

COMMUNITY

Brakes are put on Christmas hunger

Tribune van hits the road to deliver festive essentials at food bank

Friday, 22nd December 2023 – By [Lizzy Rowley](#)



Tribune helper Tess Osley, right, delivering donations to Vanessa Freeman and Colin Adams at Brickworks Community Centre

THE *Tribune's* food van got back on the road and into the festive spirit this week by making a delivery to a food bank to keep the shelves stocked over the holiday season.

We donated trollies full of essentials, and even some toys – generously donated by Murphy's construction company – to Brickworks Community Centre in Crouch Hill who run a food bank and warm space for anyone in the community who needs it.

"It's essential to get big donations like this. Without them, we won't run," said Colin Adams, director of Brickworks.

"There's no funding for food banks. I run my food bank at a deficit. But it's my fastest growing industry, and that worries me. I rely on donations," he said. Mr Adams says that donations are going down while need is going up.



Staff from Murphy's construction company delivering to the *Tribune* office

Vanessa Freeman, who runs the food bank, told the *Tribune* it was "wonderful" to get food donated.

"Food banks have become the fifth emergency service," she said.

She added: "We're also an emergency food bank, so people can come in any time. Also, because there's a stigma still with coming into food banks, we have an open kitchen and we'll put stuff outside so people don't even have to come in, they can just get what they need.

"Some people are distressed to the point where they're making sure their kids eat but they don't, that brings on a whole other psychological aspect to life. I think people need to grasp what a meal does, and how a meal helps a child.

"The seriousness of it is not just some celebrity going to a food bank – and I'm not trying to talk down on that because I work in that industry – but it's about saving lives, it's helping people, it's saying 'what can we do?'"

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The Tribune's Dan Carrier inside our food van

Ms Freeman said the demand for pre-made meals has shot up, adding: "The energy crisis and the cost of living have shot up, so a lot of people are finding it easier to put a meal in the microwave instead of having the oven on for hours and hours."

Mr Adams says that beyond having a food bank, community needs to be on offer too.

"It's about isolation, being on your own, being lonely. We ring people up just to make sure they're OK. Social isolation is our biggest disease.

"We're the most congested place in London, but people are really lonely.

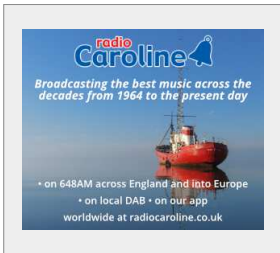
"That's why there's a high increase in suicides at Christmas. So we have to have those conversations, and we need to get people together," he said.

He added: "If you come in for our food bank, we've got a table where we talk to you. If somebody tells us they're not working and they need help getting them a job, we talk to them about CV writing and I've got an employment agency upstairs where people can get help."

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