

GOOD FOOD STORY



Name: Michelle McRobert

Project: Dalbeattie Community Initiative Pantry

Location: Dalbeattie

Describe your project:

Our Community Pantry is one of the projects run by 'The Initiative' in Dalbeattie. We offer a shopping experience to those in Dalbeattie and the surrounding area who need to access affordable everyday purchases. The Pantry is open 3 days – Monday, Wednesday and Friday at different times to allow the community to access our service. Anyone can come in and for £4 they can take 15 items from a wide variety of items; such as dry goods – pasta, rice, cereals; fresh fruit and vegetables as well as canned fruit and vegetables; a selection meat and meat products; dairy goods and alternative milk products. It's not just food products as we try and provide a range of cleaning and hygiene products and occasionally will have some pet supplies. The Pantry tries to provide a shopping experience which is inclusive to their family needs. We collect donations from local supermarkets and businesses We also buy food to make sure we have a wide selection of food products for people to choose from. Our shop on the high street also helps to signpost to other services that can help people who may be struggling and need further support. Many of our Pantry shoppers have become volunteers who now help to keep the Pantry.

How did you get started?



The Community food project was born out of our crisis food provision during the pandemic in 2020. We provided over 300 food parcels to the community during the pandemic and supported those who needed further help. During this time we wanted to provide a more dignified access to emergency food provision and looked to find another model. After looking at different models the Dalbeattie Community Initiative decided on the pantry model and looked to find funding and premises to provide a friendly place to buy food at prices which supported the community. We reached out to the local community; supermarkets and businesses to make sure this would work. We try to make it a good shopping experience and offer hot drinks and information of other local events and benefits.

What are the challenges?

We have learnt that people want a more dignified access to emergency food provision. The current economic situation affects all sorts of people and having access to a community pantry on their doorstep is important. Making sure people know about the pantry and that we continue to offer a wide range of food products is a challenge. Funding is also a problem as we are coming to the end of a 3 year fund and will need to look at our way to make the Pantry sustainable.



What does sustainability mean to you?

We have a fridge that can store perishables that have been donated near their sell by date which is free to shoppers and reduces food waste. We provide advice and recipes to encourage more shoppers to take the donated fresh fruit and vegetables to make it last longer and not end up in landfill. The local allotment will donate some of their harvests and we provide soup bags to encourage cooking at home. Team up with other local community food providers to share and support one another.



What good food changes need to happen in D&G?

The funding landscape needs to change as many small similar organisations are going for the same pots of money. A coordinated approach to emergency food provision in the area would help to sustain our projects. Working with key partners to join up our approach to supporting communities in need. It would be good to have opportunities to signpost our work at different forums.

What are your plans for the future?

We are looking to develop further opportunities to cook meals from scratch and increase cooking skills in the community. To make links with other organisations that can provide these skills to our members. The Initiative have in the past provided other opportunities to provide a holistic approach to poverty and will continue to look at different approaches to support our community. The Initiative are looking to secure funding to continue our work and to develop our volunteers. Having a friendly and supportive base for our volunteers is key.

