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BMJ appeal raises over £53 000 for food aid charity

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Food banks across the UK have been able to buy personal protective equipment for staff and provide help to feed children during school closures as a result of money raised by *The BMJ*'s annual appeal.

The appeal, which runs until 31 January, has so far raised £53 446 for the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN), a charity that focuses on the root causes of food poverty, while supporting local organisations that work to tackle its immediate effects.

Lifeshare, a voluntary organisation that helps homeless and other vulnerable people in Manchester and Salford, said that the recent grants made possible by *The BMJ*'s appeal had been crucial to its work. "They've meant we could buy essential PPE to keep our staff, volunteers, and clients safe over Christmas and the New Year and provide essential items for families living in food and fuel poverty," said Judy Vickers, the charity's operations manager.

New Forest Basics Bank has used grants made possible by the appeal to help support children affected by school closures. Sue Norris, a trustee for the food bank, said, "Schools struggle to find the funding for the breakfasts, and so we have been providing food for at least 60 children a day to six schools. We had discovered that in most schools the staff were paying for this out of their own pockets."

A soup kitchen in Leeds has used its recent grants from IFAN to help provide a wider variety of food. "Neruka's Soup Kitchen was able to use recent grants from IFAN to purchase toiletries and extra ambient food such as canned fish and pasta, which helps with the variety of foods that make up family hampers," said Neruka White.

Sabine Goodwin, coordinator at IFAN, said the funds raised by the appeal had been "invaluable" to the network. "The new covid-19 variant has presented new challenges in recent weeks, while the need for emergency food aid is increasing at pace," she said.

"We've been able to support our member organisations in purchasing essential supplies, including food and PPE, while continuing to call for measures that would reduce the demand for their services in the first place. IFAN has been able to continue to publicly advocate for a 'cash first' approach to food insecurity—a call that couldn't be more critical at this time."

How to donate

The Independent Food Aid Network needs your support: please give generously.

You can donate to the campaign at <https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/bmj>.