

Stats & stories!

2025 - 2026



A QUICK SNAPSHOT.

This year, we have really enjoyed working together as a team in our new premises. Having the space together has helped open conversations about the support we provide and whether it meets the needs. The first observation was a significant difference between partners: those we would define as active and those who were not. We want partners who are actively involved, ordering meal boxes and working alongside us. We are also mindful of not creating waste as we work toward a sustainable future and greater eco-consciousness. For these reasons, we have created **partner packs** with resources to share within their settings, along with a new way to report the primary reasons the meal box was distributed.

A mother had to leave her job, resulting in a significantly reduced income. As a single parent, she was struggling to cover household costs. We were able to support the family with two meal boxes to see them through the weekend and have continued to offer boxes on a regular basis.

Historically, we have also seen a rise in orders before a holiday, whether this is half-term or the longer holidays. Families struggle without support from the schools, and when a crisis arises, children can go hungry. Over the last year, we spent time creating **Crisis Holiday Packs**.

This is just a snapshot of these projects. Please do a deep dive into this report, as it covers supporting families in crisis, long-term top-up support, and the geographies in Milton Keynes that we have found are affecting families facing food poverty in our city.

THIS YEAR

Meals Boxes packed & delivered
5790

235
Crisis Packs packed & delivered

which provided
27,860

Plates of delicious dinner

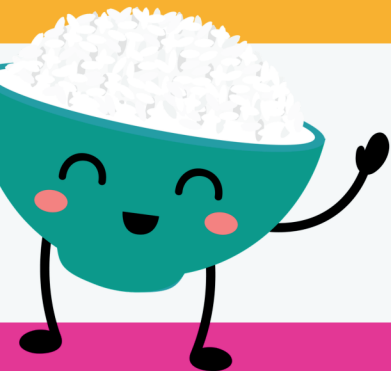


MOST POPULAR

50% of schools reported Bolognese as a favourite meal

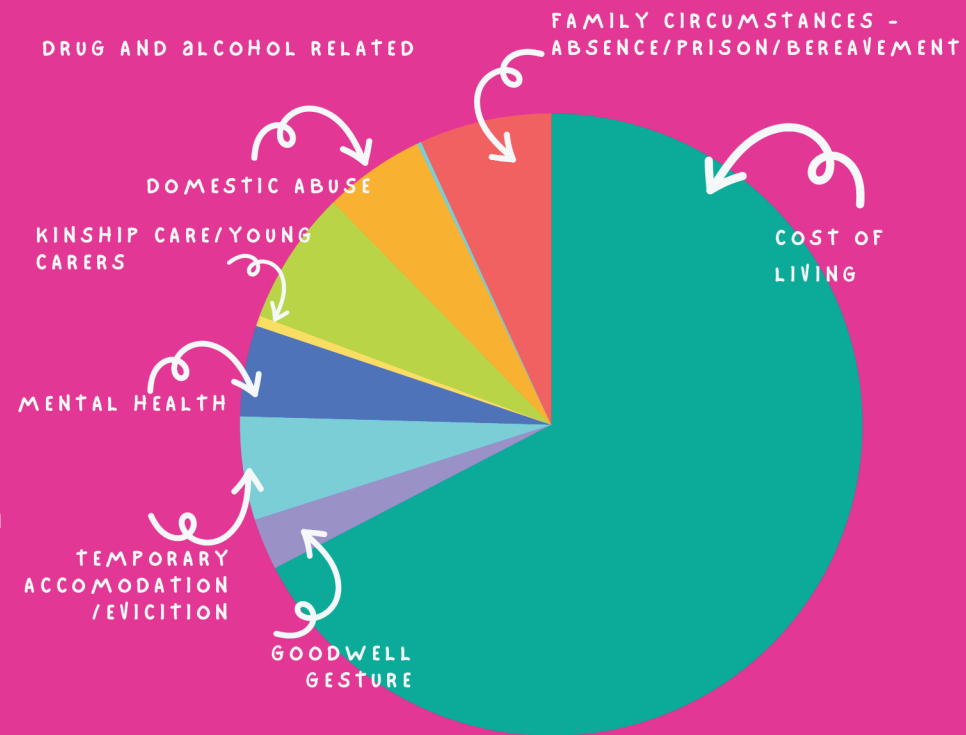
most ordered box
1,022 TUNA meal boxes ordered

21 **NEW** partner schools, nurseries, and community hubs



WHO ARE WE SUPPORTING?

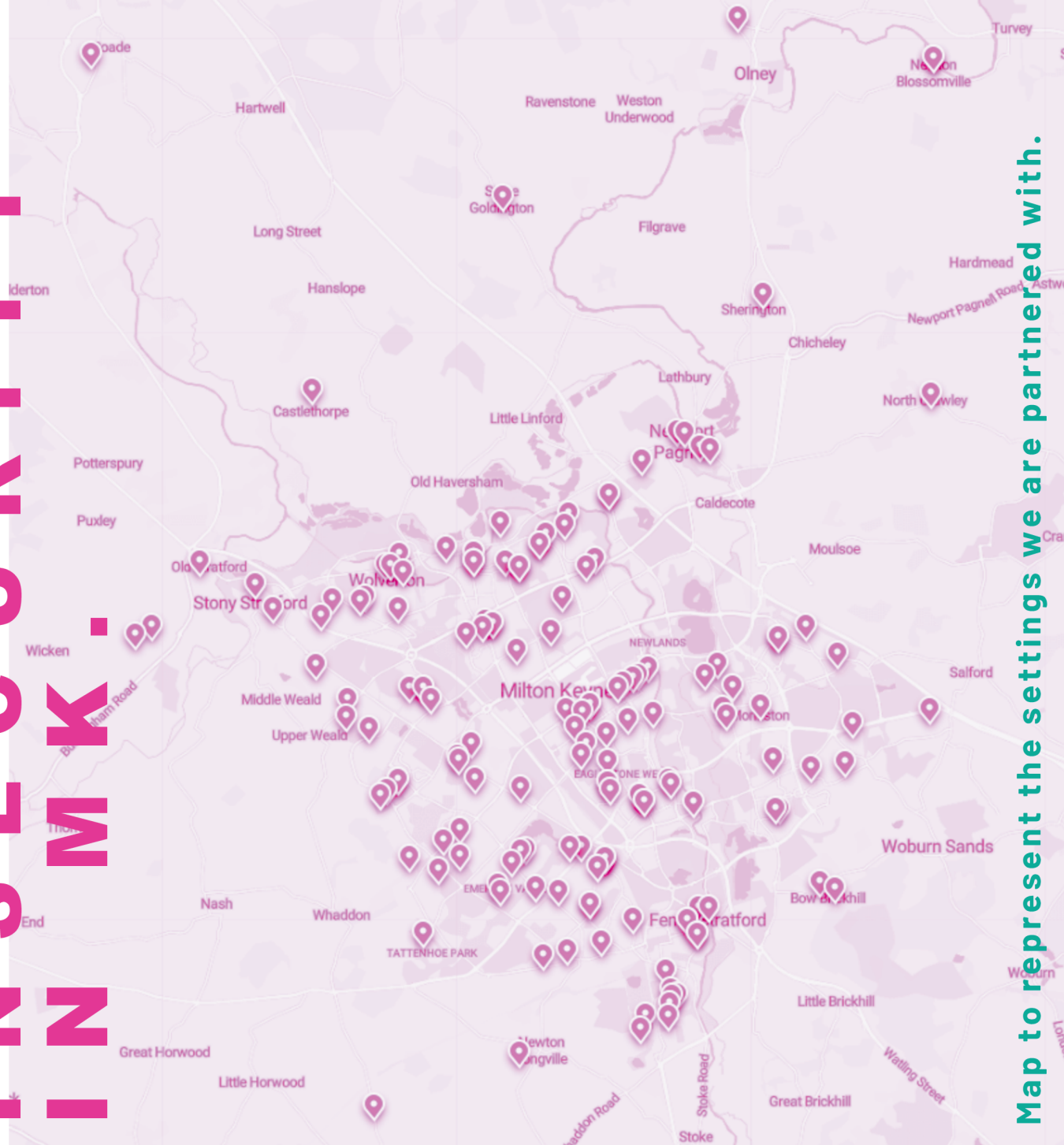
We spent time developing a way to capture data from our ordering site to gain a clear understanding of why our meal boxes are needed. We now know that the greatest need for our meal boxes is driven by the cost of living, which didn't come as much of a surprise. What it has also shown is that children can go hungry for a number of reasons, and families struggling with mental health, living in temporary accommodation and fleeing domestic abuse are also needing additional support. The picture from the data shows that food insecurity is unpredictable.



In conversations with our partners, it has become clear that the cost of living is significantly affecting families who are often classified as JAM (just about managing) or as the working poor. It is often families who are in work who are struggling to meet their needs and need some additional one-off support.



FOOD SECURITY IN MK.



Milton Keynes is constantly growing with new communities popping up across the city. At St Marks Meals, we have noticed some trends regarding location, additional provisions, and school interactions.



Schools in new-build areas often have a very mixed domestic income, and we are finding that schools are relying on our meal boxes and have less access to other provisions. Transport can often be difficult and/or expensive and these families often feel isolated. For this reason, we have a high number of meal boxes ordered.



However, we have also seen lower orders for our meal boxes in more deprived areas within the city. This is because these schools and family centres have access to food bank parcels, community larders, and other forms of support. However, when the schools are closed, we have a real need for our Crisis Holiday Packs.

CRISIS HOLIDAY PACKS.

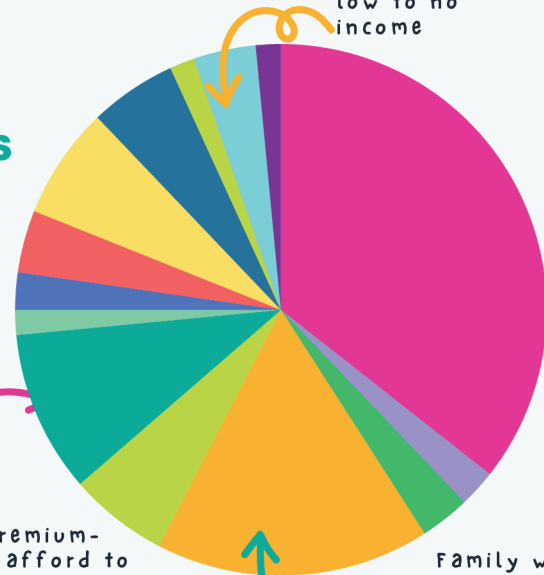
This year, we have introduced Crisis Holiday Packs. We ask partners to complete a referral form so we can provide a family with one of our packs. Currently, we are offering the pack at half terms, but we aim to extend this offer to the longer holidays in the next school year. However, to extend this offer into the summer holidays, we will need additional funding.



Each pack contains our 5 main meals, all in a large bag, for easier transportation to homes.

Single parent with low to no income

REASONS FOR THE CRISIS HOLIDAY PACKS



Pupil Premium - cannot afford to feed the family during the holidays

Family with 4+ children and low to no income

St Mark's Meal boxes were given to a family in crisis. The family's boiler had broken this winter and the family's income was used to pay for the replacement. St Mark's Meals were given to the family to support them whilst waiting for payday.

We partnered with 21 new partners this year. 8 new primary schools and 1 new secondary school, as well as 1 council hub and 11 nurseries.



146

We have also reached out to partners who have presented as inactive to work with them with our new resources. We have said goodbye to 7 primary schools that haven't been responsive or use other services/charities to support their children.

ACTIVE PARTNERS.

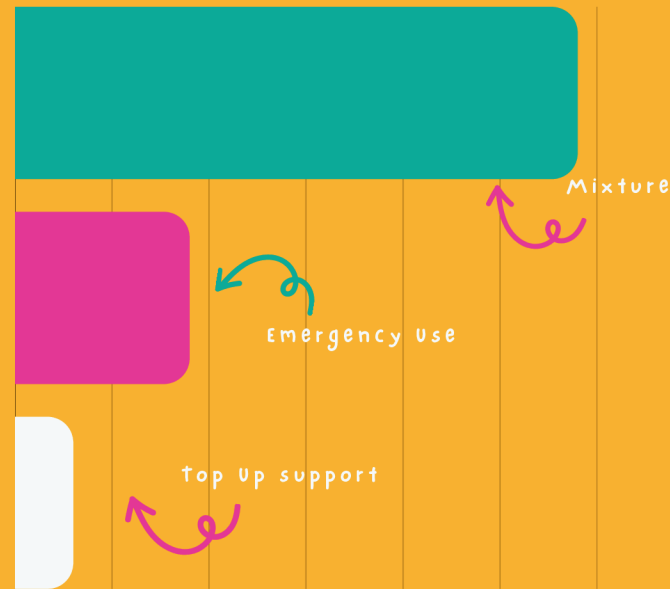
The resources in our new partner packs include posters for staff rooms and partners, as well as explainer videos.



PARTNER SURVEY 2026.

We asked our partners about their experiences working with hungry children and St Mark's Meals. Here's a summary of their responses.

- We asked our partners whether they gave out meal boxes as a top-up or emergency use. We want to understand whether we are being used as part of larger food parcels or as an emergency provision. The data shows that largely we are both!



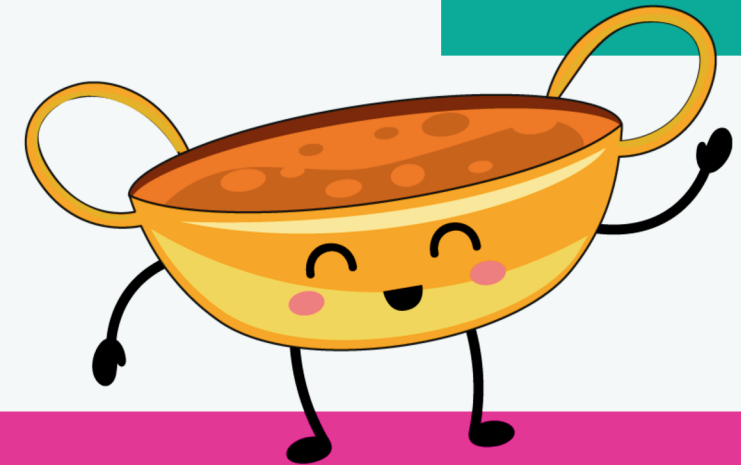
- Single parents find the holidays particularly difficult and often **rely on our meal boxes** to help feed their families. Our Crisis Packs have been particularly well-received during this time, and parents have been incredibly grateful for the support.



- The posters we designed have been displayed, and feedback indicates they have helped remove some barriers, such as embarrassment. Families feel confident to ask for support, especially at a crisis point. Families have also reported that children love the recipe card, cooking a meal together, and eating together. One family in particular has said that eating together again has strengthened their family relationships.

- Parents who are unwell physically, have an ongoing illness or mental health issues often are unable to go shopping and/or prepare food. Schools that have become aware of this, after children report coming to school hungry, have been given meal boxes until their parents are well again. Our meal boxes not only prevented hungry tummies but also prevented additional stress for the family.

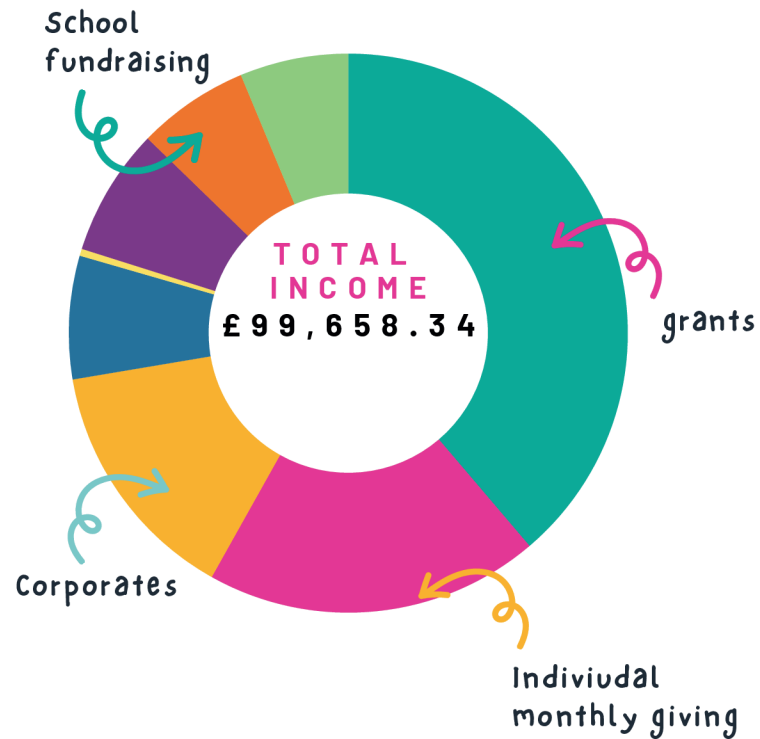
I have supplied numerous boxes to a family of 5 (single parent, 4 children), over the past year, who really struggle in many ways. They are really grateful for the boxes. Mum has said they are a 'lifeline'.



FINANCES.

ST MARK'S MEALS - INCOME.

Over the last year, our strategy was to increase our grant applications and corporate giving. As a team, we have worked hard researching different grant options and have devised a strategy that includes reaching out to the local MK parish council for grants. We managed to secure £10K through this avenue of funding and are very grateful for this local support.



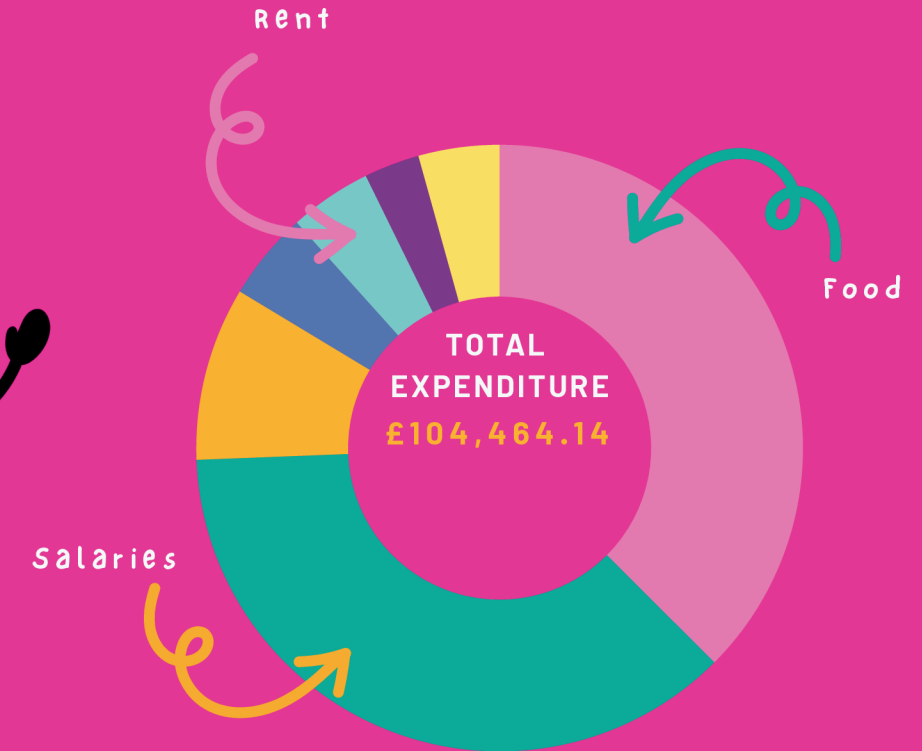
We have seen a decrease in corporate giving. **We are very grateful** to those corporates who have fundraised, given financial support regularly, and donated one-off gifts. However, we're reviewing our strategy to attract more corporates, as we haven't secured support from any new ones.

We are so grateful to our partner schools for stepping up the fundraising. **We have increased this avenue of fundraising by 35%**- a big thank you to those schools who have given so generously.

FINANCES.

ST MARK'S MEALS - EXPENDITURE.

This year's deficit is £4,905.80, and food & salaries remain the largest expenses. We have managed to bridge the gap slightly compared to last year's deficit; however, more fundraising is needed this year to cover rising rent costs. We expect rent costs to rise significantly, so we are implementing strategies to raise funds to prevent the deficit from growing further.



NEW IN 2025/26.

We have partnered with many **preschools and nurseries** this year. This has been a significant expansion of our reach, and we are so pleased that the youngest in our community are also gaining access to our meal boxes.

A new meal box! We had supply issues with our previous box supply, so we used the time to review whether we need to redesign the box. Feedback from our partners has been that the handles sometimes break, and it would be useful if the box could fit into a bag or under a buggy. After many consultations with a new company, we found a design that works, and we are so happy with our new box.

Over the year, Est has been working on **updating our website**. There is a lot of information for our partners and fundraising and general information about who we are. Check it out!



THANK YOU

ITS A TEAM EFFORT.

Our volunteers are brilliant and the key to making sure we can pack and deliver the meal boxes and crisis packs. They work so hard, are incredibly supportive, and we are very grateful to them.

For a small charity, we have a wonderful community cheering us on. If you have fundraised, packed meal boxes, or engaged with our social media, THANK YOU.

To those who financially support us, whether regularly or on a one-off basis, a huge heartfelt thank you. Your generosity is providing relief to families across the city of MK.





Jo

**WE CAN'T
FIX EVERY
PROBLEM**

**BUT WE
CAN SORT
DINNER.**



Becky



Paul



Rach



Est

THANK YOU
from us!