

## **'KL Community': Hub, Cupboard, Food Club & Community Lunches**

### **Request for funding from KL Town Council - Supporting information**

#### **The Background**

Our volunteer telephone helpline 'The Hub' was established in March last year and has helped out with just under 1000 tasks, such as picking up prescriptions and collecting shopping for vulnerable and shielding residents. The Town Council kindly agreed to fund the initial 12 month rental cost for the Hub phone number. A team of 7 trained and supported call handlers receive calls Monday to Friday 10-1pm and the service has been an enormous support for the town. Additionally, The Hub was supported by a team of six individuals, later joined by Councillor Mike Burchnall, who met at the start of each day via Zoom to assess and react to a fast-moving situation as the community descended into its first lockdown. Gradually these daily zooms became Mon-Friday then by late Autumn this became a weekly review. Whilst an incredibly experienced team continued to run this lifeline it remained without a constitution and looking for a more sustainable home.

The Community Cupboard (CC) was established in May 2020 by volunteers in response to the Covid-19 crisis and the growing concern for those in our community who were suffering from the financial impact of the crisis, replicating similar initiatives across the country and at the request of established Foodbanks who were no longer able to offer a service to clients at a distance. We consulted our primary and secondary schools, as well as front-line care providers in the area, and they all stressed that they were seeing an increase in the number of people who were struggling and agreed there was an urgent need to set up an initiative like the CC to support our community during these unprecedented times. When the CC was initially set up, we were also providing support to households within the Sedbergh area after a request from Councillor Suzie Pye. We have now supported Sedbergh to set up their own operations on very similar lines to our own CC, they now support over 100 members in a Food Club with an accompanying CC. We hope to help other satellite groups set up in the future.

The Community Cupboard is a non-profit charitable organisation, currently the constitution states its purposes are to a) provide donated/surplus food to residents within our local communities (Kirkby Lonsdale and its surrounding areas) who are in need of support and b) help to reduce food waste. Our mission is to alleviate food poverty, period poverty and reduce food waste. Our values are to be respectful of all, maintaining confidentiality and dignity at all times. (*\*Given the rapid growth of the CC in response to change, this constitution needs to be reviewed, with a broader aim that reflects the range of wellbeing initiatives now being addressed*).

QES responded quickly to our urgent search for premises back in May and provided a base for us at the Lunesdale Sports Hall – this helped us to establish the CC very quickly. As schools prepared to re-open at the end of the summer, we needed to find new premises, and with support from Neil Anderson and the KLRUFC, we were able to relocate to the Rugby Club - which is where we are currently based.

The Hub and CC are run by over 40 amazing volunteers, and donations both financial and foodstuffs have continued to flow in from individuals, organisations and businesses in the community. For ease of management and to ensure all volunteers feel part of the Community Covid response team, The Hub and CC have now merged, and together we are now running the Hub helpline, the Community Cupboard, a weekly Food Club, and most recently introducing twice weekly Community Lunches and frozen family meals. As we focus our attentions on delivering urgent support, the name and official structure comprising these joint initiatives is yet to be discussed and decided, but for the purposes of this request we are referring to our joint operation as 'KL Community'.

## Who are we?

'KL Community' is a volunteer-led, community venture, bringing people together who are both passionate about, and committed to, supporting their community. Our management committee currently consist of 13 individuals representing a wide range of groups and organisations in our community, including local businesses, Lunesdale Surgery, St Mary's School, the CIC, the Churches, KLRUFC, the farming community, and most recently - the Town Council.

We are completely reliant on, and work in partnership with, an army of over 40 volunteers – all sharing a true desire to support the community however they can. Whilst our volunteers remain committed, volunteer capacity has been significantly impacted by school closures – with many now restricted by home schooling and childcare commitments, and people shielding and self-isolating. We are also having to operate with minimal volunteer numbers to reduce Covid infection risks as much as possible.

With such rapid expansion and concerns over our capacity to sustain operations and meet demand, we applied for funding towards a part-time paid Coordinator. We secured funding to cover this role for 6 months, which we have now recruited for and is now in place on a job share basis until June 2021.

## What do we do?

'KL Community' currently operates 4 community initiatives:

- **The Hub**

The Hub is a volunteer run phone-line, providing information and practical help whilst self-isolating, or just a calm and friendly voice. It aims to offer practical support with shopping, picking up prescriptions etc to those unable to leave their house or don't feel comfortable about going out. The Hub phone line is currently open Monday - Friday, 10am - 1pm (answering machine at other times).

- **The Cupboard**

The CC has been created to head off any crisis situations, it doesn't operate to feed the starving, it operates to provide greater options for those living with existing or new challenges on their budgets. This might be ongoing or a change of circumstances, or unexpected bill demands. We all operate better if we can continue through challenging times with our dignity intact and the knowledge that we belong to a community that cares, as our community demonstrably does. As winter descended, the CC recognised the need to reach out to older household who were isolated because of deteriorating weather and a new lockdown, this was primarily to provide a welfare check in on a weekly basis whilst also providing some basic foodstuffs. The CC currently also delivers food orders to a number of households requesting assistance and over the festive period delivered 64 Christmas hampers to families and elderly residents nominated by family, friends and neighbours. This proved a valuable exercise in introducing the Cupboard to a larger vulnerable group.

- **Food Club**

Over the summer we launched our 'Food Club' (FC) to further address our food waste mission, and support households in a more accessible way. FC is a Fareshare initiative which aims to reduce food waste, whilst also reducing food bills ([www.fareshare.org.uk](http://www.fareshare.org.uk)). Volunteers collect food from Preston which has been redirected from landfill by Fareshare (now being delivered by Fareshare most weeks), food is then shared out among its members. FC is run by and for its members (members pay a small annual fee of £6 and £3 per week for a share in the food - this goes towards paying Fareshare). FC has so-far proved tremendously successful, currently with 81 members (244 people

benefitting). We have found that Food Club works with and supports the Community Cupboard extremely well.

- **Community Lunches**

Most recently we have started Community Lunches, an initiative aiming to reduce isolation and support vulnerable groups through this latest lockdown, providing a hot meal and a friendly hello twice a week. We are now sending out around 100 meals a week, to people aged 2-100 years old. For families we also provide frozen meals, so it's one less dinner to think about with the difficulties of home-schooling. Demand for Community Lunches has more than doubled since we began on the 16<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Who do we support?**

Anyone from Kirkby Lonsdale and its surrounding areas that could do with extra support is welcome to access the CC; households that are facing unexpected dips in income, extra pressure on their household budgets, or simply in need of a familiar face checking in (this includes families, couples and those isolated and alone). Where possible we have a formal registration process (through our website [www.klcommunity.co.uk](http://www.klcommunity.co.uk), or via a phone call to the Hub) and basic details are required. We do not require applicants to meet criteria as such; we felt it was important that we are available to all who needed support. Our research showed that a referral model, like those that are adopted within larger cities and towns, would not work as well in our smaller rural community.

'Surrounding areas' covers approximately a 5-mile radius of Kirkby Lonsdale. Whilst the committee decided not to have a strict boundary as such, those who approach the CC from an area which already has a community initiative that can offer support, we re-direct them towards support that is nearest to them if appropriate. The committee feels it is important to ensure the facility is there for everyone to access as and when they need to, the CC is a mutual aid concept and requires trust and a community centred approach.

The Hub covers similar areas - Hub details have been shared far and wide via AKL and requests are received from relatives living away enquiring on behalf of elderly kin.

We have an approximate radius of 3 miles for Community Lunches.

### **Next steps for 'KL Community'**

In addition to offering continued support through the HUB, the Cupboard and running the weekly Food-Club, our immediate priorities include:

- **Expansion of Community Lunches**

The need and demand for Community Lunches has far exceeded our expectations. We are looking at ways of how we can expand the initiative beyond the end of March cut off (which was the initial end date that was set).

- **Combatting isolation and loneliness**

The impact of continuing isolation is fast becoming a significant issue that we need and want to address. In addition to the Community Lunches, which helps to reduce a feeling of isolation, we are now looking into ways we can offer remote social connection opportunities.

- **Mental health and well-being**

In many ways our volunteers are on the front-line of community support, and we can find ourselves in situations that are both emotional and difficult. We want to make sure we have the right skills and guidance to support others as well as one another. As such we are now exploring relevant mental

health training for our committee and volunteers and have secured funding via Cumbria County Council to help pay for Mental Health First Aid training.

### **The immediate need for funding**

We are fortunate as a community to have received both financial support from local businesses, and many kind individuals giving their time, premises, their expertise, food donations and financial support over the past 11 months. We were extremely grateful to receive initial grants from both the Town Council and the Churches which helped us get the Hub and CC set up. Since then, we have been continuously seeking and applying for funding, including:

- £5,000 grant from the Cumbria Community Foundation COVID-19 Response funding to support The Community Cupboard over the first 6 months (grant now ended)
- £2,700 grant from the Masonic Charitable Foundation and the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cumberland and Westmorland Freemasons to support the Community Cupboard.
- £8,100 grant from DEFRA via South Lakeland District Council (towards rent, food provision and mental health training)
- £8,000 grant from Cumbria Community Foundation Covid-response fund (towards a part-time Cupboard and Hub co-ordinator post for 6 months).
- £2,500 grant Local Connections Grant through The National Lottery Community (recently secured to help cover the costs of Community Lunches).
- Application to the Holehird Trust for funding to support ways to reduce isolation (awaiting decision).

Whilst we currently have funds to continue our operation in the immediate short-term, it is vital we secure funds to ensure we can sustain the level of activity and meet the growing demand for our services. The number of people accessing support has risen steadily over the last 11 months, and we are sadly very aware that the impact of COVID-19, together with the pre-existing issues that it has uncovered, will remain. “South Lakeland has been disproportionately affected in terms of furloughed workers due to the areas reliance on the tourism and hospitality sector” (Cllr Pye referring to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the area) and across the region there has been a surge in numbers of people accessing food banks and community initiatives like the Community Cupboard. Since the crisis began, we have seen a steady increase in households accessing the Cupboard, calls to the Hub have again increased since January, food club membership is almost full, and the need and demand for Community Lunches has far exceeded our initial expectations. It is vital that, at the very least, we can maintain our current capacity to offer these initiatives that together have created a safety net of support for our community.

### **Future of ‘KL Community’**

The ‘KL Community’ initiatives have been created out of the pandemic crisis but now it exists in Kirkby Lonsdale the hope is that it will become a part of the glue that holds the community together. We have already seen so many off shoots from this, new friendships, crop sharing, a generosity of time, money and caring. Although this was established in response to current unprecedented circumstances, and this remains our immediate priority, we believe there is a longer-term opportunity to establish a sustainable, mutual aid and community centred approach to support the most vulnerable and encourage mental and physical wellbeing amongst residents of Kirkby Lonsdale and surroundings.

## **Our funding request**

We would be extremely grateful if the Town Council would consider a grant of **£5,000 - to provide flexible core funding over the next 6 months**. We received an initial £5,000 grant from Cumbria Community Foundation (COVID-19 response fund), but this is now fully spent, and the COVID-19 response fund is now closed. We feel that requesting an amount to match this first grant, to support a further 6-month period is a realistic approach to take. So much is unknown and difficult to predict, and we understand the need to continuously evaluate a newly established operation. A grant from the TC would help in the following ways:

- **Contribute towards our core running costs**

Whilst we have benefitted from so much in-kind support, and the Rugby Club are only charging a small nominal rent, we do still have to cover continuing running costs including rent, PPE, additional food supplies & household provisions, Hub phone rental, insurance, volunteer expenses, equipment, and printing / publicity etc.

- **Continuation of the Community Lunch initiative**

As it stands, Community Lunches initiative is due to end at the end of March. Whilst our operational costs for the Community Lunches is currently covering its own costs this is due to two factors: Firstly, we are in receipt of Fareshare foods that arrive weekly and contribute greatly to the frozen family meals, this is an unpredictable source of food and cannot in any way be relied upon week by week; Secondly, our chefs Mel and Kerry Ormston are planning, preparing, cooking and serving up in excess of 100 meals per week without charging anything for their time and energy. Such generosity is only possible whilst their own business is unable to operate due to Covid-19, once they are able to trade again in a safe manner they will need to resume 'business as usual.' The cost of paying two kitchen staff will need to be found once this occurs.

- **Sustain our team capacity to continue to meet growing demands and support the community**

We know we have achieved so much in the short time we have been running and we desperately want to harness the commitment and passion that our small community led group is tirelessly demonstrating. Understanding that this commitment can only go so far on an unpaid voluntary basis, we applied for funding to secure a paid Coordinator role. The funding we have secured only covers a total of 18 hours per week, for 6 months. We are finding that the demands of the role are far exceeding the 18 hours, so we are looking for funds to both expand the number of hours and the length of time this covers.

- **Secure additional funding**

A grant from the TC would provide invaluable 'match' funding when we make applications to other funders towards expanding the Coordinator role, and for other future funding. It would also demonstrate we have local support, which will make a huge difference when applying for funding from both regional and national funders.

***The Community Cupboard Committee would like to thank Councillors for taking the time to consider our request. We hope this document provides all the information that is needed, but please do not hesitate to let us know should you require any further detail.***