

Reach Community Solar Farm Grant Application, June 2021



What we do, for who and how

The Red Hen Project has been supporting children and their families across north Cambridge for 22 years. In 'normal' times, 90% of our experienced family workers' time is working intensively one-to-one with individual families in their homes.

A range of criteria are used by primary schools to decide which children might benefit from working with Red Hen, but poverty is most often the underlying cause of the referral. The child could be struggling to concentrate, may not be dressed appropriately for the weather; they might be unwashed, hungry, anxious, overly demanding of a teacher's time.

Frequently the family has complex needs and could be experiencing trauma. This may be due to the death or illness of a family member, a breadwinner being made redundant, family break-up, a domestic violence incident, a suicide attempt.

We work closely with them, over several months, with the specific aim of supporting the child to thrive at home and school. Typically, this involves us helping parents understand and address their own physical and mental health needs. We also support the parents to access other help and services (e.g. financial, housing, furniture, household goods, food/cleaning/self-care products) and ultimately helping them to provide a more stable and secure environment for their child.

COVID-19: Our response

During the pandemic we rapidly switched our service model to focus on being as responsive as possible to the needs of families. We provided both practical help through deliveries of food and resources to more than 300 children, and an emotional lifeline to around 120 families.

Our family workers adapted rapidly to the changing conditions and shifted to online and phone meetings. Where this was impossible or where concern for the family was high, they maintained personal contact through socially distant visits. We have been able to work closely with our schools, sharing information and concerns. One way or another, we have rebuilt our service according to conditions.

Moving forward

Supporting families, many in desperate financial need, to get their children re-engaged in education is our current focus. Children have had an extended period of time without the benefits of routine and social integration. Many will have had long periods without being able to access education due to the 'digital-divide' – many of our families have no laptop or computer at home to access online resources. Special needs will have gone unaddressed, and vulnerability will have increased.

Families may have disruption to their income or lost jobs, experienced bereavement or domestic abuse. Serious mental health issues will have emerged, or been exacerbated by, the situation.

This work requires a great deal of highly skilled one-to-one family work - compassionate, discrete, nurturing, the work on which we have built our reputation. Closely supporting families to build their resilience and help them to better, happier lives.

What we could achieve with this grant



**THE RED HEN PROJECT
CLUB COOK**

hungry mouths to feed? *tight budget?*

JOIN OUR 'VIRTUAL' ONLINE COOKING CLUB!

Ingredients delivered to your door with recipe cards and friendly step-by-step help videos.
Group and individual Whatapp chat and support.
To find out more contact your Red Hen worker or message Jen on 07862 380 222 or jen@redhenproject.org

Cambridge City **foodbank**

During lockdown we created a virtual cooking programme, in partnership with the City Foodbank delivering a weekly recipe and food packages over 6 weeks. The programme is fundamentally about improving wellbeing. Encouraging the families to undertake positive activities together and creating an increased confidence in cooking. The course promotes 'cooking from scratch', using fresh and healthy ingredients. Recipes are designed to be made up from typical ingredients in a Foodbank parcel, helping them to plan and cook on a tight budget.

The doorstep deliveries provide a crucial opportunity for Red Hen project workers to 'check-in' on families, many of whom will be isolated and suffering from poor mental health. Weekly videos with cookery instructions are sent to the group and individual help and support is given by the project worker. Encouragement also comes from their peers in a closed WhatsApp group where the highs and challenges are shared.

During recent months we have delivered three cohorts of Club Cook. Families who took part had all used the Foodbank and/or community fridge over the past 12 months, or had food parcels from the Red Hen Project

Your support of this project will give children and their families:

- Greater awareness of health and wellbeing
- Access to support and advice from Red Hen workers via WhatsApp and on the doorstep
- Improved family budgeting and reduced costs for food - healthy meals that aren't expensive to cook
- Reduced social isolation and the creation of peer support
- Improved confidence with regards to providing healthy meals for families
- Provision of fun activities that bring both the family and the community together safely

Families involved overwhelmingly reported a positive experience, and that the project helped them cook more cost effectively. Children enjoyed taking part and tried new, healthy foods that they would have been reluctant to try previously. Families reported that they reduced the number of takeaways that they ordered, and 'ready-meals', thereby eating more healthily and saving money.

Predominantly we will target and encourage specific families who we work with on an intensive basis and know would benefit to attend. These can typically often be classed as 'hard-to-reach' families.



Your funding would help us put more families through this program. £2,000 will help fund a budget cookery project to work with twenty vulnerable families and their children.

A reminder of our key metrics

On average

- we work with a family for just under six months
- we have twenty contacts/sessions with the family
- we have ten contacts with other services and professionals related to the family – eg teachers, health, housing - we signpost and refer, we accompany and advocate

Our Outcomes

- Children from disadvantaged families have improved life chances, through developing confidence and emotional resilience.
- Parents have improved family relationships, through developing effective, responsible parenting skills
- Families have improved engagement with the community, reduced isolation, and less reliance on outside intervention.

Our Indicators

- Supported children demonstrate increased confidence and emotional resilience
- Schools report improved engagement with education for supported children
- Supported parents demonstrate improved parenting skills and strategies as well as increased emotional and physical wellbeing
- Supported parents demonstrate an increase in positive family activities, feel less isolated and report improved peer support networks
- Supported families report having better coping strategies, are more able to manage in a crisis, and are able to access other services without support

Demonstrating the impact of the grant

Red Hen Project staff would be delighted to present to the RSCF community at any time, but specifically would propose at the end of the funding period to detail the help that the fund has been able to provide to those specific 'sponsored' families (while ensuring anonymity).

In conclusion

A grant from The Reach Community Solar Farm at this time, when demand is high, and sources of income are pitifully low, will help children in Cambridge, often experiencing poverty and disadvantage, to brighter futures.

Please visit www.redhenproject.org/club-cook for more details including videos and photos.

Further information can be obtained from Sarah Crick, Project Lead (sarah.crick@redhenproject.org)

THE RED HEN PROJECT CLUB COOK

Over recent years, we have run several very successful budget cooking programmes, most recently in partnership with Cambridge Foodbank. Since COVID-19 meeting together in person isn't possible, we've developed a **new virtual cooking club for families struggling on a tight budget.**

For each recipe, participants will receive a package of store cupboard ingredients typical of those given out by the Foodbank, topped up with fresh products as necessary. Families will have access to simple step-by-step videos and recipes cards.

The delivery of the food packages from a Red Hen Project Worker, will provide vital support and engagement for the families and will develop as appropriate/necessary.

Families will be encouraged to actively share success and struggles in a closed WhatsApp group, with the aim to encourage a club feel and allow peer support between families to develop. The project worker will also keep in touch with each participant individually.

We are targeting families who have made use of a Food bank vouchers or other food support within the last year.



To refer a family please complete a form at www.redhenproject.org/club-cook