

## Who we help

The mission of [Open Kitchens](#) is to get free meals to those in need across the UK, working with kitchens who cook voluntarily, using ingredients funded by the community. In partnership with [FareShare](#), we get meals to those in need, including...

### **Children in Poverty**

With schools closed during the pandemic, children reliant on free school meals are facing a food crisis. Children and young people are vulnerable to the effects of hunger as this can alter behaviour, reduce educational attainment and compromise development. Some staff at schools and community projects we support volunteer their time to deliver food to these families, helping reduce the effects of the crisis.

### **The Elderly**

Poverty impacts millions of older people each year. Many miss out on vital benefits and support with up to £5.5 billion of means tested benefits unclaimed each year. There are thousands who live just above the poverty line and struggle to afford basics like food and fuel. Combined with other challenges that older people may face it means that securing regular and nutritious meals is difficult or at times impossible. Age UK estimate that 1.3 million people over 65 suffer from malnutrition, and one third of all older people admitted to hospital are undernourished. Studies show that 93% per cent of those at risk from malnutrition in the UK live at home and have little and no link with health services – isolating them from support and vital social interaction.

Other factors that can affect older people's ability to secure healthy food include: the availability of door-to-door transport; the availability of 'assisted shopping'; problems in using standard kitchen utensils/equipment; and the need for practical advice on healthy eating. FareShare report that 36% of beneficiaries report they cannot afford the ingredients and 27% are not physically able to shop/prepare food for themselves.

## The Homeless

For people living rough and looking for temporary shelter, living with the daily struggle to stay warm and safe is made worse on an empty stomach. Hunger can be physically painful, make individuals ill and saps them of energy to look for help or even get up at all.

Many in this situation are homeless or at risk of losing their home as a result of multiple issues such as addiction, unemployment, mental health conditions and domestic violence. Homelessness is a real threat also for people living on the margins of society who might be socially isolated, ex-offenders, war veterans and asylum seekers. Homelessness also carries a stigma where people are written off as being 'invisible, ignored and forgotten'.

Working with FareShare, meals reach a variety of homelessness projects supporting vulnerable and marginalised people and their families every week. These include hostels, shelters, housing projects, community cafes, day care and family centres, many located in the most deprived areas across the UK.

## Dementia Sufferers

There are 850,000 people with dementia in the UK. 91% are over 65 and this figure is rising. There are links between dementia and malnutrition, and for those who are already vulnerable it can lead to consequences including increased frailty, falls, hospitalisation and mortality. Access to food and meals is essential:

*"Malnutrition is particularly common among people with dementia. It tends to be progressive, with weight loss often preceding the onset of dementia and increasing as the disease progresses. Reasons are complex, but reduced appetite, increased activity, and, in the more advanced stages of the illness, the disruption of eating and feeding behaviours by cognitive and behavioural problems all play a part."*

*- Alzheimer's Disease International*

## Isolation & Loneliness

Research suggests social isolation often has negative outcomes. Individuals with less social connection have disrupted sleep patterns, reduced immune systems, a higher risk of depression and higher levels of stress hormones. One recent study found that isolation increases the risk of heart disease by 29 percent and stroke by 32 percent.

Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, loneliness was already one of the UK's greatest Public Health issues. With the increased isolation as well as the economic and health impacts of the pandemic, tackling loneliness becomes a greater challenge. Many of the charities and community groups we are supporting have changed their method of getting food to people who need it most. For example, community centres have changed from social eating spaces to home deliveries.

## Other vulnerable people we support

- Victims of domestic abuse
- People fighting alcohol and drug addiction
- Low-income families

## Types of groups we support to reach these individuals

- Hostels
- Homeless centres
- Asylum seeker projects
- Community cafes
- School holiday / breakfast clubs
- Food banks
- Drop-in centres / community centres
- Women's refuges and more

## Can you help feed those in need?

Open Kitchens is reliant on public donations. [See which kitchens are cooking for their community](#) and help fund more meals by donating to the central [Just Giving page](#).