

# A neighbourhood food bank for people in need in the United Kingdom

This project, supported by the Givaudan Foundation, and initiated by Givaudan Milton Keynes employees (United Kingdom) is conducted in partnership with a local food bank. So let's dive further into it through an interview with Caroline, member of the Givaudan "Food bank – Meal buddy" volunteer project team. She helped to drive and coordinate the initiative.



*Givaudan volunteers with the packed meal boxes*

**Caroline, could you tell us a bit about the specificities of this initiative?**

It is a project that falls within the health category of the Givaudan Foundation. Prior to this project our site had worked closely with the Milton Keynes food bank on some initiatives like the Christmas hampers. However, we wanted to give the local families in need something healthier and more nutrition-focused. In this project, Givaudan volunteers assembled nutritionally-balanced

meal boxes with recipe cards. Each kit contained a step by step picture recipe card and all the necessary ingredients. The project started late 2019.

**Who are the project beneficiaries?**

The project is aimed at local families from Milton Keynes who live with limited economic resources. The 1100 meal boxes that we managed to pack have benefitted around 4400 people who attend the local food bank.

**How did the project come to life?**

For many years, our site has supported two local charity organisations, and the food bank is one of them. Debbie, our project lead and Paul, our lead culinary expert, brainstormed about a project that could benefit, from a nutritional perspective, families in need in the community while remaining affordable for them in the longer term. The main inspiration behind the project was the meal box trend and through the meal kits we hoped to help the families gain confidence in using store cupboard ingredients to create tasty nutritional meals.

**How many employees were involved in this project, what were their roles and areas of expertise?**

Ten employees were involved with this project. It was initially planned to have a bigger team, however, the pandemic obliged us to reduce the group to a smaller number. This very committed team was led by Debbie, who oversaw all the activities. Under Debbie's supervision we were organised in sub-teams supporting

in different areas. Paul, our culinary expert, was able to develop a set of eight tasty recipes. He was supported by volunteers who helped gather nutritional information and source all ingredients. Other employees helped with the graphic design of the recipe cards, the various photographs, the logistics, meal boxes' packing and dispatch.



*Paul, Givaudan chef and culinary expert, who developed the recipes*

**What were the main criteria taken into account for each meal box's recipe?**

All ingredients had to be ambient, as the main objective was to create a recipe from cupboard ingredients. Overall the recipes had to be simple to recreate, cost effective, and nutritionally balanced whilst considering the limited equipment the families would have access to.



*One of the eight developed recipes*

**Why did you choose to apply for a grant with the Givaudan Foundation?**

We felt that with the hampers we only managed to reach a small handful of families and our aim was to go bigger while continuing to help less fortunate local families. With the resources received from the Givaudan Foundation we were able to create a new scheme that gave us the possibility to reach a greater breadth of families.

**The pandemic must have impacted your project activities, how did you organise yourselves?**

Indeed. Covid-19 meant that all ingredients needed for our meal boxes became harder to source. Our team size had to be reduced and social distancing also meant that access to the Givaudan site to develop our recipes, taste them and pack the meal boxes was reduced. To ensure we could still deliver our goals, we split all the activities into small pieces in order to maintain a safe environment. Overall, working in a social distancing way and the scarcity of ingredients were the most challenging aspects of the project.

**What was the response from the food bank regarding your support?**

It was very positive. They informed us that they had really good feedback from the families across all the recipes. The food bank then contacted us to ask for help with their own cooking inspired events using the Givaudan recipe cards.

**What was the most rewarding, and motivated you to carry on with it?**

We felt very motivated by the positive feedback from the food bank. We were also happy to be giving something back to the community, and with the pandemic the need for it was heightened. The way our team gave its 100% throughout the project strengthened our bond and gave us a sense of camaraderie.

**Finally, any advice you can give to other Givaudan sites that would like to do a similar project?**

Having deadlines was the key element of our success regarding the organisation of the project. It helped keep us on track and meant the project was kept moving. Without the deadlines, things would have been pushed aside. A second advice I can give is that it is essential that you consider having a wide breadth of skills and team qualities that can all come together to deliver the objective. In our team, we all knew what our responsibilities were from the beginning and this helped us keep the project on track.

*Food Bank – Meal Buddy Team*

*June 2021*