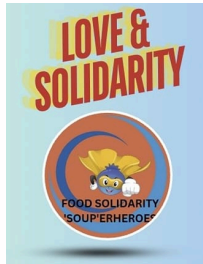


Cash-first in action: Love and Solidarity



Food Solidarity 'Soup'erheroes | Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/379205031059351>



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Love and Solidarity

Love and Solidarity are a grassroots constituted community group in Castlemilk, South East Glasgow.

Their aims are:

- **To alleviate the stigma of poverty** through sharing and caring while promoting love and solidarity throughout the Castlemilk Community
- **In partnership to raise awareness of the impacts of poverty** and work together collaboratively for positive social change
- **To promote an ethos** of having an inclusive, non-judgemental approach without discrimination or favouritism

A short poem on the next page was written by a member of Love & Solidarity and expresses their aims and ethos.



Do you know what the word Solidarity is all about?
Do you think it's just a word that we randomly shout?

We've been told it's too political and to drop the word from our name,
But the Food Solidarity Superheroes definitely don't think the same.

It is the beacon of hope in what we do ,
Its a commitment of the values we hold so true,
It brings powers of unity and strength that we can share, reminding each other that we do care.

It wraps its strong and loving arms around us all,
giving us courage in case we fall.

It means everyone together in heart and in mind,
building friendships and a unity that can forever bind.

It promotes justice and peace when life seems so grim,by shining a light that will never dim.

It means together we can, together we will
pledge that making a difference is top of our bill.

So al ask you again do you know what the word Solidarity is all about?
Or Do you still think its just a word that we randomly shout?

Love and Solidarity are made up of food activist volunteers who deliver their aims via regular community outreach, community events, partnership working and being 'Souperheroes' with their work centred around the warmth, care and connection that a pot of soup can bring.

Their **Community Food Initiatives** includes:

- **Regular pop up stalls** in streets across Castlemilk offering soup packs, a chat, and solidarity
- **Community Events** and Festivals centred around food, sharing, caring, celebrating the area, the people and "coming together" through difficult times. For example, 'Curry & Karaoke' nights and 'Love & Solidarity Summer Festival'.
- **Their Community Hub** in a disused shopping unit which they have on a month to month basis. Twice a week anyone can come in for a hot soup, a chat, information on what's happening locally and support
- **Being actively involved in Castlemilk Together: Community Food Action**, a consortium of local organisations, community groups and community members working collaboratively to reduce food insecurity and food poverty
- **Highlighting the levels of poverty** throughout Glasgow and Scotland through, for example, presenting a workshop at The University of Glasgow, being interviewed in a podcast, and sharing our experiences

Overview of current cash-first approaches

Offered alongside Love and Solidarity's activities are:

- **signposting** to relevant agencies, in particular the local Castlemilk Law and Money Advice Centre
- **encouraging** people to **access wider services** such as those that support people to claim their entitlements of benefits or provide fuel vouchers and energy advice, etc
- when other solutions are not available, **providing vouchers or hardship donations** to those experiencing crisis via money that has been donated to Love & Solidarity or fundraised by them at their community events



for us it's always the reality that people have to go from pillar to post and fit 'the criteria' to receive financial and food support whereas our criteria is that you are standing in front of us trusting us with your struggles

By us giving cash or voucher this enables them to purchase food which meets their personal requirements such as dietary, lifestyle, religious and allergens.

It supports them to maintain their dignity .



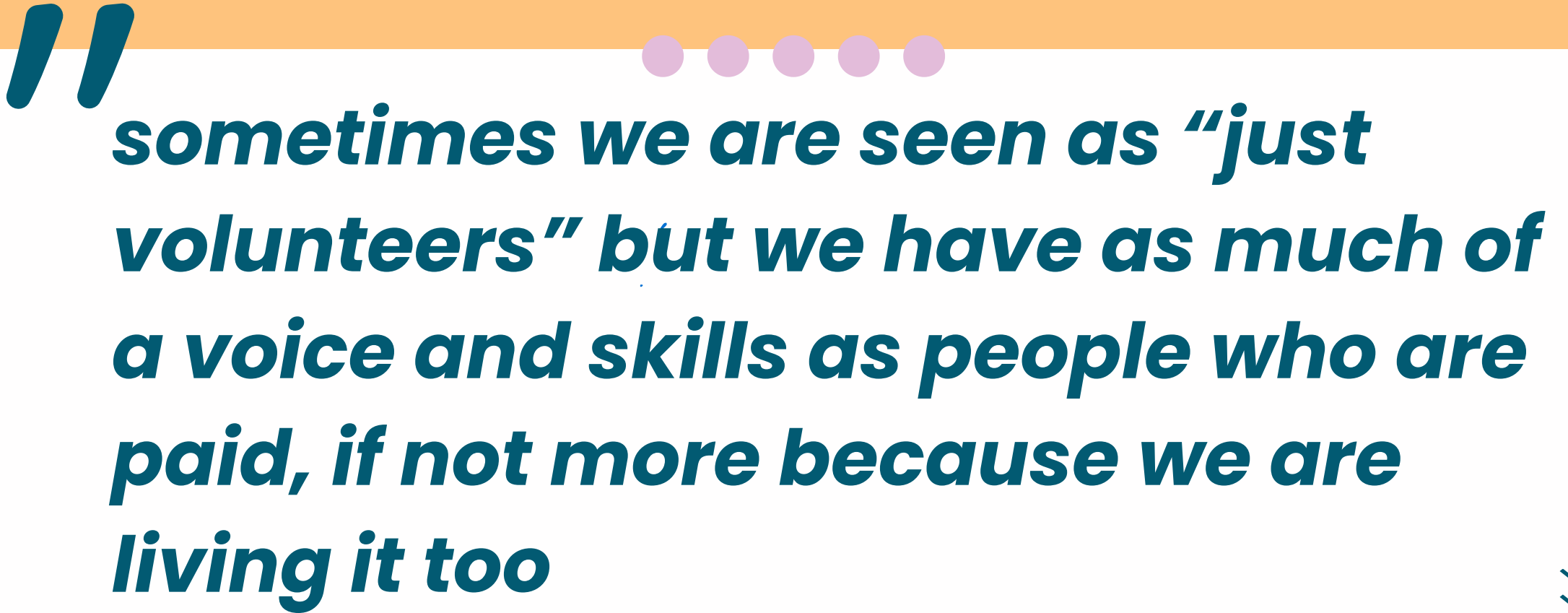
Figure 1 below shows Love & Solidarity cash-first approach in action.



Challenges

Their reported **key challenges**:

- **limited funds** to enable the food support that further enables the cash-first work
- **temporary nature of the Community Hub** as it is on a month to month basis
- **accessing training** to remain updated on benefits, entitlements and unique barriers that some people face, such as asylum seekers and refugees
- **working to change people's outlook** around key issues such as diversity and inclusion, stigma of living in poverty, and solidarity over charity
- **encouraging our ethos** of that there is no deserving and undeserving poor, their ethos is that everyone is equal
- **sometimes lack of support and collaboration** from larger organisations and feeling vulnerable as a result of this
- **sometimes being viewed as 'less than'** due to doing this on an unpaid basis



“sometimes we are seen as “just volunteers” but we have as much of a voice and skills as people who are paid, if not more because we are living it too

“

we have always worked on giving the choice, and feel that so long as this is done respectfully and confidentially and if funds are available then there is no reason why this choice cannot be offered



Positives

The main positive that Love and Solidarity have observed is:

- **how having increased knowledge and support** to access advice as well as vouchers or foodstuffs is the impact it has on reducing the stigma that can be felt when seeking food
- **the visible change in others** with regards to increasing their understanding of poverty, practicing empathy and inclusion of people who are facing similar challenges



The positives are definitely obvious, firstly it is so noticeable how grateful people are and how much they feel included and important, which is key to stamping out the stigma that comes with seeking food support.



Key Learnings

In implementing their approach, Love and Solidary have observed the below key learnings:

- **By promoting and practicing solidarity and equality**, they observe others continuing this practice creating a ripple effect across the community
- **Through their personal approach, they have built relationships** with the people that seek food and cash-first support which they believe to be important to reduce people feeling like they are someone who “is just a person needing a bag of food”
- **They have been very successful in holding events** that have brought organisations and projects together and have demonstrated loudly the benefits of partnership working: however outwith these events partnership working they have learned that this is not as available or as easy to establish



Aspirations

Their reported **aspirations** related to cash-first approaches:

- **having access to fuel vouchers** rather than having to signpost to services that can have inconsistent availability and opening times
- **get more support** via partnership and collaborative working
- **having a more permanent space** for our community activities rather than a temporary month to month space as the solidarity we're providing isn't a "quick fix", because poverty is a long term issue for people

rather than us having to send families or individuals on a 'wild goose chase' to find a place open. By us having a float of them it means we can provide more immediate support



Thank you

to Love and Solidarity for their contribution to this 'cash-first in action' series.

You can see more 'cash-first in action' profiles via Glasgow Community Food Network's website at <https://glasgowfood.net/>



This series is part of a wider Scottish Government funded project, delivered by Paddy McKenna, commissioned by Glasgow Community Food Network.



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