



Redbridge Foodbank Strategic Vision

2026 – 2031

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	3
A RENEWED STRATEGIC VISION	7
VISION/ MISSION/ VALUES & OBJECTIVES.....	8
OUR UPDATED MISSION STATEMENT:	8
OUR UPDATED OBJECTIVES:.....	8
OUR CORE VALUES:	8
COMPASSION, COMMUNITY, DIGNITY, EMPOWERMENT & EQUITY	8
OBJECTIVE DRIVEN INITIATIVES	11
CURRENT INITIATIVES:	11
EMERGENCY FOOD DISTRIBUTION	11
FOOD DRIVES.....	11
STEP SIGNPOSTING RESOURCE.....	12
CITIZENS ADVICE REDBRIDGE (CAR) PARTNERSHIP	12
VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT	13
THE FUTURE INITIATIVES OF REDBRIDGE FOODBANK – MOVING TOWARDS A ONE STOP SHOP	15
RFB CAFÉ AT JUBILEE CHURCH	16
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE.....	16
LEARNING HUB.....	17
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE.....	17
PROVISION OF STORAGE ALONG WITH DELIVERY PARTNERSHIPS FOR OTHER LOCAL CHARITIES.....	18
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE.....	18
THE BROADMEAD WAREHOUSE	20
STRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OVERCOMING THEM	22
1. FUNDRAISING & INCOME GENERATION.....	22
INITIATIVES TO INCREASE AND PROTECT OUR REVENUE STREAMS:	22
2. REINTEGRATION OF DISTRIBUTION SITES.....	32
3. GOVERNANCE & TRUSTEE DEVELOPMENT	34
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE.....	34
4. PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TRUSSELL	36
5. FOOD PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY	37
6. LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HUNGER, POVERTY AND HARDSHIP	40
APPENDIX 1: THEORY OF CHANGE	44
END OF DOCUMENT	45

Introduction

At Redbridge Foodbank, we recognise the importance of adapting to an ever-changing landscape. Challenges such as increased demand for our services, a diminishing and competitive funding environment and evolving community needs necessitates innovative approaches, collaboration, and resilience. This plan reflects our commitment to addressing these challenges while staying true to our core values of:

Compassion, Community, Dignity, Empowerment & Equity

The development of this strategic plan involved engagement with a range of stakeholders, including beneficiaries, donors, partners, staff, and volunteers. Their insights and experiences have shaped our goals and strategies, ensuring that our plan is both ambitious and grounded in the realities of our work. This included interviewing those who have lived experience of poverty and as a client of Redbridge Foodbank. RFB values their insights hugely as they provide direct feedback on our activities, can bring a unique point of view to proposed new activities and act as a powerful measure of accountability for our organisation.

This document is more than a set of objectives; it is a call to action and an invitation to all who share our vision to join us in creating meaningful change. Together, we can build a stronger community in Redbridge, alleviate suffering and foster a brighter future for all.

We invite you to explore this strategic plan and learn how we aim to make a difference. With your support, we can transform this vision into reality and create lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

Background and historical context.

Redbridge Foodbank is a Christian organisation motivated by Jesus' teaching on poverty and injustice. We operate according to Christian principles of compassion, honesty, integrity, openness, kindness and care for all people, regardless of backgrounds or beliefs.

The foundational scripture widely associated with the foodbank movement and one that Redbridge Foodbank takes inspiration from is *Matthew 25:35-36*:

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you

clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Whilst we are a Christian organisation, we serve people of all faith groups and beliefs or none. We are passionate about inclusion and being non-judgemental is central to what we do. We believe that everyone has the right to have food on their plate, dignity, skills, a chance to work and hope for the future.

The Great Recession & 2008 Financial Crisis

Although poverty existed before 2007, (the last month of which is included in the formal recognition of the Great Recession) the UK saw an increase in the number of foodbanks and the numbers of clients using them:

- Trussell records a 226% increase in parcels distributed in 2007 compared to the year before with a further 51%, 87% and 58% increase in the subsequent years (2008, 2009 & 2010).
- In 2010/11, when Redbridge Foodbank was founded, Trussell supported around 35 food bank centres. This ballooned to 650 in 2013/14, expanding further to 1300 in 2019/20¹ and 1,699 foodbank centres in 2023/24.
- There is now an additional 1,172 independent foodbanks also operating.²

It was this initial boom of need that inspired the formation of Redbridge Foodbank and forged its mission to provide the people of Redbridge with emergency food in a time of crisis. It is noteworthy that even at the inception of RFB, while there was this great and growing need to feed people, the mission statement that was created referenced the need to “promote social inclusion” and “advance education & training” and empower people to “identify and meet their own needs”. Redbridge Foodbank has clearly always fostered a holistic approach to poverty prevention but has been stymied by crises and an unrelenting growth in need for its service.

The Covid -19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic is widely considered to be the greatest peacetime challenge of the 21st century. Redbridge Foodbank, and organisations like it, were particularly vulnerable to its devastating social effects, the legacies of which continue today.

Redbridge Foodbank was negatively impacted at both ends of its model - RFB had to respond to the increase in need for its services whilst at the same time completely

¹ Understanding the post-2010 increase in food bank use in England - <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-13738-0>

² House of Commons Library - <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8585/>

redesign its operational processes and procedures to comply with government-imposed restrictions. It is a testament to the strength and resilience of RFB, its staff, volunteers and supporters that RFB was able to achieve this and only be forced to close once for a limited time because of staff having to self-isolate.

In examining the legacies of the pandemic and its effects on RFB there are a mix of positive and negative aspects to consider when developing our strategy going forward:

- Regrettably the café which had operated at Jubilee Church and was the public face of Redbridge Foodbank had to be scrapped in order to comply with restrictions.
 - Due to the increase in demand that has sustained since the pandemic it has not been operationally viable to re-open the café.
 - This has meant the ability to create personal relationships between clients and volunteers has been dramatically reduced.
 - The initial conversation that took place about the clients' food parcel with the personalisation and element of choice that used to be standard has been lost to a more efficient and covid compliant system of prepacked parcels.
- Some positive aspects arising from the pandemic, include:
 - a substantial increase in financial income over this time, as foodbanks were in the zeitgeist.
 - Some donors (individuals and businesses) whose outgoings dramatically decreased were able to donate generously to trusted organisations such as Redbridge Foodbank.
 - However, both financial and food donations have returned to pre pandemic levels.
 - In the case of food donations, these have decreased dramatically falling below some levels prior to the pandemic.

Cost of living crisis 2022 – current

At the time of writing this document, the cost-of-living crisis is ongoing. After the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic, which itself came at the end of a decade of public spending reductions, a period of high inflation and rising prices, has resulted in Redbridge Foodbank being negatively impacted at both the supply and demand end of its model.

Like the challenges described before there has been yet another increase in demand to contend with. The only exception to this, with a slight reduction in demand for a short

period, after government lock down regulations lifted in July 2021 and the economy opened again.

Redbridge Foodbank, for the first time in its history, is now having to purchase food to supplement donations on a regular basis to keep up with the demand of people in need within our shared community.

- Unlike the previous challenges, donations from the public have not kept up with the rise in demand. During the financial crisis in 2008 donors were operating from a relatively high base in terms of finance and resources.
- Fast forward to 2022 and, regular donors, who previously would have described themselves as ‘comfortable,’ have had to reduce their outgoings, which, of course, includes charitable donations.
- In some cases, these previously comfortable people, are now clients of food banks. This decrease in donations and increase in demand represents an existential threat to the finances and overall survival of Redbridge Foodbank.

The socio-economic circumstances being faced by our community and the funding & third sector environment that faces Redbridge Foodbank today are very different from those faced in 2010 when Redbridge Foodbank was founded.

This new strategic vision enables Redbridge Foodbank to take stock of lessons learnt over the past fifteen years, thereby designing a sustainable, grounded and optimistic vision for the years to come. Aligning with the philosophy of Trussell’s 5 Year Strategy [Together For Change Part 2] RFB will seek to *pursue* what works; *improve* what we can; *discard* that which does not serve us; and *embrace* the new.

At the core of this work is the commitment to ensure Redbridge Foodbank continues to provide the vital poverty reduction and prevention service that it has done for over a decade.

A Renewed Strategic Vision

The Trustees are committed to renewing the vision, mission and objectives of Redbridge Foodbank in order to:

- safeguard the organisations sustainability
- equip it to deal with new and developing needs of our shared community today and over future years.

Taking into account the humble beginnings of our organisation, the challenges it has faced in the past, the current challenging context and the huge strides already made by RFB in tackling poverty in our community

This plan sets out the refocussing of Redbridge Foodbank's efforts:

- from responsive to proactive
- It details how we will bear down on the increasing demand for our service and the costs of supplying that service.
- To deliver a range of tools for the community the Foodbank serves.

In the words of the South African Bishop, theologian and anti-apartheid campaigner Desmond Tutu - "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

This is the challenge Redbridge Foodbank sets out to tackle over the next five years.

Vision/ Mission/ Values & Objectives

Our updated Mission Statement:

Redbridge Foodbank is dedicated to the relief and prevention of poverty in Redbridge and surrounding areas, through the provision of food, and related services that assist in breaking the cycle of poverty.

- *Our activities are co-ordinated nationwide through our partnership with Trussell, to contribute to a United Kingdom that no longer needs food banks.*

Our updated objectives:

- **To provide emergency support for people in crisis.**
- **To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience, by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**
- **To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.**
- **To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.**

Our Core Values:

The following are the lived values that have been at the core of Redbridge Foodbank's fifteen-year history and will be carried through into our future.

Compassion, Community, Dignity, Empowerment & Equity

Why these values:

Compassion - Kindness and empathy is shown to those in need by providing a non-judgemental safe space for clients to receive emergency and long-term support.

Community - RFB seeks to create a community of trained and informed volunteers who can in turn support their shared community.

- This also relates to our investment in partnerships with other expert organisations as well as our partnerships with community organisations such as schools and churches.
- Redbridge Foodbank is the definition of a community organisation. It is run, powered and supported by individuals and groups throughout the local community.

Dignity –We aim to treat everyone we support in a manner that allows them to maintain and/or develop the self-respect they deserve. It is the invisible thread that runs through our decision making and processes at every level.

- It is foundational to poverty prevention and RFB experience shows that if a person loses their self-respect & dignity, it is very difficult to rebuild.
 - It accelerates the decline into further poverty.
- Some of the ways we endeavour to enforce this:
 - damaged or out of date food is disposed of rather than distributed because RFB does not believe that our clients deserve any less than that of people who are able to purchase food from commercial outlets.
 - The distribution of hygiene products to our clients.
 - Redbridge Foodbank operates a non-judgemental service where all those with a valid foodbank voucher are served and treated equally and respectfully.

Empowerment – We provide tools and knowledge to help enable our volunteers and clients to help each other and themselves.

Over recent years Redbridge Foodbank has consciously tried to expand its core activities to include long term holistic support as well as emergency food provision.

- Examples of this are the Step signposting resource (<https://stepsearch.org>) and the joint project with Citizens Advice Redbridge. These are specifically designed to empower clients to tackle the underlying issue(s) that necessitates their use of the food bank.
- In addition, the development of the Community Empowerment & Resilience Programme, which the latest National Lottery Grant was gained for, has at its heart the empowerment of not just clients, but volunteers and the local community.

Equity - All of RFB's activities are informed by the belief that everyone, regardless of faith, background or life choices should be treated equally.

- We believe that everyone deserves an opportunity to live a dignified and meaningful life without having to face food poverty and its associated effects.

- This work has been developed and expanded since RFB's founding, resulting in the flourishing of wrap around support services that go beyond emergency food distribution and seek to redress unfairness or injustice suffered by many of our clients.

N.B. Updating our Core Values in line with the Trussel

We have endeavoured to align our values with those of Trussell which are:

"Compassion, Community, Dignity & Justice".

Stakeholders agreed that these values also represent the values of Redbridge Foodbank. However, in our discussions with clients and volunteers, questions were raised over the value of Justice. This is not to say that Redbridge Foodbank does not believe in justice, it believes fundamentally that everyone deserves to live without hunger and fulfil their individual potential.

However, stakeholders felt that the term 'Justice' adds a campaigning or political nature to the values of RFB. Redbridge Foodbank is an apolitical organisation that works with local and national politicians across the political spectrum. It also draws support from different members of the community who have different political beliefs.

Trussell, the organisation to which Redbridge Foodbank is affiliated, has a national political platform and engages in national campaigns to tackle systemic issues that contribute to poverty.

There have been examples in the past with Trussells "Guarantee Our Essentials Campaign" where dissenting voices have been heard within our volunteer base.

Redbridge Foodbank aims to be a welcoming environment for all and there is an ongoing commitment to make sure no stakeholder feels isolated because of their political beliefs. There is an ongoing discussion in the drafting of this document as to whether the value of Justice should be included in Redbridge Foodbanks literature.

Objective Driven Initiatives

The following initiatives are aligned to the Mission of the foodbank and our core objectives:

Current Initiatives:

Emergency Food Distribution

This is a core activity of our organisation and is the one that most people associate with the foodbank movement. RFB collects food, toiletries and other essential item donations from the public via donation points in supermarkets and other local fixtures, RFB also purchases food, toiletries and other essential stocks in addition to receiving bulk donations from local schools and churches at various points throughout the year. The donations and purchased stock are then weighed into RFB's inventory. It is sorted into date and type whilst removing out of date and damaged products. The stock is then prepared for distribution to clients.

Associated Objective: *To provide emergency support for people in crisis.*

Food Drives

Overview

In order to boost the food available from the food bank, RFB facilitates several ways in which donors and supporters can donate food to be processed and distributed to RFB clients. These drives also offer an opportunity for the public to donate financially to the foodbank.

Benefits

- Engagement with the local community
- Raised awareness of the organisation
- Distributed "shopping lists" can be distributed which ensures RFB receives donations of stock it is most need of.
- Gain financial donations on a one off or potentially ongoing basis through standing orders.

Enabled by:

- Designated stands at various supermarkets on specific days throughout the year
- Permanent designated collection bins at supermarkets across Redbridge

- RFB maintains an online store hosted on the 'Give Today' Platform from which donors can purchase food directly for RFB
- RFB facilitates corporate days by which corporate or other group partners can complete a series of challenges which result in them purchasing food for RFB.
 - In addition, the corporate groups are asked to contribute a financial amount per participant.

Associated Objective

- *To provide emergency support for people in crisis.*

Step Signposting Resource

Overview

Step (<https://stepsearch.org>) is an online referral network that RFB use to create a list of organisations it can direct clients to, based on their answers to a questionnaire, in order to enable them resolve their current issues.

Benefits

- Empowers clients and supports them with their underlying issues that necessitated their use of the Foodbank.
 - Confronting these issues is conducive to reducing the number of service users.

Enabled by

- A team of signposting volunteers who take clients through the STEP programme at regular times in our main distribution hub

Associated Objectives

- *To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.*
- *To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.*
- *To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.*

Citizens Advice Redbridge (CAR) Partnership

Overview

The facilitation of relevant advice to RFB clients, primarily focused on Financial Inclusion and Income Maximisation.

- This is the key partnership that delivers on Redbridge Foodbanks commitment to “related services” and the bedrock of RFB’s objective to “Empower clients onto a pathway of resilience and security, leading to a life without the need of a foodbank”

Benefits

- Empowers clients to build reliance and sustainability in their lives
 - The evidenced success of this project (Monthly reports produced by CAR & RFB & stored confidentially) serves as a model for partnership working and RFB’s facilitation of expert serves for clients.
- This work is attractive to funders as there is a general ambition among large donors to contribute to projects that offer more medium/ longer term support.

Enabled by

- A 1-1 meeting scheduled with a trained Citizens Advice professional facilitated by RFB.
- Regular reviews by RFB and CAR
- Workshops hosted by CAR for RFB staff and volunteers

Associated RFB Objectives:

- *To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.*
- *To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.*

Volunteer Development

Overview

Redbridge Foodbank is powered by its volunteers at every level of the organisation: from the Trustee board, the volunteer teams that support staff and clients to drivers and ambassadors.

Redbridge Foodbank takes seriously it’s responsibility to, not only aid the development of clients, but also its volunteers.

- Redbridge Foodbank offers services to young volunteers, alongside the general volunteering experience. We currently facilitate specific work experience that can contribute to Duke of Edinburgh schemes and helps with young volunteers' life skills and academic accolades.
- RFB supports and promotes employability by providing skill development opportunities for all volunteers. Current staff members joined RFB as volunteers and were then successful in applying for jobs. RFB provides credible references for volunteers who seek employment with other organisations.

Benefits

- Develops the skills and knowledge of our volunteer base (as recently illustrated by the successful National Lottery Bid).
- Develops a range of volunteering opportunities at RFB including Warehousing, Finance Administration, HR Administration, Logistics, Social Media and Fundraising.
- Developed and trained volunteers can provide accomplished support and comfort to clients.
- Volunteers are able to socialise and contribute practically to strengthening their local community.

Enabled by

- Many volunteers use their time at RFB to gain companionship, socialise and interact with various members of their community, who they would not normally meet.
- Volunteers given the opportunity to engage with and donate their time to RFB in numerous ways; Administration, Large Vehicle/ Van Driving, Sign Posting, client engagement & Parcel Distribution.
- Action taken by RFB leadership on feedback given by volunteers informally or in formal monthly surveys, that is agreed to benefit the organisation, its volunteers or its clients.

Associated Objective

- *To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community*
- *To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.*

The Future initiatives of Redbridge Foodbank – Moving towards a One Stop Shop

The gradual increase in the range of initiatives within Redbridge Foodbank's work, is a reflection of its growing desire to become a facilitator and enabler of a holistic approach that empowers clients to meet their own needs. This can be summarised in our objective to establish a "One Stop Shop" for clients' needs.

The aim is to create a central point of access where a client, in an emergency (or at risk of a crisis) can come to Redbridge Foodbank and be connected to the services needed to address the underlying issues preventing them from building a sustainable life without the need to use a foodbank.

Redbridge Foodbank's "One Stop Shop" will aim to *feed* people in ways that will nourish not just their physical requirements but also their emotional, financial, and developmental needs - *Nourishing Mind, Body, Spirit and System*.

This will be achieved through existing and future partnerships with local, expert service providers. For example:

- Facilitation of emergency clothing provision
- Facilitation of 1 to 1 advice on a range of issues such as debt, universal credit, immigration, employment rights and housing.
- Facilitation of group workshops, seminars & support groups relevant to RFB clients.
- Facilitation of physical fixtures from relevant services such as DWP (Department of Work & Pensions), CAR (Citizens Advice Redbridge) and RAMFEL (Refugee and Migrant Forum East London)
- Facilitation of Food Education - how to best utilise foodbank parcels, basic cooking skills, how to grow your own food in different housing situations.
- Facilitation of mental health support.
- Referral partnerships with local service providers for clients needing additional support beyond what is offered on-site.
- Promotion of local community pantries for clients that are able to take their next step along the security and resilience pathway.
- Utilisation and development of RFB website and social media channels to help deliver access to these services as well as promotion of specific services and programmes, enabling clients to discover and learn about the support available both online and in person.

Not every service that will be required or desired can be foreseen at this time and so the programme will be flexible and responsive to client needs as they change and develop.

The introduction of the “One Stop Shop” Strategy requires RFB’s current activities to be expanded and new activities initiated.

RFB Café at Jubilee Church

Overview

The Redbridge Foodbank Café, prior to the pandemic, was a welcoming and informal environment where clients could be greeted by volunteers and offered refreshments. Additionally, any fresh produce which had been donated and was still within legal allowances was available for distribution. The completion of the Warehouse Renovation Project and making it operational, enables the reintroduction of this capability: an improved café in support of the “One Stop Shop” Strategy.

Strategic Objective

To re-establish the Redbridge Foodbank Café at Jubilee Church and develop it as the flagship model. It will align with engage with Trussells “A warm welcome” as a welcoming, relationship-centred space that enhances client support, strengthens volunteer engagement, and supports the “One Stop Shop” strategy, providing a warm, dignified, and holistic service beyond food assistance.

Benefits

- The cafe will give volunteers an opportunity to develop a relationship with clients in a more social and less transactional way, enhancing their ability to signpost more effectively.
- Enables a positive impact on volunteers’ personal growth strengthening their connection to the charity’s initiatives beyond food assistance
- More meaningful engagement with clients will provide existing volunteers with the opportunity to develop their communication and relationship-building skills, supporting their personal growth.
- Provides STEP volunteers with additional time and space to signpost effectively, contributing to RFB’s mission and strengthening their connection to the organisation’s broader goals for clients beyond food assistance.
- This will bring RFB in line with a key part of Trussell’s new strategy: “Providing a warm welcome to clients in need”
- The renewal of this activity will aid volunteer recruitment by attracting former and new volunteers who would like to give their time to interact, assist, and build a relationship with clients on a face-to-face basis.

Enabled by

- Setting up the Café at Jubilee Church and, if possible other sites

- New training provided to current and future volunteers to equip them for these face-to-face interactions with clients.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- *To provide emergency support for people in crisis.*
- *To empower our clients onto a dignified pathway of security and resilience by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.*
- *To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.*
- *To reach out, embed and promote at all levels of the organisation people with lived experience of poverty and represent accurately the diversity of our community.*

Learning Hub

Overview

Embracing the RFB vision of facilitation, rather than in-house delivery, it will provide the space and time for workshops, seminars, advice sessions and support groups with qualified experts on topics relevant to clients of RFB.

- The Learning hub will provide a fundamental pillar for the Foodbank's ambition to become a "One Stop Shop" for clients.

Services envisioned for this hub include: Writing CV's, budgeting, food preparation and resilience planning, which may be delivered at RFB locations or at partner locations when needed.

Strategic Objective

To establish a Learning Hub as a core element of RFB's "One Stop Shop" model, facilitating workshops and support sessions with qualified partners that equip clients with practical skills, build resilience, and create pathways out of crisis.

Benefits

- Provides a holistic service whereby RFB is not only meeting the immediate crisis needs of clients but adopts a preventive method.
- This will help stem the flow of future users.

Enabled by

- Facilitation of local expert organisations to deliver advisory sessions or direct services
- Planning and development of a comprehensive programme of workshops and seminars

- Co-ordination of client development and bespoke recommendations based on individual needs.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- *To empower our clients onto a dignified pathway of security and resilience by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.*
- *To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.*

Provision of Storage along with delivery partnerships for other local charities

Overview

The completion and integration of the Broadmead Warehouse enables many opportunities for RFB to cut costs, improve efficiency, simplify logistics, fortify sustainability and, most importantly, enhance our client's experience.

The completion of this project could be a major factor in addressing the lamentable availability of charitable warehousing space throughout northeast London.

There are also opportunities for income generation. (See below)

Strategic Objective

To fully integrate the Broadmead Warehouse as a central logistics and income-generating hub, reducing costs, improving efficiency, and enhancing client services, while addressing the wider shortage of charitable warehousing space in northeast London.

Benefits

- Through storage and delivery partnership, aid other local charities and organisations.
- Provide a source of income for RFB.

Enabled by

- Delivery of phase 4 of the Warehouse Renovation Project and continued development of the Broadmead Warehouse.
- Securing the Lease for the Broadmead Warehouse that enables these activities.
- Approaching other charities and organisations to become a storage and delivery partner.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- *To provide emergency support for people in crisis.*
- *To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.*

The Broadmead Warehouse

Overview

The Broadmead Warehouse Renovation is in its final stage of completion and is operational. This enables improved and more cost-effective storage of food and will underpin the future expansion of RFB's services.

Redbridge Foodbank has already taken steps to address the inefficient logistical system – through lobbying of the local council and demonstrating to them a mutual benefit to Redbridge Foodbanks sustainability and increase in capacity, a 600m2 unit has been secured on a draft 10-year lease.

Strategic Objective

To fully operationalise the warehouse as RFB's central logistics hub and further develop its capacity for income generation, partnership, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

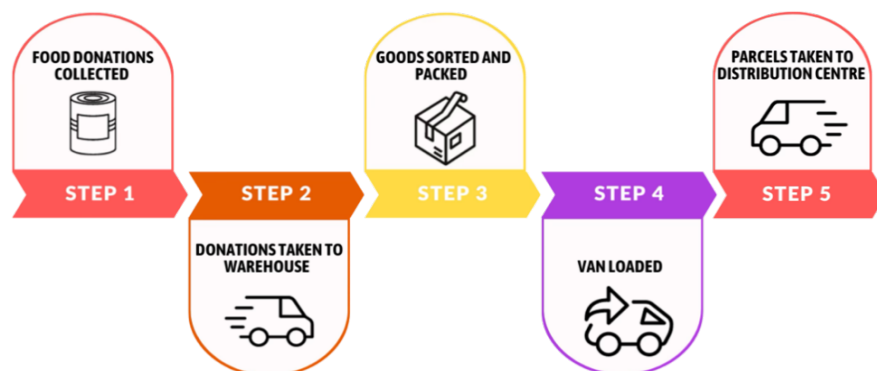
Current Challenge

The warehouse will need dedicated resources for its day to day management, maintenance and development; it will so require a volunteer recruitment drive to achieve its full potential with a focus on volunteers local to the warehouse and with manual handling and warehouse work capabilities and experience.

Benefits

- This unit will provide a storage and processing facility for Redbridge Foodbank which has the benefit of being in a permanent state of operation with no “setting up” or “packing down” needed at Broadmead. The diagram below shows the proposed streamlined logistical operation enabled by the Broadmead Project

The New Operational Model



- As well as a sustainable solution for RFB's warehousing and processing needs, the warehouse provides an opportunity to cut other costs for Redbridge Foodbank, for example, with the increased capacity in storage space RFB are now able to take advantage of bulk buying of stock, greatly reducing the cost of goods.
- The warehouse is also able to accommodate an expanded offer to clients:
 - Fridges can be operated for the storage of fresh produce
 - Private spaces for professionals to conduct remote appointments as well as equipment to enable the workshops envisaged in the Learning Hub.
- The warehouse in its current renovated state will revolutionise the operation of Redbridge foodbank, cut costs, improve efficiency, simplify logistics, fortify sustainability and enhance our client's experience.

Strategic Challenges and overcoming them

1. Fundraising & Income generation

The sharp rise in demand for Foodbank services and the drop in financial and physical donations necessitates RFB to think differently about how it sustains its operation and meets the needs of its community into the future.

As outlined in the introduction, the context in which foodbanks operate in the UK in 2025 is very different to that of five or ten years ago. Throughout this Strategic plan we have highlighted the need to address the supply of ample regular food donations to lift clients out of an initial crisis, and the demand for services that empower clients to build more resilience in their lives.

Redbridge Foodbank historically has relied on grants to fund the majority of activities. The ambition is to safeguard the organisation over the medium and long term through diversifying income sources and to open regular revenue streams, alongside protecting the integral role that grants play.

A Fundraising Report was produced in 2024 and its recommendations have been incorporated into this Strategic Plan.

These additional revenue streams will seek to address some of the drawbacks that a “grants only” funding regime produce, including:

- the time lag on decisions from grant givers
- restricting spending options
- inability or difficulty reacting to changing circumstances
- time consuming application processes
- possibility of unsuccessful bids
- funders requirements and aversion to funding existing projects or salaries.

Initiatives to increase and protect our revenue streams:

A. Grant writing

Current Challenge

Grant funding remains one of Redbridge Foodbank’s strongest income streams.

While this track record is a strong foundation, to ensure long-term sustainability and maximise opportunities, RFB must transition from a reactive approach to a structured, proactive programme.

Strategic Objective

To strengthen RFB's grant writing programme by improving evidence of need, embedding diversity and lived experience data, and implementing a structured renewal plan, thereby sustaining and growing income from trusts and foundations.

Benefits

- Increased funding success and efficiency through a proactive, planned approach
- Stronger, more competitive applications rooted in evidence, diversity, and lived experience
- Greater continuity and resilience in funding streams, reducing reliance on crisis-driven bids
- Long-term sustainability to underpin delivery of RFB's mission

Enabled by

- Maintain both the Digital General Proposal and Digital Grant Directory documents library
- Embed Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Data
- Collect and maintain demographic data on trustees, staff, and volunteers.
- Ensure this becomes a standard feature in volunteer, trustee and staff applications, reflecting sector-wide funder priorities.
- Develop a Grant Action Plan
- Create a live grant tracker with timelines for all existing awards, renewal dates, and upcoming opportunities.
- Establish a forward calendar of application deadlines to ensure continuity and avoid "cliff-edge" funding risks.
- Align applications with strategic priorities, focusing effort on high-value, high-alignment opportunities.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To provide emergency support for people in crisis.**
- **To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience, by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**

B. Broadmead Warehouse

Current Challenge

The completion and operationalisation of the Broadmead Warehouse marks a key milestone in RFB's infrastructure development. This enhanced facility now opens up strategic opportunities to diversify income streams by leveraging the site for external use, without compromising the organisation's mission.

Strategic Objective

To fully operationalise the Broadmead warehouse for core RFB logistical use and develop an integrated management system that enables maximum income generation from the site.

Benefits

- Generation of sustainable, unrestricted income through responsible and mission-aligned use of the Broadmead Warehouse, supporting RFB's financial sustainability and operational capacity.
- Will support the core logistical operation of Redbridge Foodbank's distribution programme
- Stronger partnerships with local groups through shared use of space
- Improved utilisation of RFB infrastructure and increased community visibility

Enabled by

- **Meeting Room Rentals** - Offer affordable, community-based meeting space for local organisations, charities, and small businesses, market to faith groups, community groups, and partner organisations.
- **Storage Space Rentals** - Rent secure storage areas to vetted local groups or partners. Ensure usage aligns with RFB values and community benefit principles
- **Expanded Corporate Volunteer Days** - Increase capacity to host multiple or more frequent corporate engagement sessions.
- **Filming Location Rental** – Offer rental of the warehouse as a filming location with agreements in place that ensure foodbank operations are unaffected, and due care and attention is paid to security, confidentiality and reputational considerations.

Operational Considerations

- **Lease Permissions** - Activities are currently permitted under RFB's licence, provided no landlord-tenant relationship is created.
 - Ensure compliance is maintained during finalisation of the long-term lease agreement
- **Usage Guidelines** - Develop clear terms of use and pricing structures, implement booking systems and staffing plans to manage demand and availability
- **Compliance** – Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, RFB policies and best practice on Health and Safety, Security, Risk Management, safeguarding and Monitoring

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To provide emergency support for people in crisis.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**

C. Corporate & Local Business Partners

Current Challenge

RFB has had success engaging corporate partners through its corporate volunteer day programmes. Now, there is an opportunity to transition from a reactive to proactive engagement, with a values-aligned corporate partnership model. Local business engagement is currently minimal, representing a significant untapped resource for regular support.

Strategic Objective

To develop initiatives and systems that engages corporate and local businesses in a more regular and proactive way.

Benefits

- Establishment of a structured and proactive approach to engaging both corporate and local business partners, maximising funding, our visibility, and long-term collaboration in the community.
- Diversified and sustainable funding through expanded corporate and business networks.
- Increased food and resource donations through local business engagement
- Elevated RFB profile across Redbridge's business communities.
- Stronger long-term partnerships based on shared values and measurable impact.

Enabled by

- **A Corporate Outreach Programme**
 - Assigned responsibility to the RFB fundraiser to identify, cultivate, and maintain strategic corporate relationships
 - Targeting businesses with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, funding/grant schemes, and employee giving programmes.
- **Proactive Relationship Management**
 - Develop tailored engagement packages including volunteering, food drives, matched giving, and sponsorship opportunities
 - Track and report impact to partners regularly to encourage continued support
- **Local Business Engagement/Tiered Partnership Model**
 - Create levels of support (e.g. Bronze, Silver, Gold) with associated benefits and recognition
 - Publicly acknowledge partners through social media, newsletters, and in-store signage
 - Offer accessible entry points such as monthly donations, sponsored collections, or hosting food drop points
 - Develop a “Local Champions” network to help promote RFB within business communities
- **Joint Campaigns & Visibility**
 - Collaborate on local campaigns tied to awareness days or seasonal needs
 - Enable partners to co-brand campaigns and increase their own social impact visibility
 - Continue local collaborations with schools, colleges and churches enhanced by a structured RFB Ambassador programme

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To provide emergency support for people in crisis.**
- **To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience, by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**
- **To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.**

D. Regular Donor Engagement

Current Challenge

Donors outside the internal RFB network receive limited communication, leading to potential disengagement.

Strategic Objective

To build stronger relationships with regular donors through tailored communications, impact-driven newsletters, and engagement events, increasing donor retention, loyalty, and lifetime value.

Benefits

Deepened relationships with existing donors and strengthened long-term support through consistent, meaningful communication.

- Increased donor retention and loyalty
- Greater transparency and donor confidence
- Enhanced ability to cultivate major donors

Enabled by

- **An External Donor Newsletter** - Collecting and managing donor contact details with appropriate consent. Launch a quarterly newsletter highlighting impact stories, funding use, and volunteer spotlights
- **Donor Engagement Events** – Hosting in-person gatherings to thank supporters and showcase the work of RFB. Create space for fundraising teams to build personal connections and make targeted asks.
- Developing a streamlined efficient system for individuals to plan, organise or sign up for fundraising opportunities dedicated to RFB (*E.g. Run for Charity)

Associated RFB Objectives:

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- **To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience, by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**
- **To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.**

- **To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.**

E. Events Calander

Current Challenge

Events play a vital role in strengthening Redbridge Foodbank's visibility, deepening community engagement, and generating sustainable income. While RFB has successfully hosted ad hoc activities in the past, the absence of a structured events calendar has limited consistency and long-term planning. By developing an annual calendar of regular events with space for additional one-off opportunities, RFB can create a stronger public presence, improve supporter retention, and diversify income streams.

Strategic Objective:

To establish an inclusive, year-round events calendar that balances flagship and ad hoc activities, engages diverse audiences, and drives fundraising, awareness, and community connection.

Benefits

- A reliable, predictable programme of events that engages supporters year-round
- An inclusive and diverse calendar reflecting the needs and interests of all sections of the community
- Increased visibility, awareness, and fundraising income
- Stronger relationships with donors, businesses, and community partners
- Greater flexibility to seize new opportunities without disrupting planned activity

Enabled by

- **Establishing a Core Calendar:** Identify and formalise a set of flagship annual events (e.g., Quiz Night, Charity Walk, Volunteer Celebration, Donor Thank-You) scheduled across the year to ensure consistent engagement and aligned with seasonal peaks (Harvest, Christmas, summer campaigns).
- **Prioritising Inclusivity & Diversity:** Curate events to appeal to a wide range of audiences — families, young people, older adults, corporate supporters, faith groups, and diverse communities — ensuring accessibility for people of all abilities and needs.
- **Maintaining Flexibility:** Reserve capacity for ad hoc and opportunistic events such as local fairs, external invitations, or emerging partnerships.
- **Integrate with wider strategy:** Link events to fundraising goals, donor engagement, partnerships, and communications, ensuring alignment with social media and showcasing impact through client stories, lived experience voices, and community recognition.
- **Strengthening Participation:** Create opportunities for volunteers to lead or support events, while engaging local businesses, corporates, and community partners as sponsors, hosts, or participants.

Associated RFB Objectives:

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- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**

F. Social Media Strategy**Current Challenge**

Social media is currently underutilised in the foodbank, and it is a vital public engagement tool. Past success under a professional contracted short-term has shown strong potential.

Strategic Objective:

To develop and implement a social media strategy that enhances RFB's public presence, engages supporters, and drives fundraising and volunteer participation through consistent, professional, and volunteer-supported content.

Benefits

The establishment of a professional, consistent, and engaging social media presence that drives awareness, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment.

- Broader reach and visibility of RFB activities
- More engaged supporter base leading to increased donations
- Efficient use of staff time through volunteer involvement
- Support the work of the learning hub and one stop shop strategy

Enabled by

- **Development of a Social Media Strategy** - Define tone, goals, content types, and posting frequency. Include plans for legacy content (stories, events, donor spotlights)
- **Volunteer-led social media team** - Train volunteers to manage and schedule content under staff supervision. Formalise review and approval processes to ensure quality and brand alignment
- **Integration into Staff Roles** - Assess options to include social media oversight in existing or future staff positions, developing a culture of promoting the work of Redbridge Foodbank through social media posts from across the organisation
- **Recruitment of a Wider Community Communications Officer** – This part time staff position would enable consistency and planning for social media outreach, recognising the significance of a social media presence in the present time.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience, by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**
- **To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.**

G. Legacy Giving**Current Challenge**

Legacy giving is rarely considered for local small and medium sized charities, such as RFB, yet presents a low-cost opportunity for long-term support.

Strategic Objective:

To establish a sustainable legacy giving programme that raises awareness, encourages supporters to consider gifts in wills, and creates a long-term income stream to secure RFB's future impact.

Benefits

A pathway for legacy giving that is respectful, subtle, and integrated into broader fundraising efforts.

- Establishment of a new long-term giving stream
- Increased awareness among supporters about legacy options
- Greater financial sustainability for RFB in future years

Enabled by

- **Website & Communication Presence** - Create a webpage explaining how and why to leave a gift in a will. Incorporate gentle reminders in bi-annual social media posts and donor materials
- **Integrate into Fundraising Strategy** - Identify moments to mention legacy giving (e.g., donor events, newsletters). Ensure fundraising volunteers and staff are briefed on how to introduce the option when appropriate

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To provide emergency support for people in crisis.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**

H. Volunteer Fundraising Team

Current Challenge

Volunteers are at the heart of Redbridge Foodbank, and their dedication has always been central to its success. While volunteers currently support operations across distribution, warehouse, and client-facing activities, there is significant potential to expand their involvement into fundraising. Establishing a dedicated Volunteer Fundraising Team will strengthen the overall fundraising capacity of RFB, relieve pressure on staff, and provide volunteers with new opportunities for skill development and engagement.

Strategic Objective

To establish and support a Volunteer Fundraising Team that complements staff-led fundraising efforts, increases capacity for income generation, and empowers volunteers with new skills and experiences.

Benefits

- Expanded fundraising capacity without significant increase in staff workload
- A sustainable, self-motivated team of fundraising volunteers
- Enhanced volunteer skills and satisfaction
- Broader community engagement in fundraising activities
- Increased income to support the delivery of RFB's strategic objectives

Enabled by

- **Recruit & Train Volunteers** - Develop a clear recruitment process to attract volunteers interested in fundraising, offering induction and training on fundraising best practice, compliance, and donor engagement.
- **Create a Structured Team Role** - Define clear responsibilities for volunteers, such as supporting events, coordinating community fundraisers, liaising with local businesses, and contributing to digital campaigns.
- **Support Staff Capacity** - Enable volunteers to take ownership of smaller fundraising activities and community-led initiatives, freeing staff to focus on strategic partnerships, major donors, and grant applications.
- **Enable Skill Development** - Provide volunteers with opportunities to learn transferable skills such as event management, communications, and relationship-building, enhancing personal and professional development.
- **Deepen Volunteer Engagement** - Offer an additional pathway for volunteer involvement beyond traditional roles, strengthening loyalty, sense of purpose, and ownership in the work of RFB.

Associated RFB Objectives:

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- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**

2. Reintegration of Distribution Sites

Overview

Redbridge Foodbank (RFB) currently operates five distribution centres under a semi-autonomous model. Each centre pays a one-time “sign-up fee” covering initial equipment (IT, uniforms, signage, etc.) and receives standardised training. While aligned with RFB’s core framework, centres retain operational independence.

Strategic Objective

To build on the work already done and accelerate the reintegration of RFB’s distribution centres through structured formal governance, shared learning, and unified branding - enabling collaboration, resource pooling, and borough-wide growth in fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and community impact.

Current Challenges

- Minimal ongoing engagement between RFB leadership and distribution centres post-launch
- Lack of formal coordination limits the ability to share best practices, leverage resources, and build a unified brand presence
- Missed opportunities for borough-wide growth in fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and community impact

Benefits

Enhanced collaboration, consistency, and collective impact across all distribution centres through structured integration and shared governance.

- Increased community engagement and support
- Enhanced service delivery through shared expertise and collaboration
- Stronger organisational cohesion and identity

Enabled by

- **Reinstating a Steering Committee**
 - Composition: Representatives from each distribution site, RFB trustees, staff, volunteers, and client voices (lived experience)

- Purpose: Foster communication, drive strategic alignment, and identify cross-site opportunities
- Rotating Chair: The position of chair could rotate through distribution sites reinforcing integration
- **Network-Wide Collaboration**
 - Facilitate regular knowledge-sharing to replicate best practices and innovations across sites
 - Coordinate borough-wide initiatives in fundraising, volunteer outreach, and advocacy
- **Unified Branding and Messaging**
 - Strengthen RFB's public presence through aligning and contributing to social media, Newsletter, outreach, and events
 - Ensure consistent messaging across centres while allowing local context-driven adaptations
- **Representation & Organisation of Events** – Distribution sites to organise their own RFB Events
 - Church engagement events
 - Local Community Connect Event
- **Review of One-off Registration fee**
 - Consideration of an annual subscription fee
 - Value offered to distribution sites to be assessed and aligned with fees

Associated RFB Objectives:

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- **To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.**

3. Governance & Trustee Development

Overview

The delivery of Redbridge Foodbank's Strategic Plan requires significant organisational growth. To meet this challenge, the Trustee Board recognises the need for additional resource, including finance, human, and structural. A proactive approach to board development will be essential in ensuring RFB has the governance capacity to lead this next phase effectively.

In addition, it is imperative that the make-up of the Board of Trustees reflects the community it serves and this necessitates the need for lived experience to be integrated into the board.

Strategic Objective

To strengthen and diversify RFB's Board of Trustees by expanding governance capacity, embedding lived experience, and ensuring the Board reflects the community it serves, thereby equipping the organisation to lead and sustain implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Benefits

A strengthened board and governance arrangements, ensuring the Trustee Board has the right mix of skills, lived experience, and continuity to support the successful delivery of the strategic plan over the next five years.

- A skilled, diverse, and resilient Trustee Board representative of the communities RFB serves
- Reduced governance risk through succession planning and proactive recruitment
- Enhanced strategic leadership with greater insight from lived experience
- Stronger capacity to deliver on the long-term goals of the strategic plan

Enabled by

Annual Trustee Skills & Representation Audit

- Conduct a structured annual review of board member skills, experience, and demographic representation
- Identify strategic gaps, including underrepresentation of communities most impacted by food poverty
- Use findings to inform targeted recruitment and board development activities

Rolling Trustee Recruitment Strategy

- Shift to a continuous, proactive recruitment model to maintain board stability and succession planning

- Adapt recruitment drives based on emerging needs and skills audit findings

Lived Experience Inclusion Initiative

- Proactively recruit trustees with lived experience of food insecurity or related challenges
- Identify potential candidates from within RFB
- Partner with community organisations to identify and support potential candidates
- Provide induction, mentorship, and development support to ensure inclusive and meaningful participation

Capacity Investment

- Invest in staff, equipment, and operational systems necessary to support strategic delivery
- Expand board oversight capacity in priority areas such as income generation, digital engagement, and HR
- Set up sub-committees of the Board to oversee key areas such as Finance and Income Generation, HR and Payroll, IT and Operations

Governance Reform

- Review and improve board structures to support effective, inclusive, and agile decision-making
- Ensure all governance processes remain compliant, transparent, and aligned with RFB's mission and values and charity law.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**
- **To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.**

4. Partnership with the Trussell

Overview

Since its founding in 2010, Redbridge Foodbank has benefitted from being part of the Trussell network. Over the past 15 years, this partnership has provided invaluable support through shared resources, training, advocacy, and a national framework that strengthens the delivery of foodbank services. Being part of the Trussell network has enabled RFB to integrate best practices, access guidance on compliance and governance, and benefit from national campaigns that amplify local efforts. This partnership has been central to RFB's growth, ensuring consistency of service, increased credibility with funders and partners, and stronger connections across a national movement to end food poverty.

Strategic Objective

To maintain and deepen RFB's partnership with the Trussell, maximising the benefits of shared resources, advocacy, and integration to enhance service delivery and strengthen long-term sustainability.

Benefits

- Continued credibility and trust with stakeholders through association with a nationally recognised organisation
- Access to high-quality training, research, and advocacy resources
- Stronger influence in shaping policy and tackling poverty at both local and national levels
- Increased organisational resilience through shared learning and collaboration

Enabled by

- **Sustained Alignment:** Continue to align RFB's work with the Trussell's standards and operational frameworks.
- **Maximising Shared Resources:** Leverage training, data, research, and advocacy provided by the Trussell to improve local impact.
- **Strengthening Collaboration:** Deepen collaboration on joint initiatives, particularly around addressing the root causes of poverty.
- **Enhancing Integration:** Ensure RFB contributes to and benefits from knowledge-sharing across the Trussell network.

5. Food Procurement & Supply

Overview

The way in which food has been procured over the history of RFB has changed significantly in volume and means. Since the founding of Redbridge Foodbank in 2010 the organisation has been designed on the premise that the food provided to clients is donated to Redbridge Foodbank. This has now changed and since 2023 RFB has had to spend significant funds per month buying in additional food to make up for the shortfall in donations.

Strategic Objective

To develop a sustainable food procurement model that balances donations and reduces purchasing to a minimum, reduces waste through client choice, and secures reliable, cost-effective supply to meet growing community needs.

Current Challenges

- Declining levels of donated food, creating reliance on costly purchasing to meet demand.
- Unsustainable monthly expenditure on food despite fundraising efforts.
- Limited awareness and uptake of the online donation store due to accessibility barriers.
- Lack of integration with supermarket shopping platforms, reducing convenience for supporters.

Efforts have been made to mitigate this challenge by establishing an online store where donors can purchase food items needed by the foodbank and have them delivered to our centre. However, there are limitations to this as this is not integrated into common supermarket websites where people do their weekly online shop. There are the additional steps of going to RFBs website and completing another dedicated shop and this assumes that the community are aware of this feature.

The level of spending on food purchase is unsustainable even with a fundraising regime in place:

- Consideration needs to be given to bulk buying to reduce prices
- Client choice over the contents of their parcel leading to less wastage
- Potentially cheaper products being more desired.

Benefits

The establishment of a sustainable, cost-effective, and client-responsive food procurement system that ensures reliable supply while minimising costs and food waste.

- Reduced procurement costs and improved financial sustainability
- Increased donor participation through accessible and integrated giving options
- Lower food waste and higher client satisfaction through tailored parcel contents
- A reliable and adaptable food supply system supporting RFB's mission

Enabled by

Diversify and Optimise Food Procurement

- Explore bulk purchasing agreements and discounted supplier partnerships to reduce costs
- Investigate options for integrating RFB's online store in more user-friendly environments and social media channels
- Continue to promote the existing online store, enhancing community awareness through targeted communications

Client-Centric Food Distribution

- Reintroduce client choice models allowing recipients to select preferred items, reducing waste and increasing satisfaction
- Monitor parcel contents and client feedback to adjust procurement priorities toward more desired and cost-effective products

Broadmead Development & Felix Project Collaboration

- Redbridge Foodbank is exploring the long-term potential to develop Broadmead into a fully operational Redbridge Food Hub, in collaboration with the Felix Project. This initiative would establish Broadmead as a central hub for receiving, storing, and distributing chilled and ambient food supplies. If realised, the hub would provide a sustainable and cost-free food source for RFB's distribution network, significantly reducing reliance on purchased stock. By addressing the core challenge of food procurement, this partnership offers a long-term solution that strengthens RFB's resilience, enhances food security across the borough, and builds a collaborative model of impact with external partners.

Financial Sustainability

- Align procurement costs with fundraising efforts to ensure ongoing viability

- Regularly review spending patterns and seek efficiencies through strategic supplier relationships and community partnerships.

Online supermarket integration

- This is a task that realistically needs to be lead by Trussell who have a national presence and are therefore able to engage with leading supermarkets while representing over 1000 Foodbanks. RFB can lobby Trussell to achieve this on their behalf.

Associated RFB Objectives:

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6. Lived Experience of Hunger, Poverty and Hardship

Overview

Redbridge Foodbank exists to support people facing hunger and crisis, and at the heart of this mission is the principle that those most affected should have a voice in shaping the response. Over the years, RFB has made significant progress in involving people with lived experience throughout the organisation. Many of our volunteers, staff, and trustees bring first-hand experiences of hardship and poverty, enriching our understanding of community challenges and strengthening both the empathy and relevance of our services. Embedding lived experience across RFB is not only about inclusivity; it is about ensuring our services are designed with dignity, authenticity, and impact. By actively involving those who know food insecurity first-hand, we can dismantle stigma, empower individuals, and foster a stronger sense of ownership and leadership within our community.

Strategic Objective

To integrate people with lived experience of hunger and hardship at every level of RFB, ensuring services are shaped by authentic voices, reducing stigma, and fostering an inclusive, community-driven organisation.

Benefits

- Services better tailored to the real needs of clients, with reduced barriers and greater dignity in access.
- Enhanced organisational empathy, relevance, and accountability through direct community insight.
- Increased leadership opportunities for people with lived experience, fostering empowerment and representation.
- A stronger sense of community ownership and reduced stigma surrounding food insecurity.
- An inclusive organisational culture enriched by diverse perspectives, strengthening resilience and innovation.

Enabled by

- **Representation in Governance:** Formalise roles for people with lived experience within trustee recruitment, advisory boards, and steering committees.
- **Volunteer & Staff Pathways:** Expand opportunities for individuals with lived experience to participate in frontline volunteering, paid staff positions, and leadership development programmes.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish regular service user surveys, focus groups, and direct consultation channels to ensure client perspectives guide programme design and delivery.

- **Capacity Building:** Provide training, mentorship, and support structures to empower individuals with lived experience to contribute effectively and confidently.
- **Culture of Inclusion:** Embed lived experience as a recognised strength across all areas of the organisation, from communications to service design.

While we can be proud of the work already achieved, there is more we can do. We recognise the importance of, not only involving people informally, but embedding their influence systematically and sustainably. To build on the foundation we have established, we will form a Lived Experience Board, which will work alongside our existing governance structures. This board will act as an advisory group, which Trustees and Staff can consult with to provide direct feedback on planning, delivery, and evaluation of our services and activities.

By creating this board, we will ensure that people with lived experience have a formal, respected platform to influence decisions and hold us accountable to our mission. It will strengthen our ability to respond effectively to the evolving needs of our community and further demonstrate our commitment to co-production and shared leadership.

Redbridge Foodbank can take inspiration from the model pioneered by the Trussell.

Practical steps for establishing the Lived Experience Board

1. Co-designing the process

The formation of the Lived Experience Board will itself be co-designed with individuals who have first-hand experience of using food banks or facing poverty and hardship. We will organise listening sessions and focus groups to understand what people want from such a board and how they would like it to function.

2. Recruitment and outreach

We will launch a transparent and inclusive recruitment process, inviting expressions of interest from people with lived experience across our local community and existing networks. This will include outreach through our own networks, partner organisations and referral agencies to ensure we reach a wide and diverse pool of voices.

3. Training and support

We could provide tailored training and ongoing support to all members of the Lived Experience Board, including governance, advocacy, public speaking and safeguarding. This will help ensure members feel confident and equipped to contribute meaningfully.

4. **Defining roles and remit**

In collaboration with new board members, we will clearly define the board's role, scope and advisory powers. The board will be given a formal advisory remit, with the ability to review and influence strategy, service design and delivery, and community engagement activities.

5. **Integration with governance**

We will establish clear mechanisms for how the Lived Experience Board's insights and recommendations are shared with, and acted upon by, the main board of trustees and senior leadership. This will include regular joint meetings, shared reporting structures, and formal channels for feedback.

6. **Ongoing review and evolution**

The board's structure and ways of working will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective, inclusive and representative. Feedback from board members and the wider community will be used to continuously improve its impact.

Resource commitment

Redbridge Foodbank recognises that meaningful involvement requires proper resourcing. We would commit dedicated financial and staff resources to support the establishment and running of the Lived Experience Board. This includes:

- Budget for participant expenses (e.g., travel, childcare, technology or internet access where needed).
- Compensation or honoraria for board members in recognition of their time, expertise and lived experience.
- Dedicated staff time to coordinate, facilitate, and support the board and its activities.
- Funding for tailored training and ongoing personal development.

Welfare considerations

We are deeply aware that sharing and drawing upon lived experience can be emotionally demanding. We will prioritise the welfare of all participants through:

- Providing access to wellbeing and mental health support
- Creating a trauma-informed environment that prioritises safety, trust, and choice
- Offering flexible participation options and allowing individuals to step back or pause their involvement when needed
- Providing peer support opportunities and one-to-one check-ins

In conclusion, prioritising the voices and leadership of people with lived experience is essential to Redbridge Foodbank's vision of a community free from hunger and poverty. The creation of a Lived Experience Board, informed, designed and led by people who have faced hardship, represents a bold and necessary next step. Through this, we will deepen our accountability, improve our services, and ensure that our work is guided by those who truly understand the reality of hunger and crisis.

Associated RFB Objectives:

- **To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience, by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.**
- **To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.**
- **To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.**
- **To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.**

OUR ACTIVITIES

What we will do together...

Deliver services and support with compassion, dignity and equity adhering to principles of good governance and inclusive practices.

Develop, test and implement solutions that address the causes and drivers of hunger and the hardship to reduce food bank need.

Forge and maintain strategic partnerships with organisations tackling hunger and hardship.

Conduct research, collect data and generate evidence to inform practices and policies that effectively address hunger and hardship

Collaborate with people with lived experience of hunger and hardship in decision - making and creating solutions.

OUR OUTCOMES

To bring these changes in the next five years ...



PROVISION

Provide everyone referred to with a warm welcome, emergency food and access to advice.



PREVENTION

Facilitate and develop effective services and programmes to offer early support for people at risk of hunger and hardship.



PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborate with other local organisations, business and charities that share our values to strengthen sustainability and advocacy.



PUBLIC

Raise our profile throughout the local community to build support and endorsement of our organisation and its activities.



POTENTIAL

Work alongside people with lived experience to identify problems, shape solutions and build collective power for change.

OUR IMPACT

To meet our goals we must achieve together to realise our vision ...

1

To provide emergency support for people in crisis.

2

To empower our clients and enable them to follow a dignified pathway of security and resilience by partnering with professional and relevant advice and support services.

3

To develop the capacity and skills of our volunteers so they can support our shared community.

4

To reach out to embed and promote, at all levels of the organisation, people with lived experience of poverty and represent fully the diversity of our community.

5

To contribute to a sustainable nationwide strategy to end the need for food banks.

OUR VALUES

How we work together

COMPASSION

COMMUNITY

DIGNITY

EMPOWERMENT

END OF DOCUMENT