FOOD 4 THOUGHT

One Meal =
One BIG Impact

STREET LIFE

Contents

There is nothing better to make you feel at home than a hearty evening meal, bringing people together around one table, creating a sense of community and peer support.

Introduction

Welcome & Thank You!

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to Food 4 Thought — we're so glad you have joined us!
First and foremost, thank you. Your decision to volunteer your time, energy, and compassion means the world to us and to the many individuals who will benefit from your generosity. Every box packed, every meal delivered, and every smile shared makes a real difference.

Your generosity through Food 4 Thought is helping to make young people experiencing homelessness in Blackpool, lives better by offering to provide a meal to the shelter.

Food 4 Thought is more than just distributing food — it's about building community, showing care, and standing together to support those in need. Whether you're joining us for the first time or returning to lend your support again, we're thrilled to have you on board.

This booklet has been designed to provide you with all the information you need to participate in Food 4 Thought. You'll find everything you need to get started: guidelines, tips, and information to help you make the most of your volunteering experience. If you ever have questions or need support, our team is here for you.

Together, we can make a meaningful impact. Let's get started!

Providing a Meal

The HOW is entirely up to you;

You could prepare a home cooked meal and drop it off, or if you don't fancy yourself as much of a chef you could pay for a takeaway, or you could simply donate the ingredients, and we will take care of the rest.

The WHY;

This presents a great opportunity for community engagement and skill-building. Cooking a meal and dropping it off fosters a personal connection, while ordering takeout could offer convenience and variety. Alternatively, supplying ingredients for the young people to learn to cook together not only equips them with essential culinary skills but also encourages teamwork and self-sufficiency, making the experience enriching on multiple levels.

Positive, enjoyable experiences at mealtimes are one of the most important things we can do to encourage long-term healthy eating habits. Avoiding pressure really helps this, so if young people feel relaxed and comfortable at the table, and see others enjoying meals, it's more likely to create strong, positive associations with food.

Meals together are great opportunities to model a relaxed and balanced approach to food. For example, by not focusing too much on the food you're eating but enjoying the occasion of all sitting down together. Mealtimes are also a great chance to connect together and communicate. If young people feel good when they sit down to eat, it can work wonders in developing positive eating habits.

Creating the opportunity to make a 'family' meal and eat together can help initiate a conversation about something young people like to talk about...an activity they enjoy or a person they admire

Benefits of Mealtimes

Improved Nutrition

People who eat together tend to consume healthier meals. Home-cooked meals are often more nutritious, containing higher levels of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while also being lower in calories and unhealthy fats. Regular meals are associated with better dietary habits and lower rates of obesity.

Emotional and Mental Health

Shared mealtimes provide a platform for open communication, allowing members to discuss their day, share experiences, and express feelings. This interaction is linked to lower rates of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse among young people. Regular dinners can foster resilience and higher self-esteem.

Social Skills Development

Meals are an opportunity for young people to develop essential social skills, such as manners, patience, and conversation skills. Engaging in discussions during meals helps young people learn to listen, respect others, and articulate their thoughts.

Strengthening Bonds

Mealtimes create a sense of belonging and security within the community. They allow people to connect, share traditions, and create lasting memories.

Educational Opportunities

Group meals can serve as informal learning experiences. Young people can learn about nutrition, cooking, and meal planning by participating in meal preparation. This involvement can encourage them to try new foods and develop a positive attitude towards healthy eating.

(Information taken from BBC website and the internet)

Meal Options

Home cooked meals

Cook a meal at home and drop the meal off at the night shelter before 7pm this can be hot or cold.

Suggested examples:

- Chicken curry
- Chilli and rice
- Stir fry
- Stew
- Cottage pie
- Tacos

Provide Ingredients

Buy ingredients to drop off at the night shelter. Staff will help young people prepare the meal. Great option if you don't have time to cook a meal

Suggested examples:

- Hot dogs + Frozen chips
- Sausages + Mash (Potato)
- Pie + Mash (Potato)
- Jacket potatoes, cheese beans and butter.
- Chicken and wraps with salad
- Pizza + Chips
- Cheeseburgers + Chips

Takeaways

Order a takeaway for the night shelter for 10 people for delivery for 7pm.

Suggested examples:

- Fish + chips
- Pizza
- Indian
- Chinese

Streetlife Facilities

Streetlife Shelter has fully functional kitchen facilities. Food can be warmed up or kept cold if required. There is also a cooker, air fryer and microwave available.

If you are bringing prepared food for the young people to the night shelter in your own pots and dishes, these could be hot or cold. These pots should be labelled with your name and will be returned to you clean during your next visit, ensuring a smooth and convenient process for everyone.

Another option if providing meals ready made, is to transfer the food on the day into Streetlife kitchen crockery so containers and dishes can be given straight back to you. You can also provide in one use foiled trays.

Alternatively, Streetlife could also provide you with dishes that you can take home to use and bring back. If this is your chosen option, we kindly request that you let the Shelter staff know in advance what you need to ensure we have the required dishes or containers.

Dietary Needs

Streetlife recognises there may be times when a young person is unable to eat a meal provided by a volunteer as part of Food 4 Thought. Please be assured, Streetlife always have options for individuals who can't eat the food that is provided due to health reasons, religious beliefs or allergies. Please don't feel you have to cater for everyone's needs. Providing one meal option is totally more than suitable.

Streetlife staff will ensure every young person at the shelter has an option of a meal so they can join in the meal around the table with the rest of the young people staying in the shelter. Please feel free to contact the shelter in advance to ask if there are any potential individuals who may have dietary needs.

Please Note:
Due to the nature of Streetlife's emergency accommodation service and the transient circumstances of many of the young people accessing support, it may not always be possible to know in advance who will be staying at the shelter each night. As a result, any information provided by staff regarding dietary requirements may be incomplete or subject to change. We kindly ask volunteers to remain flexible and understanding, as the needs of the young people may vary from night to night.

Safety Guidelines

To ensure the safety of both volunteers and young people, please follow these guidelines when handling food from your own home:

Food Hygiene & Preparation

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling food.
- Clean and sanitise all surfaces, utensils, and containers before use.
- Where possible wear disposable gloves and a clean apron while preparing or packing food.
- Avoid preparing food if you are feeling unwell or have any symptoms of illness.

Although we do not require volunteers to have a Food Hygiene Certificate, we do ask that you apply food safety principles when preparing the food for young people. If you would like to gain a Food Safety Certificate, please let us know as Streetlife is able to support you to obtain one.

Storage & Packaging

- Store perishable items in a refrigerator or freezer until ready for delivery.
- Use clean, food-safe containers or packaging materials.
- Label packages clearly with contents and date of preparation.
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate to avoid cross-contamination.

Allergy Awareness

- Where possible avoid using common allergens (e.g., nuts).
- Clearly label any food that contains allergens.

Delivery & Handover

- Coordinate with the shelter team for safe drop-off or collection.
- If available, use insulated bags or coolers for temperature-sensitive items.

Personal Safety

- Keep pets away from food preparation areas.
- Ensure your kitchen is well-ventilated and free from hazards.
- Take regular breaks and stay hydrated.

Legal & Ethical Responsibility

- Follow any local food safety regulations or guidance
- Maintain confidentiality and respect the dignity of all young people.
- Report any concerns or incidents to the night shelter manager promptly.

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Cancelling a Meal

Streetlife acknowledges that sometimes things are out of your control, life events happen, and plans have to be changed. If you have been diarised to complete a meal and are unable to provide due to unforeseen circumstances, please notify the shelter staff **ASAP** so they can make alternate arrangements for the evening meal.

Complaints

If for any reason you need to make a complaint, please send the complaint to the Night Shelter Manager. Any complaints received by Streetlife will be dealt with using Streetlife Complaints Policy Guidance (this is policy is available on request).

Contacts

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