

Case study: Bungay Community Support – Number 28 Food Hall

This is a case study about the community hub at Number 28 that Bungay Community Support (BCS) operate. Established initially as an emergency response during the COVID-19 pandemic, BCS has evolved to provide essential services and support to the community in Bungay, centered around their Food Hall and wraparound support initiatives.

How They Started

BCS started with a focus on medicine and shopping deliveries to support vulnerable people. They then developed a telephone befriending service to alleviate isolation during the lockdowns, which later turned into warm rooms. Recognising a greater need around access to affordable food within the community, they decided to start the Food Hall. Number 28 was a butcher's shop that had closed and been empty for some time. The team at BCS worked tirelessly to build local relationships and with help from a range of charitable trusts and an excellent team of volunteers, they converted it into a welcoming community hub that opened on June 23rd, 2023.



How It Works

Their Food Hall runs on a subscription system: customers pay £1 a month and then £3.50 weekly for their groceries. They choose their items from the Food Hall on a Tuesday afternoon. BCS record some basic data about their customers for the subscription alongside consent forms to contact customers. They contact customers every 6 months to have an open conversation about their situation and to offer additional support. This gives BCS staff a chance to book them in to speak with the various wraparound support services that attend the Hub on a weekly basis.

Several organisations attend on a regular basis: Multiply run Maths classes; The Job Centre run a Job club; and Wellbeing Walks will start soon through the local council. BCS also offers several classes and courses of their own. One is run by a former teacher offering 1:1 reading lessons for adults. Another volunteer has developed a Digital Literacy class that is held weekly to support those with tech problems and further understanding. This class has also helped the volunteer gain part time employment of their own.

Their Impact So Far

They are seeing excellent results from customers sitting down with the Financial Inclusion team and Citizens Advice, who support them with Universal credit applications and other benefits. They have reported several instances of customers no longer needing to use the Food Hall thanks to the support given to them from BCS.

The wraparound support services have been well received and engagement has increased significantly since the Hub opened. This is due to the services representatives becoming “regulars” so customers are more comfortable to speak to them as they are a friendly face that they recognise. This, alongside support and time being given by the BCS team to understand an individual’s needs, has built a foundation of trust

“As a community social centre, Number 28 offers a warm, welcoming place where local people can just pop in, socialise, chat, have refreshments, take part in activities, read, do jigsaws, or just off-load.”

Their Challenges

Continued need for funding to remain sustainable is a strain on the project. Most grants are for short-term projects only with no core or salary costs to be covered. Thanks to a great team of Trustees, staff and volunteers, BCS is able to make applications for funding grants. They were the recipient of a Lottery fund that has enabled them to expand their operation and hire a part time member of staff to manage the Hub. However they do admit it is hard work and takes up a lot of hours.

“It is therefore a constant task to find adequate, appropriate levels of funding to ensure continuity of services and support. To this end, we have a newly created Friends of BCS to assist with fundraising to supplement grant applications.”

“We are desperate to open a second day but are currently lacking funding for the additional food replenishment required, hence joining with FareShare. Unfortunately, we have been told by FareShare that increased demand from charities is coming at a time of falling donations from supermarkets, so stock is extremely limited and not necessarily predictable.”

BCS has built valuable relationships with their community in Bungay, with food supplies coming in from donations of local eggs, artisan bread (which they freeze until needed) and locally grown pulses, produce from the local allotment growers and from time to time, any surplus left in the school kitchens, thus avoiding food waste. Free pet food is received from RSPCA and free sanitary ware is received from East Suffolk Council.



Community Food Partnership Team

Looking Forward

BCS has set up its account with a wholesaler offering community food projects special discounted prices on ambient food through a connection made with the CAS Food team with a local CIC, Ankose. This will enable them to place food orders online and have them delivered directly, saving money as well as hours and hours of volunteer time. They also have more ideas for support groups from their research and community connections such as an Older woman's group that will focus on cancer, menopause, and general wellbeing support.

Number 28 community hub has been a vital asset to Bungay residents, without it many would have been left to struggle for food and support by themselves. The staff, volunteers and trustees are doing an incredible job, and this case study has only highlighted some of the work they do. Thank you to Linda and Barley for speaking to us and answering our questions.



Community Food Partnership Team