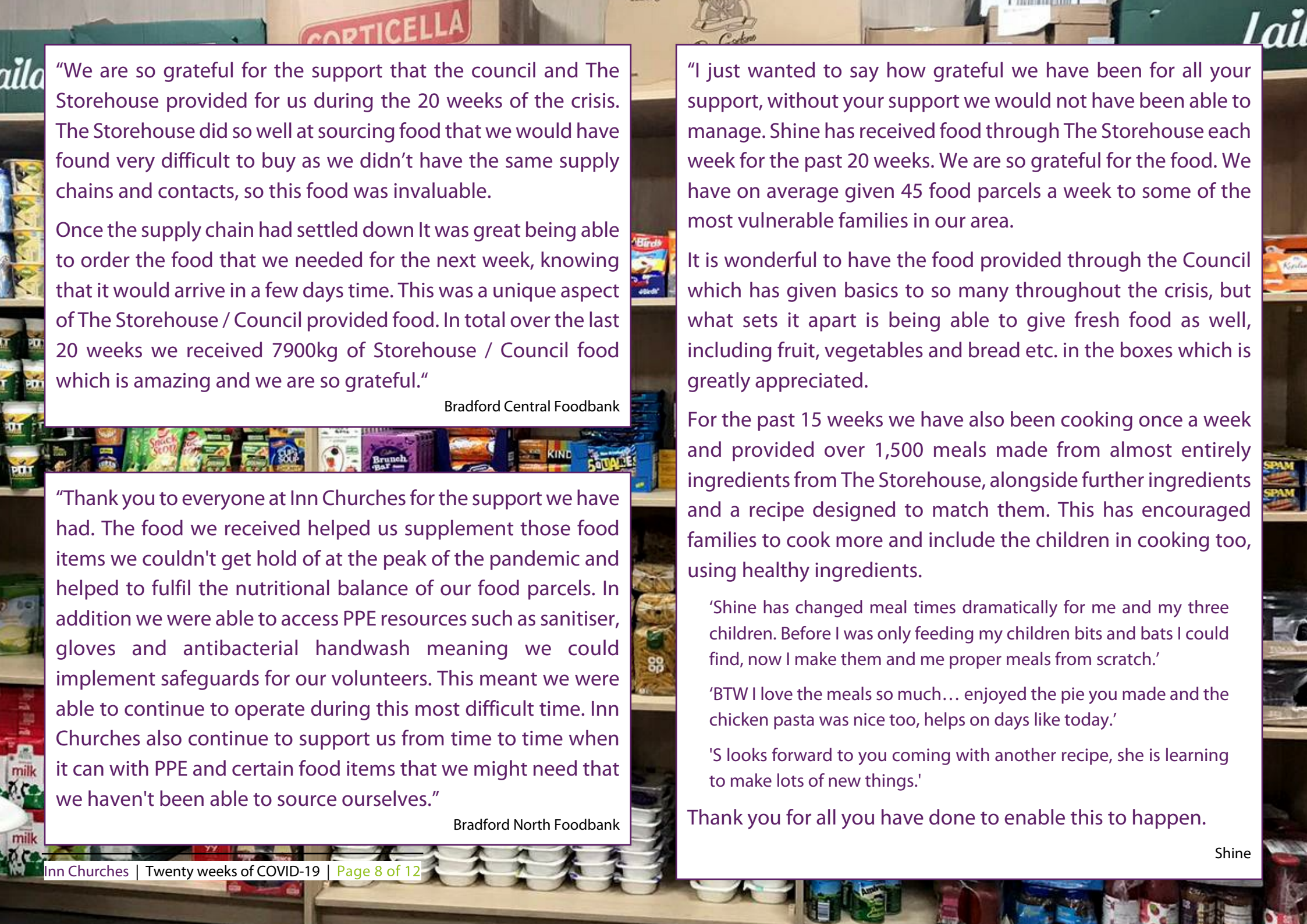
This is part of Inn Churches' long-term strategy to tackle food poverty across Bradford, and to reduce reliance on foodbanks and free food provision.

Members will gain a discount of up to two-thirds on their weekly food shopping, compared with what they would pay in regular supermarkets.

They will also get unique access to Inn Churches' Jamie's Ministry of Food cookery classes, and free hot meals during school holidays as part of the Healthy Holidays scheme.”

Feeding Britain





"We are so grateful for the support that the council and The Storehouse provided for us during the 20 weeks of the crisis. The Storehouse did so well at sourcing food that we would have found very difficult to buy as we didn't have the same supply chains and contacts, so this food was invaluable.

Once the supply chain had settled down It was great being able to order the food that we needed for the next week, knowing that it would arrive in a few days time. This was a unique aspect of The Storehouse / Council provided food. In total over the last 20 weeks we received 7900kg of Storehouse / Council food which is amazing and we are so grateful."

Bradford Central Foodbank

"Thank you to everyone at Inn Churches for the support we have had. The food we received helped us supplement those food items we couldn't get hold of at the peak of the pandemic and helped to fulfil the nutritional balance of our food parcels. In addition we were able to access PPE resources such as sanitiser, gloves and antibacterial handwash meaning we could implement safeguards for our volunteers. This meant we were able to continue to operate during this most difficult time. Inn Churches also continue to support us from time to time when it can with PPE and certain food items that we might need that we haven't been able to source ourselves."

Bradford North Foodbank

"I just wanted to say how grateful we have been for all your support, without your support we would not have been able to manage. Shine has received food through The Storehouse each week for the past 20 weeks. We are so grateful for the food. We have on average given 45 food parcels a week to some of the most vulnerable families in our area.

It is wonderful to have the food provided through the Council which has given basics to so many throughout the crisis, but what sets it apart is being able to give fresh food as well, including fruit, vegetables and bread etc. in the boxes which is greatly appreciated.

For the past 15 weeks we have also been cooking once a week and provided over 1,500 meals made from almost entirely ingredients from The Storehouse, alongside further ingredients and a recipe designed to match them. This has encouraged families to cook more and include the children in cooking too, using healthy ingredients.

'Shine has changed meal times dramatically for me and my three children. Before I was only feeding my children bits and bats I could find, now I make them and me proper meals from scratch.'

'BTW I love the meals so much... enjoyed the pie you made and the chicken pasta was nice too, helps on days like today.'

'S looks forward to you coming with another recipe, she is learning to make lots of new things.'

Thank you for all you have done to enable this to happen.

Shine

“On behalf of the Destitution Project I would like to say a huge thank you as without the support we have received we would not have been able to sustain the food provision that we provide weekly to residents over the last four months.

We had issues sourcing food: not only was there nothing on the shelves, and limitations on purchasing, but also we rely on mature donors in the community who were unable to go out and buy supplies or provide us with supplies due to shielding.

Many of our volunteers who previously would assist with sourcing food were also having to shield.

With fewer donations coming in and the lack of access to food, the support we have received from yourselves has enabled us to continue providing our weekly food provision during these unprecedented times.”

The Destitution Project, Abigail Housing

Challenges

We faced a number of challenges through this project, due in no small part to the rapidly changing situation and the need to respond quickly to changing circumstances.

The length of the service was much more than anticipated. As the needs and requests grew the staffing requirement and therefore cost increased.

The initial Council calculations were based on an average food parcel cost of £15, when in reality foodbanks are distributing parcels of varying sizes, some worth up to £30. Despite these, through careful ordering and seeking out keen pricing we were able to meet demand within the existing budget for food.

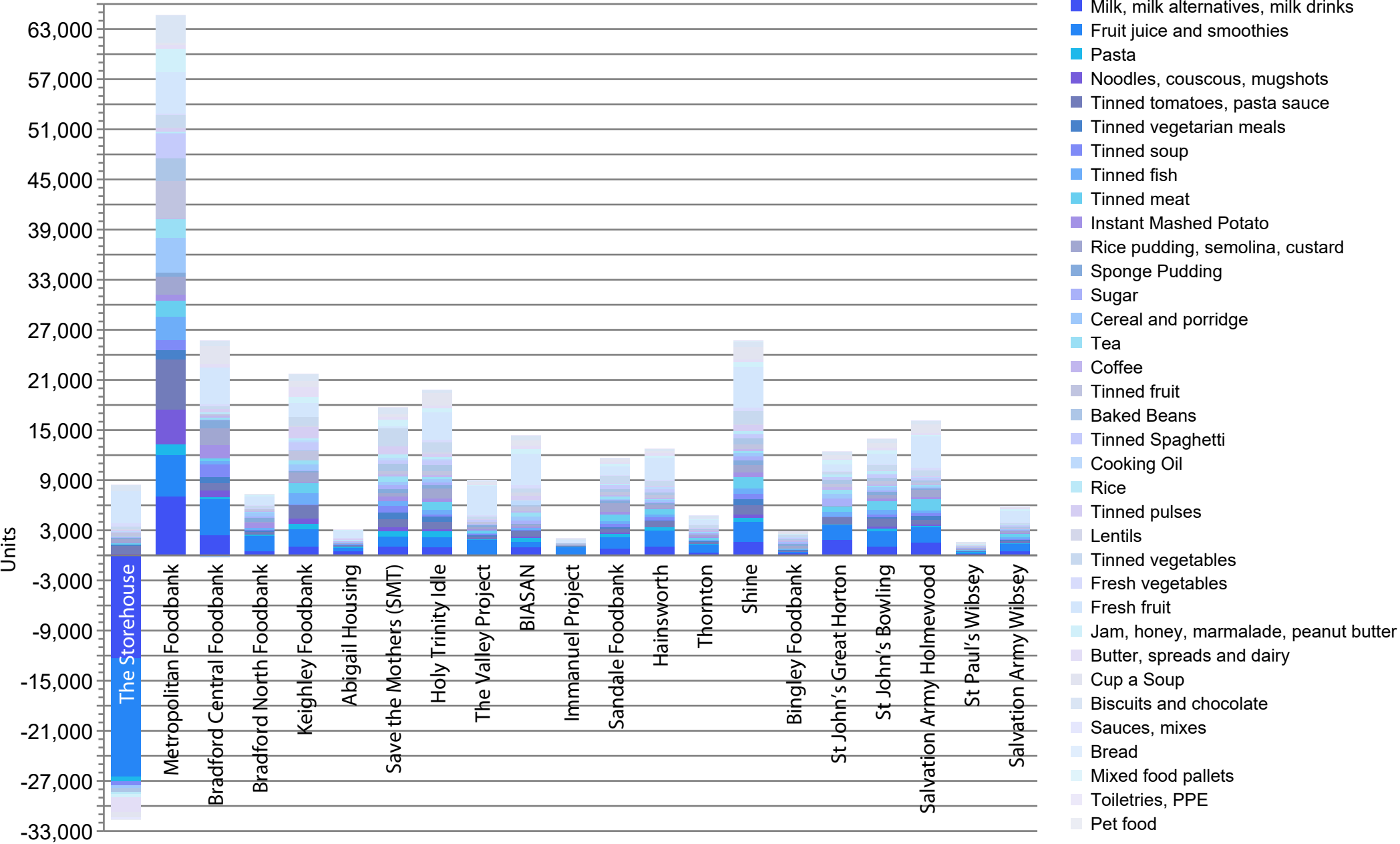
Funding from the Council was only paid in arrears, contracts were given on a monthly basis and the lead Council contact changed several times, all of which made planning somewhat difficult and means that work was often being done on a verbal promise of funds only. Promised funds for July have not yet been forthcoming.

In the early days of the crisis, food supplies were very difficult to get hold of and many supply lines were entirely unavailable. In particular, some foodbanks reported that although they had funding for food, empty shelves in supermarkets and purchase restrictions meant that they were not able to bulk buy enough stock.

DEFRA’s parallel work in providing food for shielded groups was invaluable, but sometimes meant that stock lines they were purchasing were in extremely short supply for us and others.

One unexpected challenge was that the Council funding distorted our normal funding mix and prevented us from making a number of applications for COVID-19 support from other sources.

Food distributed



Budget

	Council funding	* Feeding Britain	* Inn Churches	Total
Income	£192,250	£10,478		
Grants & donations	£192,250	£10,478		
Expenditure	£208,643	£10,478	£29,310	£248,430
Direct Project Costs				
Equipment & furnishings	£0	£0	£1,755	£1,755
Food supplies	£168,900	£10,478	£0	£179,377
Non-food and cleaning supplies	£2,071	£0	£0	£2,071
Transportation	£3,871	£0	£0	£3,871
Grants to other organisations				
Feeding Bradford consultancy (20 days)	£5,000	£0	£0	£5,000
Immanuel Project additional opening	£3,800	£0	£0	£3,800
Overheads	£0	£0	£5,056	£5,056
Personnel	£25,000	£0	£22,499	£47,499
Net	(£16,393)	£0	(£29,310)	(£45,703)

Donated stock (valued at cost)

£4,558

* These amounts were spent on the Council project, but not funded by the Council.





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