



Introduction

The Food Train Ltd is a charity registered in Scotland (no. 024843) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (no. 158165), providing vital support at home to older people. Our services include a food access grocery delivery service, household support, befriending services, library outreach, library one to one services and a neighbourhood meal sharing project. Food Train currently operates in Dumfries and Galloway, West Lothian, Stirling & Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Glasgow, Renfrewshire & East Renfrewshire and the Scottish Borders. Our meal sharing project called Meal Makers is available across Scotland. Food Train is also leading on a 3.5 year project called Eat Well Age Well, funded by the National Lottery, which aims to address malnutrition or undernourishment in older adults in Scotland.

The core charitable aim of Food Train is to provide a low-cost grocery delivery service and other practical support to those unable to do their weekly grocery shopping through age related frailty, ill health or disability. The objective of this service is to support people to live independently in their own home and community for as long as possible, and positively impact on their health and well being through increased social contact.

“We envisage our organisation as a ‘one stop shop’ for older people – by providing services or helping them access services (observing the operational boundaries of free personal care) to help them live independently at home for as long as they wish and are able”.

Directors recorded this vision at strategic planning meetings held in 2007.

The story so far

The Food Train concept was developed from the results of a community survey in 1993. Dumfries & Galloway Elderly Forum members carried out a door-to-door survey in the North West area of Dumfries, where the need for older people to have regular practical help with their grocery shopping was seen first hand. Some housebound older people were being exploited by a local travelling shop, suffering financially and lacking in food – and there the idea for Food Train was born, a simple concept of volunteers delivering shopping to those unable to get out or carry it themselves through age and frailty.

The service started in 1995 with the original vision that every older person in Dumfries & Galloway should be able to get fresh groceries regardless of their location and without means or health testing. Although other similar schemes now exist in a variety of formats, Food Train was the original developer of this concept.

From 1995 to 2002 Food Train operated in Dumfries town on a small scale. The introduction of a £187,000 four-year funding package (Better Neighbourhood Services Fund) allowed the recruitment of staff to expand and develop the service to its current region wide status, growing both volunteer and

customer numbers and developing the 'EXTRA' home support service to meet the growing needs of older people in the region.

Food Train founders were ahead of their time 25 years ago, showing great foresight into the changing climate of social care and support, developing a service that was both unique and simple – a guaranteed recipe for success.

Historically, we developed our core service geographically within Dumfries & Galloway region, but are now moving successfully into new geographical areas and additional service development with a wider scope of partners and increased motivation to gap fill around the free personal care framework.

Our Current Services and activities

We currently operate three distinct services to the same customer group in Dumfries and Galloway as well as our neighbourhood meal sharing project to the wider community.

- 1) Weekly grocery shopping deliveries (Food Train)
- 2) Regular support with general household tasks (Food Train At Home)
- 3) Befriending service, including telephone contact, home visits and trips out (Food Train Friends)

We operate these through our five district branches, with local 'hub' offices, vans and volunteers based in and around Stranraer, Newton Stewart, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries and Annan.

In West Lothian, Stirling & Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Glasgow, Renfrewshire & East Renfrewshire and Scottish Borders we provide the food access grocery shopping delivery service from a single central base.

West Lothian Food Train has since gone on to develop Food Train At Home and Library services (both on a routine schedule of delivery fortnightly and a one to one service incorporating befriending called Library Friends).

Dundee and Glasgow areas also offer the Friends befriending services and Glasgow offers support with general household tasks (At Home service). All areas promote and support the Meal Makers neighbourhood meal sharing project.

The profile of our average customer is female, 80+, living alone and becoming increasingly frail through age and struggling with labour intensive tasks like shopping. Over 2400 older people across Scotland are members of Food Train.

Food Train members pay a £1 annual membership charge, which allows them access to our full range of services. There are various small charges for all our services payable by the members.

Around 1100 volunteers across the country collectively provide Food Train services undertaking tasks such as driving, delivering, office administration, grocery shopping, household support tasks and befriending. All volunteers in direct contact with customers are subject to an enhanced Disclosure via the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme.

The funding required to operate each regional Food Train is made up of four main elements; a core Local Authority Service Level Agreement, income generated from service charges, fundraised and donated

income and small grants from other sources. Each regional Food Train contributes a proportionate share towards national support costs.

Shopping Delivery Service- Food Train

This is our original service and still the largest. Teams of local volunteers from each branch call to collect a completed shopping list from the customer, which is then taken to our partner shops. Teams of volunteer shoppers make up the order and delivery volunteers then collect the order and transport to the customer's home on a nominated day.

Home Support service- Food Train 'At Home'

Teams of local volunteers based in each branch visit customers every 3 or 4 weeks for up to 1 hour and undertake a large variety of household tasks that have become difficult e.g. inside window cleaning, defrosting fridge/freezer, changing bedding, renewing light bulbs. This service is available to all customers registered for the shopping delivery service where their further needs have been highlighted.

Befriending Service - Food Train Friends

This service offers a combination of regular phone calls, home visits, clubs, events and trips out with matched befrienders. Service users help create a regular calendar of events and trips to suit a diverse range of tastes.

Library Service – Food Train Library

This service offers a combination of routine deliveries of library books by volunteers, selected based on the customers known likes and preferences, and 1-1 visit to collect, delivery and read with customers less able

Meal Makers

Ongoing customer and volunteer feedback for many years highlighted the need for our grocery shopping service to move beyond into providing cooked meals too. However this has always been an area classed as 'care' and difficult to navigate in a voluntary informal way out with the boundaries of becoming a registered Care Provider. Malnutrition among older people is also a growing problem and something we pursue relentless progress with at policy level. During a study tour to London in 2013 we learned about a new web based service that matched local cook volunteers who could donate any extra portions of their home cooked food with older people in need – this provided the much needed lightbulb moment to progress this for our members. Securing 2 year pilot funding from Scottish Government and Rank Foundation we worked with the company to create a web platform best suited to our style of delivery and Meal Makers was born www.mealmakers.org.uk. Launched in August 2014 in Dundee as the test site, the project extended into Glasgow and other Food Train regions. From April 2018, Meal Makers will be available right across Scotland. Volunteer cooks sign up on the web site then our team match them up with older diners who have been referred to us. The meal sharing takes place when suits the cook

and diner and the info is logged in the system. Feedback from diners show they are eating more, eating better, enjoying a wider range of foods and enjoying the social contact. The cooks say they love sharing their food, enjoy helping someone close by and feel great about their new relationships.

Eat Well Age Well

Funded by Lottery, the project will run for 3.5 years (2017 to 2021) to address malnutrition or under – nourishment in older adults. The project is varied and carrying out a range of work including research, trying out new ways of helping older people to eat more, screening, providing training, providing information and resources and running a small grants scheme www.eatwellagewell.org.uk

National Development Project

Given the changing environment of social care and free personal care, combined with Scotland’s ageing population we continue to seek funding opportunities and commitment to expand our services and start up in more local authority areas.

Monitoring

A full customer satisfaction survey of our services is undertaken annually. Compliance monitoring for the Office of Scottish Charities Regulator is completed annually, as is service monitoring for statutory funding. Bi-annual volunteer and staff surveys help provide a full picture of how the charity interacts and responds to the people that work within.

Training

Maximising opportunities for personal and professional development for both our staff and volunteers is important to our organisation. Supporting volunteers in building confidence and self-esteem and ultimately employability, helps us maintain our high volunteer numbers.

Partners

Although we are an independent organisation, we work directly with colleagues in all health and social services departments for customer referrals, similarly with a variety of older people based organisations, forums and centres who refer people to our service.

We have a unique partnership with the private sector where a wide range of local grocery stores contribute their staff time to support our customers by making up the grocery orders for our volunteers to deliver. This is a relationship that allows the private sector grocery industry in the region to directly support the community living around their store.

Achievements

Our achievements and recognition from others demonstrates the value and quality of our services:

- Awarded 'The Queens Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service' in the Community ~ 2004
- Winner 'The Guardian Society Charity' Award ~ 2004
- 'Best Practice in Volunteering' ~ 2005
- Named 'Group of the Year' by Age Concern Scotland ~ 2005
- Awarded 'Highly Commended' at the UK Charity Awards ~ 2007
- Achieved Healthy Working Lives Bronze Award ~ 2008
- 'Runner Up Service Provider of the Year to Over 65's' at the Herald Society Awards ~ 2008
- Achieved Healthy Working Lives Silver Award ~ 2009 and 2013
- Highly Commended 'Group of the Year' West Lothian ~ 2011
- Community Partnership Award Dundee - 2012
- Shortlisted 'Charity of the Year' Charity Times UK - 2012
- Volunteer Friendly Award ~ Dundee 2012, Stirling 2013, Renfrewshire 2014
- Youth Link Intergenerational Work 'Finalist', Food Train Friends 2013
- Age Scotland Older People's Service of the Year, Food Train Friends ~ 2013
- Dumfries & Galloway Life Charity of the Year Finalist ~ 2014
- CEO selected as 2015 Clore Social Fellow (Specialist Older People's Fellow)
- CEO awarded an MBE in Queens Birthday Honours in November 2016
- 2017 awarded Befriending Networks Accreditation
- 2018 Awarded Runner Up in GSK Health Improvement Awards
- 2018 Achieved Cyber Essentials Accreditation
- 2019 Outstanding Achievement Award – Dumfries & Galloway Life Awards

Our Board of Directors

A Board of volunteer Directors governs Food Train. This body has grown and changed with Food Train but in recent years has had to become increasingly formalised to meet new challenges, in particular to oversee national growth.

We have capacity for 11 Directors and there are currently 9 in post.

The Board currently meets every 6 times a year on Fridays. 2 of the meetings are held at Head Office in Dumfries, 2 are hosted by a Food Train branch where Directors get to meet and have a buffet lunch with local staff and volunteers before their meeting and 2 are located centrally just off the M74 at Larkhall. Meetings generally last between 2 hours and Directors are also expected to allow time to read the Board papers, usually circulated 1 week before the meeting. The overall time commitment may vary according to areas of interest of individual Directors, with the option to be involved in short life-working groups (e.g. recruitment, new service developments). Travelling expenses are re-imbursed at 45p per mile. The AGM (included within the 6 meetings per year) is held in Dumfries on the first Friday in October. The Chief Executive is also the Company Secretary, Mr Madhi Hasan our Chair, Mr Sean Connaughton our Vice-Chair and Mrs Pauline Jackson the Treasurer. The general duties and responsibilities of a Director are outlined in the accompanying role description.

For further information about Food Train or the role of Director, please contact Michelle Carruthers, Chief Executive on 01387 270800 or by email: michelle@thefoodtrain.co.uk