



## FOOD & DRINK

# Food for Thought: Vulnerable families across south west London benefitting from food boxes

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The BRITE Box and The Good Food Co-op projects use food as a force of good at the Kingston based charity Voices of Hope.

Standing for Building Resilience In Today's Environment the [BRITE Box project](#) supplies weekly food boxes that contain ingredients, printed recipe guides with photos and illustrated steps on how to cook a healthy meal together as a family.

Now reaching 430 families and 1700 people per week with help from charities, schools, and authorities the initiative has been able to ascertain and help the most vulnerable families across Kingston, Richmond, and Southwark.

Operational and developmental manager Nick Dawson said: "Food can nourish people both physically and emotionally, it's a great way of bringing people together."

This initiative aims to impact the serious and growing issue of child food insecurity in a fun family way and also bring families together around food, develop cooking skills with the confidence to use them and to develop a healthy relationship with food.



BRITE Boxes. Image Credit: Nick Dawson, BRITE Box, Voices of Hope

The BRITE Box project arose out of a previous Voices of Hope initiative 'meals on wheels' which provided service for vulnerable groups during the covid-19 pandemic.

In June 2020 the first box of ingredients was sent out for Toad in the Hole along with a recipe guide to 17 families experiencing food insecurity.

The positive impact of these first boxes was immediate and signalled the growing need for more, with help from the council, local groups, and a volunteer team soon 250 families received boxes every Friday across the Borough.

Nick Dawson said: "We are proud to be able to reach so many families thanks to the great support of our funders, partners, and volunteers."

A recent evaluation conducted by Kingston University found that 93% of people had a positive experience, 95% said they would use recipes again and 87% said their children tried new food because they'd been involved in the cooking process.

BRITE Box has worked with AFC Youth, Project X, Kingston Young Carers and D of E students, by providing the meal kits to prepare at home and by providing live cooking classes.

This presented an opportunity to build skills, confidence and to learn how to engage with others and share stories or experiences during the activity, alongside weekly volunteering opportunities which are open to all levels on the scheme.

BRITE Boxes partner The South London Mission operates the project in Southwark and an Elmbridge location is currently setting up, in the future more partners will enable this project to develop and reach all those in need.

A participating family in the project said: "It is an awesome scheme to be part of and quite literally given us a meal some days when we've run out and it's exciting."

Voices of Hope additional food-based initiative is [The Good Food Co Op](#) which aims to make the provision of healthy food accessible, affordable and inspiring for all.



The Good Food Co Op Box. Image Credit: Nick Dawson, The Good Food Co Op, Voices of Hope

From November 2020, using a not for profit model spray, free fruit and vegetable boxes have been packaged and delivered with help from volunteers and local suppliers.

All profits go towards providing heavily subsidised boxes to local families in need.

The boxes come in a range of sizes, along with recipes and online cooking classes sourced from the Kingston community.

This initiative aims to champion local farmers by using their fresh healthy produce of a high quality, all while sourcing sustainably and ethically.

Greener Greens, a surrey-based organic delivery business is The Good Food Co-op supplier, they source fresh produce from local, independent growers certified by the Soil Association.

After sourcing an independent grower of high quality spray-free produce, Greener and Greens set up a spray-free line during the pandemic in which 200 Horsham families benefitted weekly.

This created the relationship between Greener Greens and The Good Food Co Op, with all box produce free from artificial fertilisers and chemical pesticides.

Positive reactions created a loyal customer base and a range of organisations now involved in the project including: Growbaby, Staywell, Homestart, CAP, Achieving for Children and Refugee Action.

Nick Dawson said: "There is a desire in the community to help others and customers know that by signing up for a fruit and veg box they will be helping somebody local get affordable access to the same tasty produce."

This 'by the community, for the community' ethos was something new and missing for local residents according to The Good Food Co Op, however it was something that was clearly needed.

This enterprise ensures income isn't a barrier to healthy fresh produce, to reduce to waste and surplus in the wider food system and to engage in advocacy to improve socio-economic issues.

Both initiatives aim to offer tangible hope for those struggling with child food insecurity and access to healthy produce by using food as a force of good while establishing a culture of healthy living for all.

Voices of Hope have many more community projects and various choirs open to the community, for more information or to get involved there's more information [here](#).

Featured Image Credit: Nick Dawson, BRITE Box, Voices of Hope