

Providing food vouchers to referral agencies in Moray

By Mairi McCallum of [Moray Food Plus](#)

When the lockdown was enforced in March it quickly became clear to us that not only would we be unable to deliver our normal services but we would also have to adapt to meet a new need.

Our Holibub Club project runs during school holidays and we had everything in place for our normal Easter clubs to go ahead supporting around 100 children. It was obvious that this couldn't happen and our funder, MFR Cash for Kids, were keen for us to use the money to support families in some way during the Coronavirus crisis. At the same time we were experiencing a sharp increase in referrals for emergency food provision, particularly from larger families which was putting pressure on an already stretched service. We got approval from our funder to buy supermarket vouchers which we distributed to a selection of trusted referrers who could then pass them to families rather than request a food parcel.

We have been fortunate to secure various pots of funding during this time and within most funding applications we have allocated an amount of money to continue to buy vouchers. These have been distributed to referrers and have been used in different ways – some referrers have just given a voucher direct to a client to use themselves, others have done shopping for the client if they have been unable to go to the shops themselves (this has been particularly beneficial to those who have no transport or have caring commitments), and we have also been able to work with referrers to provide a food parcel with an additional voucher to enable the client to purchase some fresh produce.

Other organisations in Moray have also been distributing vouchers but have focused on families, we made the decision to broaden our support to anyone a referrer felt would benefit from support. The introduction by Aldi of vouchers that restrict the purchasing of alcohol has also meant that we have been able to support clients of local addiction services.

We ask each referrer to complete a short form to enable us to monitor how many people have been supported in this way and feedback has been very positive. We believe it is a much more dignified method of support and offers flexibility – people have been very appreciative of the support and the opportunity to actually purchase food themselves.