



Overview

There is an unparalleled scale of food poverty in the UK at the present time. There is a vast array of research and foodbank uptake evidence that demonstrates this, that is available on request. For example: <http://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/FoodInsecurityBriefing-May-2016-FINAL.pdf>

To date the main response in the UK and the USA has been foodbanks. We want to do something different, based on similar projects across Europe.

Hope Food Club will be a social supermarket: where food is supplied at a cost, normally 1/3rd retail, to members of a club. People pay for membership and what they buy. It's designed to reduce their total food costs in a way that gives a higher level of dignity to putting food on the plate for people on very low incomes.

It will involve a project growing food for the club that we grow ourselves. The idea of growing food to supply the food club is central to the concept. By growing healthy veg and salad, Hope will ensure the food club provides for nutritional needs, improves the local area, and offers training in horticulture. This project has an explicit sub-aim of improving the urban landscape though developing urban agriculture (for the value of this, see, for example:

<http://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/sarep/publications/food-and-society/ualitreview-2013.pdf>)

There is widespread evidence that foodbanks are not a sustainable, dignified nor viable solution to food poverty and one that does not provide any economic stimulus to poor areas nor change the food distribution system. They address crises, not ongoing food poverty: For example Paget A, (2015) *British Aisles: Demos* https://www.demos.co.uk/files/476_1501_BA_body_web_2.pdf?1427295281 and Poppendieck J, *Sweet Charity* (1998).

The social supermarket model is explicitly designed to make money to grow itself and expand, building a community asset created from the income of poor communities, placed with a not-for-profit using it on their behalf, instead of passing all of it to supermarkets and other retailers, who do not.

We have taken a great deal of inspiration from the Stop project in Toronto (<http://thestop.org/>) which although still a food bank, has many of the elements and approach that we are looking to develop. The story of the Stop can be read in the former Stop CEO, Nick Saul's book, *The Stop* (2013) (available from Hope).

We do not believe that people should be required to go through 'hoops' to access the supermarket. We won't insist they have to be referred by a social worker. We won't require them to attend a course or see a counsellor before they buy food for their kids tea, unlike some food banks or other social supermarkets. We believe people who use the store are not poor always because they are feckless, lazy, drug addicts or layabouts. Those factors may sometimes be true, but the vast majority are just people who are poor. Any other view is just propaganda. We will work within Hope to counter these ideas with active awareness of the reality of poverty. Its part of the project

We recognise the continuing need for foodbanks alongside the social supermarkets to address crises in people's lives and for people outside of our start-up areas. We collaborate and work together.

After start-up funding, which will include grants, loans and crowdfunding, the project will be self-sustaining.

How far have we got with development?

We have been researching the idea for ten months. We have done a great deal of research and consultation to get the idea to this stage, including building up funds and support, visiting existing supermarkets, talking to national experts and refining the offer. We have fully costed the model and produced detailed business plans, job descriptions for staff and cashflow projections.

We are now ready to move on to the next stage, setting up an advisory or leadership group who will take us through to the next stage of implementation.

Very shortly we will have acquired enough funds to recruit staff and set up the warehouse.

What support does Hope need at this time?

We are looking to begin to recruit people who may volunteer in the future in the various parts of the project, including in practical roles. However our main need now is to add capacity to support the CEO of Hope to bring the project on, above and beyond our trustee group. We have sought to identify people with expertise and skills to take on developing the project at this higher level.

The key areas we need to address, at this time, are:

- Finding land to grow food
- Finding and setting up a warehouse
- Sourcing a van/vans
- Engaging with supermarkets and retailers
- Starting to prepare for recruiting volunteers – drivers, warehouse, shop, growing, leadership
- Funding
- Working on the mechanics of how the scheme will operate – eligibility, volume of purchase etc

We hope to identify small teams or pairs or even individuals who will take a lead on one specific area, working closely with the CEO to take this forward.

We hope to open in the Autumn!