



Malvern Community Kitchen

Summary & Detailed Overview of the MCK Project for Major Sponsors

Prepared by Julia Needham, November 2024

Summary

Community kitchen, providing free meals to families with at least one child under 18 in Malvern and surrounding areas that are struggling with the cost of living crisis, on a referral basis from local GPs. This project will operate as part of the Octagon Community Centre Malvern, a registered charity¹. The MCK will serve high quality fresh food prepared on site in the early evening, initially twice per week: once at the Octagon Centre, Poolbrook and once at a venue to the North of Malvern, at St Mary's Church, Pickersleigh. Specifically targeting child food poverty.

At the heart of this project will be respect for the dignity of our clients. The intention is to make this as close to a 'going out for dinner with your family' experience as possible - more a 'treat' than 'charity'. Once referred, clients and their families will be supported for a period of 6 months. MCK intends to employ 3 members of staff (part-time), supported by volunteers, and will endeavour recruit as many staff/volunteers as possible from the community we are intending to serve. Seed funding of approximately £10k is needed before we open. Ongoing funding will be based on a model of encouraging lots of the wealthier residents / successful local businesses to set up a small monthly standing order.

Seed Funding

Individuals or companies contributing £1000 or to seed funding of MCK will be featured permanently on the MCK webpage, and on social media / email 'signature' for the first year of operation (unless they specifically request not to be included).

We aim to open Malvern Community Kitchen to our first clients early in 2025.



¹ Charity Commission Registered Charity Number: 1197948

Detailed Overview

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Definition of Poverty
Resources not sufficient to meet minimum needs

1 Motivation & the Initial Idea

Like many others, I was deeply shocked to hear the outcome of the most recent UNICEF report on child poverty at the end of 2023.

Did you know?

Child income poverty rates in the United Kingdom were the highest among the world's richest countries ranking bottom of the table for changes in those rates in the past decade. The UNICEF report looked at relatively well-off countries to assess the rate of child income poverty combined with child poverty reduction rates. Britain ranked 37th out of the 39 nations in the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) based on income poverty rate for children and their success in reducing child poverty in a time of prosperity.

UNICEF - December 2023

- Around 1 in 5 people in the UK are living in poverty
- Of that group, around 40% are in 'very deep poverty' with household income after housing costs (AHC) less than 40% of median AHC income.
- Children consistently had the highest poverty rates (pensioners and working age adults without children had the lowest)
- The West Midlands had the highest rate of poverty at 27%, followed by the North East and London (both 25%), Yorkshire and The Humber, the East Midlands and the North West (all 23%).

Joseph Roundtree Foundation: January 2024

Rural poverty is a problem in the UK - 17% of rural households in England are experiencing relative poverty after housing costs - yet it is often unseen - hidden by tourism and/or wealthier neighbours².

Dr Stephanie Denning, Coventry University - Jan 2024

² Coventry University, published Jan 2024: Hidden hardship: everyday experiences, coping strategies, and barriers to wellbeing in rural Britain.
<https://hiddenhardship.coventry.ac.uk/index.php/report-for-policymakers-and-community-leaders/>

2 The Developed Proposal

The Idea

Community kitchen providing free meals for families in Malvern and surrounding areas that are struggling with the cost of living crisis. Specifically targeting child food poverty.

For whom?

Families, with children under 18 on a referral basis from Local GPs, health visitors and school nurses. We will also be working in partnership with the Social Prescribing Team covering Malvern Town Primary Care Network and with Action for Children (the Family Hub Network) covering Malvern Hills district.

Why these referral partners?

Local GPs alongside the Social Prescribing Team and Action for Children are uniquely well placed to be able to identify families in particular need of this service. Our local GPs are likely to be willing and able to provide more referrals than we need in the first instance: clearly, we are not going to struggle to find customers. Very positive feedback has been received from GPs and school nurses. Feedback from GPs suggests that the families they would refer will need long-term help ie for at least 6 months, probably longer. While not excluding the possibility of adding additional referral partners in future, small but targeted in the first instance is what I am proposing.

How would referrals work?

Places would be booked using an online booking system to which only these referral partners would have access. Having identified a family in need, referral partners could make a 'reservation' for their client's first family supper with us. Before the project goes 'live' I would propose to hold a short zoom training session, to make sure our referral partners are comfortable with using the system. Once clients had attended their first meal, they would be given a 'loyalty card' and be invited to rebook directly with us to reduce admin for our referral partners.

When?

initially 2 evenings per week, possibly Sundays and Wednesdays (to be determined based on the convenience/availability of the 'home' venue). Sittings for 20 people at 2 sittings, who would be invited to arrive between 4:30-5pm, or between 5:30-6pm (total 40 per evening). Food preparation for each week's provision to be undertaken on Sunday afternoons prior to the Sunday evening serving.

What?

To be simple. Two options to be provided, based on a 2 week rotating menu. Eg Pasta bolognese, chicken curry. Details of food provision to be finalised with input from a qualified chef, but this will not be a 'race to the bottom': food provided to be prepared on site from good quality fresh ingredients only.

It is hoped that standard cooking equipment/utensils/cutlery/crockery will be able to be borrowed from the venue. Additional resources required will likely include:

dedicated Fridge and Freezer, extra large catering saucepans x 2. Costings currently based on all ingredients being purchased from wholesale food suppliers.

By whom?

This needs to be sustainable and reliable. On the days of service provision, I anticipate that this will require a minimum of 3 employed positions:

- Chef
- Lead organiser (duties to include confirming rotas for staff and volunteers)
- Member of staff (continuity and assistance with all roles)

Aspiration will be to staff the rest of the operation with volunteers, to include:

- Food prep (eg peeling veg) Sunday from 2pm (with 3 volunteers, for example, this should only take 30 minutes at most).
- Serving/clearing/washing up

Note regarding Volunteers

Feedback from other similar organisations in nearby counties suggests that we should aim to recruit volunteers from amongst the community we are seeking to serve as soon as possible. Existing operations have found that some of those using the service are often keen to have the opportunity to 'give back' in this way, and the experience gained can in some instances be life changing. In the medium to longer-term, the project would aspire to recruit employed staff, as the need arises, from within this cohort of volunteers, providing training opportunities if/when appropriate. In this way, we can look to offer more than just free food to families in need!

Signposting

It will be essential (not least for ongoing funding applications) to ensure that staff and volunteers would be in a position to signpost our clients to other local agencies/services such as Citizens Advice/CAP etc where appropriate.

3 Community Consultation

Research conducted

- Visiting and speaking to staff and clients at other 'Community Kitchens'. In particular: Cornerstone in Cheltenham, and The Cavern in Gloucester. Speaking with staff and existing service users.
- Seeking input / advice / feedback from potential 'Referral Partners' (Local GPs, Health Visitors and School Nurses), including a meeting with one local GP involving a detailed discussion about the project in general and the details of the referral process.
- Seeking quantitative data to analyse local need by means of short questionnaires completed on behalf of existing clients of Malvern Hills Food Bank. I have assumed that there will be a significant cross-over between clients of MHFB and those we hope to serve. The information gained from this analysis will be used to confirm the need for the service I am hoping we will provide, and 'fine tune' operational aspects of the project including the referrals process, timings of provision and menu planning.

Existing Local Provision

Are any other local services already providing free/virtually free cooked supper in the early evenings for families with children under 18?

School holidays

- HAF scheme of summer activities with food provision for children on free school meals. Sarah McC believes that there is nothing that the children can attend with their parents through HAF.
- Nothing currently available for children with their families.

Term time

- Nothing currently available for secondary school children and their families.
- There is 'light meal' provision on Thursdays from 3:30pm - 5pm, at the Octagon Centre for families with primary school aged children in term time only.

For Reference, the following existing charities, primarily focused on deprivation/poverty, already operate in the Malvern Hills Area

MAGGS

Day centre for the homeless in Malvern, providing support / assistance in accessing services in a safe environment. Includes filling out forms, attending appointments, clothes, food, substance and alcohol support, housing support.

Community Fridge

Community Fridge is national network, aiming to prevent fresh food from going to waste. Typically, community fridge branches receive surplus from supermarkets, local food businesses, producers, and gardens.

Several branches of Community Fridge operate in Malvern, including at the Octagon Centre and St Mary's, Pickersleigh. Both of these are locations from which MCK will be operating. It is expected that the co-location of these projects will provide substantial mutual benefit / reduce food waste further.

Malvern Green Space Community Lunch

'Pay What You Can, If You Can' lunch held twice per month.

The Octagon Centre

Brook Farm Drive, Malvern, WR14 3SQ

Focused on the Brook Farm area of Malvern and beyond. 'Thursday Project' - after school cafe style session for families with primary school aged children, offering activities, crafts or games, as well as a light meal. 3:30-5pm once per week (Thursdays) in term time only. Also runs a Community Pantry (for a £3 donation), which is open during the 'Thursday Project' and Fridays from 9:30-11am.

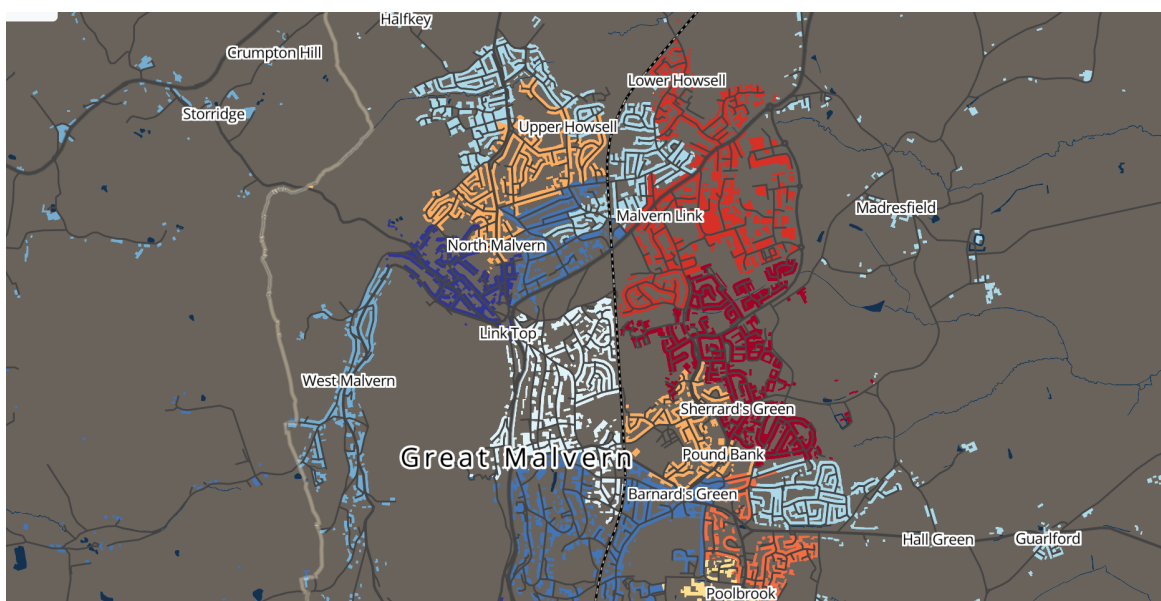
How?

To be funded primarily from regular charitable giving by standing orders from local individuals, sole traders and businesses within the local community. However, I cannot reasonably ask for this until the project is up and running. The project will therefore require significant Seed Funding while work establishing ongoing community based funding is undertaken. I have assumed that it will take 6 months to establish sufficient community funding to fund this project in the long-term.

I intend to take responsibility for establishing the community funding base over the first 6 months of operation and will commit to continuing my voluntary work on this project until that objective is achieved.

4 Unique Opportunity for Community Based Funding

Malvern Hills is in a relatively unique position. A ward level analysis based on the most recent census data indicates that we have some of the wealthiest communities in the country here in Malvern (top 10%) juxtaposed with some of the most deprived areas of the country (bottom 10%). This is relatively unusual, outside of the context of large urban areas³. Key barriers to charitable giving are the ‘drop in the ocean’ and ‘can’t see where my money is going’ concerns. We have a unique opportunity here in the Malvern Hills to enable the substantial wealthy cohort of the local population the opportunity to donate in to a local project, capable of making a substantial difference, where they can actually see the operation/result that their charitable donations are funding⁴.



I hope to fund this project, long-term, by encouraging a large number of local individuals / business in the Malvern Hills area to make a modest monthly contribution by standing order. A ‘leap of faith’ will be required here, but I do have a lot of experience of community fundraising, so feel I will be in a good position to make this happen. In the short term, a detailed analysis of operating costs has led to the conclusion that ‘seed funding’ of approximately £10k will be needed in order to cover the shortfall during the first 6 months of operation while long-term funding is secured.

³ Data analysis provided by the Geography Department, Malvern College.

⁴ Anecdotally, many friends to whom I have mentioned the possibility of this project have indicated a keen willingness to sign up for regular donations.

6 A little about me...

I am a criminal / human rights barrister and campaigner and live in Malvern with my husband and 3 teenage children. In my professional role, in addition to my criminal practice I undertake a substantial amount of pro bono work - enabling access to justice for a wide range of individuals for whom legal aid is not be available. I have twice been nominated for pro bono counsel of the year. I have a life-long history of involvement with charity fundraising / governance and have substantial past experience as a trustee, school governor and PCC member.

I am in the fortunate position where I am able to afford to take some time out of my professional practice at the moment. Attendance at the Priory 'Romans' course earlier this year, reading the UNICEF report at the beginning of 2024 and a reminder from a fellow campaigner of the importance of '*deeds not words*' have inspired me to do my bit to address the pressing issue of child food poverty. However, this is not a career move! My plan is for the project to be fully funded and on a sustainable footing within 6 months, with an employed manager and paid part-time staff...at which point I will take a step back (but not before). Ambitious, I realise - but achievable I believe.

For the avoidance of doubt, I will not personally be receiving remuneration for any aspect of my work in setting up Malvern Community Kitchen.

Annex 1

Key advice from those running similar projects in surrounding Counties

Having spoken to management and service users at other organisations running similar projects in the surrounding counties, the following key themes emerged:

1 Volunteers

We should aim to source volunteers from within the community we are seeking to serve as soon as possible for client facing function. Some inspirational success stories involve individuals who were initially clients, became volunteers, then received training paid for by the Community Kitchen and were ultimately employed as paid members of staff.

2 Reducing Stigma - Voluntary contributions

I had originally planned that the dinner at the Community Kitchen would be free. However, feedback from service users suggested that this would be a major barrier. The overwhelming advice was to make a small charge, to improve dignity and allow clients feel that they are contributing. I therefore propose to encourage a voluntary contribution of £1 per adult, with children being free. See also feedback from Malvern Hills Foodbank clients, at Annex 3.

Annex 2

Analysis of the results of questionnaires completed by Foodbank Clients

Key findings

- Preferred time for families with children was 4:30/5:30 (not later).
- Demand for vegetarian/vegan food was very small.
- A very small proportion were vegetarian/vegan.
- Local GPs were the preferred referral point, with some resistance to referrals from school nurses/health visitors.
- Favourite meals were spaghetti/pasta bolognaise and curry. (Very helpful, as both lend themselves to vegetarian / vegan alternatives).

Of note

- Most of the Foodbank clients are single adults: there is clearly substantial demand from within this cohort. Worth noting for future expansion.