



COMMUNITIES TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS
Collaboration between Croydon Mutual-Aid, Croydon Foodbanks and CVA

It's been a tough year and, as we all know, with Christmas approaching it will get even tougher for some families. When putting food on the table is hard enough, extra pressures at work or in the home can tip people over the edge. Throw covid-19 restrictions and a second lockdown into the mix and you have the makings of a perfect storm.

The CVA-supported partnership of mutual-aid groups, foodbanks, social prescribers and faith groups has done an amazing job this year in supporting people through the covid-19 crisis. But the biggest challenge may be yet to come, which is why from **12 November** we'll begin a new collaboration – the *Communities Together At Christmas* campaign. Involving all faiths, we'll use **Christmas Day** as our centrepiece activity when we bring a selection of families together at CVA's Resource Centre to collect food-hampers and presents for their children.

In making sure that none of our families go hungry in the run-up to Christmas, we'll also use the *Communities Together At Christmas* collaboration to launch our wrap-around support services. CVA will provide our foodbank and mutual-aid partners with exclusive access to a **Helpline** through which the families referred will be connected up to customised support systems.

Using the Helpline, our mutual-aid and foodbank partners will refer families to us that need more support than they can give. We will then place the family with one of our **Community Builders**, whose job will be to build a support system around the family. This might mean that we link the family up to one of our volunteer befrienders for one-to-one support – or it might be more appropriate to link them up with a community group running peer-support activities. In some cases we will need to refer them to one of our delivery-partners specialising in supporting people experiencing domestic abuse, substance misuse, anxiety or depression. Families in severe financial crisis or where safeguarding is a concern, will be referred to the Council's Gateway services.

We'll continue to provide our foodbank partners every week with as much produce as possible and if any new families come to us for support we'll cater for their immediate needs before referring them to their nearest foodbank – trusting that if any foodbanks reach capacity, they'll let us know. As well as UK Harvest, FareShare and City Harvest, we will reach out to Croydon's mutual-aid and faith-based groups to donate more food – and throughout lockdown and into December we'll invite members of the public to make daily donations.

Between us – with the foodbanks delivering food parcels and mutual-aid groups making shopping trips and picking up prescriptions – we'll strive to support the families we work with to overcome all the stresses, strains and financial worries they're managing, helping them to make it safely through lockdown, Christmas and into the new year.

Steve Phaure
CEO, Croydon Voluntary Action

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COMMUNITIES TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN
cvacroydon (Instagram) / CroydonVA (twitter)**