

Press release: 15th May 2022



Shrimpers supporting the local foodbank: Standing Up For our Community

During the 21/22 season, Blues fans donated over half a tonne of food, 600kg, and £2750 in cash to Southend Foodbank. This is a huge amount that will do a lot of good across our community.

Southend United, through the Community and Educational Trust, hosted two foodbank donations days at Roots Hall in November and April. Fans gave generously, bringing food, toiletries and cash to donate. Away fans from Woking and Notts County also donated to the foodbank volunteers at the ground.

Local pubs the Blue Boar and Spread Eagle kept collection crates on their bars throughout the season, with additional collections arranged by local grassroots group Fans Supporting Southend Foodbanks.

Collecting food, toiletries and cash outside the ground makes an impact on the work of the foodbank. As well as the amount donated, seeing support from the club and fans shows people struggling locally that they are supported by their local community. It makes a real, practical, local difference when the items donated can end up in kitchens on the streets you walk through on your way to Roots Hall.

Fans across the country, in all leagues, have been joining a growing grassroots movement of Fans Supporting Foodbanks, which was named by the Big Issue as a top poverty changemaker in 2020. With Marcus Rashford's campaign for free school meals and the Right to Food campaigns, footballers and football fans have been tackling food poverty by connecting the power of football to urgent challenge of helping people who are hungry.

Alex Small, founding member of Fans Supporting Southend Foodbanks said:

“Since forming Fans Supporting Southend Foodbanks last August, the generosity of our fans, the local pubs and the club has blown us away. With the cost of living worsening, we face major challenges ahead but this year has shown the spirit of solidarity in our community is more than a match. A massive thank you to everybody who's contributed to our cause whether as a volunteer or donor, and we look forward to seeing you next season.”

Need for the local foodbank has doubled since 2017, as more families struggle with the cost of living. In the first three months of 2022, the Foodbank received 1,034 referrals from January to March and fed 2,783 people - of whom 1,219 were children. That is a stark 44% increase in referrals this quarter compared to the same time period last year.

Reflecting on the importance of match day collections, Simon Carter, warehouse manager at Southend Foodbank, said:

“I always knew Blues fans would rise to the challenge to support families in our community who require food aid support. The level of that support has been both

fantastic and humbling at a time of a deep cost of living crisis. The support from the Club and in particular the Community and Education Trust has been pivotal to that success.

We have some exciting plans for the coming season that I hope will deepen our relationship with Blues fans, the Club alongside the support of Fans Supporting Southend Foodbanks, as part of a wider National League campaign to support local foodbanks.”

To give help or get help, please visit southend.foodbank.org.uk or see southend.foodbank.org.uk/category/football-and-foodbanks/ for more information.

Ends.

Editors notes

- Southend Foodbank opened in November 2013. Since then, it has grown to cover Southend and Rochford with 8 distribution points across Southend, Shoeburyness, Southchurch, Westcliff, Leigh, Eastwood and Hawkwell and Hockley.
- Every year the foodbank has been open, it has been busier than the year before. In 2021, Southend Foodbank had almost 3000 referrals, and gave out food to more than 8500 people including nearly 4000 children.
- Referrals are made to the foodbank from a range of agencies, including Citizens Advice, schools, GPs and social workers, housing associations, police, and community organisations.
- As part of the Trussell Trust network of foodbanks, Southend Foodbank works on a referral model to make sure that people in need are connected with at least one source of support as well as getting emergency food. The foodbank also offers signposting to further help for people in crisis.
- Anyone that would like a referral to the foodbank can call Citizens Advice Southend on 01702 456352 or 456354 to go through a referral process over the phone.

Media enquiries for Fans Supporting Southend Foodbanks, please contact Alex Small alexandersmall@hotmail.com

Media enquiries about Southend Foodbank donations or the ongoing support from SUFC, please contact Simon Carter simon@southend.foodbank.org.uk

Media enquiries about the wider work and impact of Southend Foodbank, please contact Cass Francis cass@southend.foodbank.org.uk