



# COVID-19 FOOD RESILIENCE RESPONSE PROJECT - END OF PROJECT REPORT

October 2020

<b>Project Name</b>	Covid-19 Food Resilience Response Project		
<b>Project Donors</b>	For a full list of donors and supporters, please see: <a href="https://www.bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk/covid-19.html">https://www.bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk/covid-19.html</a>		
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bridgend Farmhouse COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project was set up as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions with the aim of supporting the most vulnerable members of our local community. This included preparing and distributing meals, through outreach to vulnerable people, using a largely volunteer workforce.

The project began on 30 March 2020 and concluded on 31 July 2020. Within this time, the project grew dramatically, resulting in Bridgend Farmhouse outsourcing the Kitchen Team to a local catering company, Saltire Hospitality Limited. This allowed us to supply over 500 meals daily at the peak of our operations.

The main objective was to set up and run a successful emergency response food project:

- providing food to people within the EH16 & EH17 area who were vulnerable, shielding or had been directly affected by the pandemic;
- delivering food parcels seven days a week;
- within our capacity;
- to reduce and help tackle isolation; and
- to help people to eat regularly and healthily.

Since the start of this operation, a team of over 80 volunteers prepared, packaged and delivered over 75,000 meals to members of our local community in EH16 and EH17 who, for COVID-19 related reasons, found themselves in need of help. Almost all our users were new to us and had not heard of Bridgend Farmhouse before this service was set up.



*Figure 1: Packaging area in the former Bridgend Farmhouse cafe*

# SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

In mid-March 2020, as lockdown was approaching, and on-site activities at Bridgend Farmhouse had been suspended, staff and local community members identified a need for support within the local community. A proposal from staff to use the Farmhouse as a hub to host a food emergency operation was agreed by the Bridgend Farmhouse Board.

The initial idea was simple. It was brought to Bridgend Farmhouse by a shareholder, Lewis McLachlan, a professional chef, who had created the social enterprise, [Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts CIC](#). Bridgend Farmhouse would produce food daily that could easily be reheated to those who were shielding or vulnerable. Food was supplied as a pack of three meals, typically porridge for breakfast, soup for lunch and a cooked and chilled main meal for dinner, plus snacks depending on availability. The meals could be easily prepared or reheated using a kettle and hob or microwave and were supplied in recyclable packaging. The project required a production (kitchen) team, a packaging and distribution team, a team of delivery drivers and a team in charge of all the logistics. The plan was to use donated food (from FareShare and food suppliers, retailers and hospitality venues with surplus) and a volunteer workforce, largely made up of workers (many from the hospitality industry) who had been furloughed or made redundant.

On 30 March 2020, the COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project began with 210 meals being produced and delivered to 70 individuals who were shielding. Over the next four months, the team at Bridgend Farmhouse produced, packaged and delivered over 75,000 cooked meals to the most vulnerable members of the local community.

An unprecedented humanitarian response made this possible. People who regularly volunteer in community activities, as well as an overwhelming number of people who had never before considered volunteering, joined the Bridgend Farmhouse team and together made this effort possible.

After the first month, Lewis McLachlan branched out to other premises in Leith and continued to provide an emergency response from there. The kitchen team at Bridgend was restructured and new volunteer chefs were recruited. Towards the end of May, it was apparent that volunteer numbers were reducing as businesses started to reopen and people returned to work. There was also a reduction in food donations. The volatility in the food system seen at the start of the lockdown stabilized, meaning there was less surplus for initiatives such as that at Bridgend Farmhouse.

To overcome those two crucial elements (surplus food and volunteer labour) upon which this project had been reliant, we began to use Saltire Hospitality as a supplier of cooked meals, using their furloughed chefs as volunteers in Saltire's commercial

kitchens in Loanhead, and their supplier networks when free ingredients were lacking. This enabled us to significantly increase production, and at the peak, volunteer chefs at Saltire alongside the packaging team at Bridgend Farmhouse were preparing 1500 meals a day. This significant increase in production, beyond the initially estimated three-month lockdown period, was made possible by Bridgend Farmhouse joining Edinburgh Food Project (EFP) which was an initiative funded by the Scottish Government Food Programme, and disbursed via Edinburgh Council through [EVOC](#).

## **Closing the Project**

Into June 2020, we were delivering around 500 packs per day. However, a number of external developments caused us to adapt the project. Underestimations of the impact period of COVID meant funding became scarcer, and Saltire Hospitality moved towards re-opening their commercial operations. Furthermore, restrictions were easing, and fewer people were shielding. Clients who still needed support were seeking a greater variety of help, including food-related services that promoted greater autonomy (eg. grocery deliveries or only occasional meal deliveries). In this context, the Board and Management at Bridgend Farmhouse took the decision to bring production back in-house, with a view to scaling down the project and concluding it at the end of July. By the end of July, when the COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project concluded, the logistics team had managed to refer the few (less than 100) remaining clients on to other services in the city.

In parallel, there was a desire among members of the local community and the Board to resume a limited level of activity on-site at Bridgend Farmhouse, which was complicated by the numbers of people and levels of footfall involved in the food emergency response given the need for physical distancing.

## **Beyond the crisis**

The COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project was a fast-evolving situation and it is not an exaggeration at all that every single person involved in this program contributed to this success, ultimately saving lives.

Bridgend Farmhouse worked – and will work – to support our local communities before, during and beyond this current crisis. As our communities begin the effort to rebuild lives and develop new ways of living, staff, Trustees and volunteers and Bridgend Farmhouse are planning how to deliver our services and organise activities in the new context of COVID-related restrictions. Our emergency food response objectives are being furthered by the Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts initiative, which began its life in the Bridgend Farmhouse kitchen. Meanwhile, staff at Bridgend Farmhouse look to re-establish our existing community food initiatives, funded by the Edinburgh Joint Integration Board/Edinburgh Health and Social Care partnership,

albeit using innovative and different delivery models reflective of the current on-going restrictions.

The COVID crisis has highlighted a number of areas where we would hope to strengthen our activity in the coming months and years, one of which is food insecurity. Bridgend Farmhouse's community food initiatives have previously focused on social connection, skills development and wellbeing, but what became even more obvious during the pandemic was the extent of food insecurity in our local area. We are designing our work under funding from Edinburgh Integration Joint Board/Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership in this context, using the connections and networks built during our emergency response to strengthen our efforts. A grant from the Clothworkers' Foundation and money from various funders of our emergency food response have enabled us to make capital investments (a new fridge and oven) which, now our emergency response is over, will support our community food work as well as our plans to develop income streams from our café and kitchen. We are also working with Dr. Kirsteen Shields from the Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Security at University of Edinburgh on a research project around food insecurity, poverty and the impact of COVID-19 using our area of benefit (EH16 and EH17) and our food parcel recipients as a case study. This will enable the team to develop evidence-based solutions and funding applications to support local people's wellbeing, connectivity and skills development as we emerge from the pandemic and plan for the future.



*Figure 2: Volunteer packaging team at Bridgend Farmhouse*

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND TIMELINE

Throughout the four months the project was in operation, we successfully managed to set up and run a large-scale catering and logistics operation in what was previously the Bridgend Farmhouse training kitchen and cafe. We supplied over 75,000 meals within the EH16 and EH17 community to those who were directly affected by COVID-19. These were people who were vulnerable and shielding.

## **Key Statistics**

- Over 75,000 meals delivered over the project
- 536 unique recipients including elderly people, families and children.
- Over 90% of clients had not previously heard of/used Bridgend Farmhouse.
- Over 40 donors
- Over 80 volunteers divided in mainly in four teams:
  - Kitchen 28
  - Packaging 24
  - Delivery drivers and cyclists 24
  - Logistics 4
  - Communications 2
- 95% of volunteers were new to Bridgend Farmhouse
- This project allowed for the employment of 11 people as freelance chefs, kitchen assistants, and a Packaging Team Manager. Two of them have now joined the team as freelancer contractors at Bridgend Farmhouse. Meryn (16), a prize-winning junior chef, who has been volunteering with Bridgend Farmhouse for over two years, got the opportunity to have her first paid job through this project. We hope to be able to offer Meryn further paid opportunities in future as her career as a chef takes off. Gill Curran, our sessional arts and crafts tutor took responsibility for ensuring all the work areas were clean and hygienic and work wear and chef's whites were ironed and laundered.

Through this project we are providing hygiene training to the volunteers who participated by offering the opportunity to attend and obtain the hygiene certification provided by The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS).

Appendix 1 gives an overview of the evaluation of this project. We successfully encouraged healthy eating as well as eating regularly. We also have helped to reduce and tackle isolation throughout the community, including for our volunteers.

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

The project was managed by Eric Fernandez-Baca, Bridgend Farmhouse's Food Support Worker, who has significant experience in catering and the events industry. He managed the logistics team, packaging team, kitchen team and a group of delivery drivers/cyclists. All of these team members worked well together using Whatsapp, Zoom and Google Docs to communicate daily. This allowed for limited face to face interaction in accordance with physical distancing guidelines and risk assessments.

### **The Logistics Team**

Over the first weekend, a basic logistics system was created using a Google account. Google spreadsheets were used to gather the information of the food recipients, create

a delivery driver rota, and as a way to remotely communicate among the different teams within the project.

The main challenge the logistics team faced was dealing with a large volume of calls daily. Bridgend Farmhouse offered one logistics phone which was kept with a team of volunteers who were isolating at a youth hostel in Edinburgh. This allowed the team to be working seven days a week and reduced the infection rate as they were all living together as a bubble.

### **The Packaging Team**

This was run and organised by Tanya (initially as a volunteer and later as a contractor), who was a catering manager for Saltire Hospitality before lockdown came into effect. She worked efficiently and safely, inputting health & safety measures to meet government guidelines as well as hiring and training a team of volunteers. Read Tanya's story [here](#). Read the story of Clément, one of the packaging team, [here](#).

### **The Kitchen Team**

The first team of chefs was brought to Bridgend Farmhouse through Lewis McLachlan, who eventually moved on to set up Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts, taking much of the kitchen team with him to a larger operation in the north of the city. The production on-site at Saltire Hospitality, who had already been providing equipment to the project, was designed to fill this gap. As production wound down and returned to Bridgend Farmhouse, freelance chefs and kitchen assistants were recruited to support the operations. Read the story of Meryn, our youngest volunteer and kitchen assistant, [here](#).



*Figure 3: Kitchen assistant, Meryn Brock Parsons*

### **Production at Saltire Hospitality, Loanhead**

Moving the kitchen operation to Saltire, using their furloughed staff as volunteers, was of great benefit to Bridgend Farmhouse, as the project was growing and the Bridgend kitchen couldn't cope with the demand. Two weeks prior to the official move, Saltire

was already cooking the soup used for lunch. The food production at Saltire was managed by Simon Monin and overseen by Executive Chef Bran Jankovic, both of whom had been furloughed and worked on the project as volunteers. In addition, they had help from a further 20 furloughed Saltire staff. They worked in shifts 4 days a week. At the height of the crisis, Saltire's team was producing over 2000 portions of cooked food per shift. Saltire produced the food for the project from 11 May to 28 June 2020.



*Figure 4: Saltire Hospitality Chef, Simon Monin*

## RISKS AND ISSUES

Throughout the four months that the Bridgend Farmhouse COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project was operational, there were a number of risks and issues that had to be resolved.

The need for this service was because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Over the time the project was in operation, the information provided by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland was changing frequently. The Bridgend Farmhouse teams implemented various safety measures to stop and reduce infection rates. These included additional compulsory hand sanitizing stations before and after entering the building, overalls to

be put over outside clothing, shoe sanitising points, the compulsory wearing of face masks, and gloves to be worn when packaging food. There was a limited amount of staff/volunteers on-site at one time and anyone who could work remotely did so.



*Figure 5: Volunteering in the Saltire Hospitality kitchen*

We gave the delivery drivers and cyclists risk assessments to read and sign. They were given hand sanitiser and gloves to be worn during delivery. We arranged staggered pick up times so only one driver would be onsite at a time collecting their round.

We were very grateful for all donations and volunteers. When the project began there was a risk that we wouldn't be able to fulfil the desired aim, however we were overwhelmed by the support offered.

Later into the project we did come across a few bumps such as food donations decreasing and volunteers returning to work. These issues were overcome by the assistance offered by Saltire Hospitality.

## BUDGET AND RESOURCES

We were fortunate to receive a large amount of funding and in-kind donations in support of this project. Full details will be provided to individual funders on request. We operated the project on a full-cost recovery basis, seeking to cover building overheads through the project which were exposed due to the lack of trading revenue. The cost of a day's pack of food fluctuated depending on the availability of food donations and volunteer labour. We were also able to make a number of capital investments using COVID-related funding which served this emergency project but which will contribute to the overall sustainability of Bridgend Farmhouse's community food initiatives for the future.

## Donors

- Saltire Catering
- WD Catering Solutions
- Scottish Government Investing in Communities Fund
- Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts
- Cash for Kids
- National Emergencies Trust / Foundation Scotland
- Legal & General
- Waitrose & Partners
- Mark Murphy
- Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre
- Trees and Seas Outdoor Adventures
- Cliftonhall Farm/Eden Valley Organic Oats
- Scottish Children's Lottery
- Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund
- EVOC
- Neighbourly Community Fund
- Clothworkers' Foundation
- The Antonio Carluccio Foundation
- Health & Social Care Partnership/Edinburgh Joint Integration Board
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Scottish Government Supporting Communities Fund
- Third Sector Resilience Fund
- Community Land Scotland
- Cycling Scotland
- Edinburgh Local / University of Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Mask Makers
- Penicuik Storehouse
- Mungoswells Malt & Milling
- The Gannochy Trust
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Smiths direct
- Benja Pavlin

There were also some organisations who gave one-off donations of food at the start of this project, including: Novotel Edinburgh Park, Heather Hills Farm, Hawksmoor, Michael's Grill and Seafood Place, Braehead Foods, Coro The Chocolate Cafe, Tron Kirk and Penicuik Storehouse.

## SUPPLIER MANAGEMENT

In the first weeks, food packaging supplies, cleaning products and PPE were sourced from various commercial suppliers. However, we later consolidated our supplier management with Instock for reasons of efficiency and value for money, benefiting from a connection with Saltire Hospitality. At the height of the project we were using around 6000 food container units per week.

This program was run largely through food donations, especially via FareShare. Initially Lewis McLachlan sourced food from hospitality businesses that were closing their kitchens due to lockdown. We also used our main suppliers during normal times (Fareshare, Mark Murphy) and established a relation with Waitrose. These suppliers became an important source of food donations for the majority of the project.



*Figure 6: Food was also sourced from local producers at reduced prices, for example we purchased one tonne of freshly produced oats from Eden Valley Farm thanks to a connection gained through Saltire Hospitality*

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The quality of the service was at the highest standard possible due to the circumstances. Food hygiene and food safety standards were assured by the kitchen team, composed of professional chefs. The vulnerability of our client group was a significant concern for the teams in this regard. Appropriate PPE was provided at all times, and regular cleaning and hygiene and temperature checks were essential, with records kept in line with HACCP guidance.

The packaging department was managed by Tanaya Radeva assisted by Claire and Carmen who are also very experienced in the hospitality sector. They kept control of food rotation, packaging quality and portion control. As well as temperature records in the packaging and distribution area.

The quality of the delivery could be divided in two areas:

**Delivery volunteers** were in contact with clients. The team of delivery drivers and cyclists was made up largely by local residents from EH16 and EH17. They became not only the food porters but in many instances they would be the only person many of the clients would get to talk to face to face. They became a very important part of the service in terms of tackling the isolation which many of our clients experienced.

**Logistics phone communications** also became an important lifeline for the people receiving the service. Volunteers Malakye, Cassie and Hannah were in regular contact with many of the clients. There were a few occasions where clients would only phone the logistics phone number only to have a chat. They always received a warm and friendly chat from the logistics team. The logistics team were essential to this service:

not only their expertise in IT and their very high level of organization were paramount to the success of the project, but their human quality also made a huge difference to the lives of many people on the other end of the phone. Read Malakye's story [here](#).

## EVALUATION

The Bridgend Farmhouse COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project was set up to help people within the local community. We delivered food to over 500 clients during the operation, with over 90% of these people being new to Bridgend Farmhouse. We made connections and relationships with local schools and churches who referred clients to us or received large group food packages to distribute themselves. We had over 40 donors providing food and resources as well as 80 volunteers helping to run this project successfully.

After the project was completed, we sought feedback in order to evaluate the project. We created feedback forms for Drivers, Clients and Volunteers. This allowed us to gain some statistics and testimonials on the service we provided during lock down.

We faced data collection challenges in that a large percentage of clients that we provided food for were through other outlets such as Liberton Kirk and the Whitehouse. We unfortunately did not have access to these clients' contact details. We also found many former clients did not answer the phone or have access to the internet to complete the survey themselves.

The main objective of the project was to provide food to vulnerable people within the local area, which we successfully achieved. At the peak, we were helping over 500 individuals daily. The other objectives were to help tackle isolation and improve people's mental wellbeing as well as providing healthy meals to encourage everyone to eat regularly.

Overall, we believe this project has helped towards conquering isolation within the local community and allowed us to provide healthy, substantial meals to those who wouldn't have been able to provide food or this type of food to their families. It helped those in need, who appreciated - not only the food - but also the daily contact with another person as well as knowing someone was there to keep an idea on them.

Here is a link to our website which details more information about Bridgend Farmhouse and what we do.

<https://www.bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk/>

The Bridgend Farmhouse response to the COVID-19 pandemic received some media coverage. Here is a link to an article in Bella Caledonia written by Caitlin Logan which details charities projects during this time.

<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2020/05/03/leadership-from-below/>

Please see Appendix 1 for detailed evaluation information.

### **Client Testimonials**

“Thank you so much for supporting me through this difficult situation. I probably would not have made it having healthy meals. I am so grateful to the team at Bridgend Farmhouse.”

“It was indeed a blessing to have people around to car for you especially during this depressing time. Thank you.”

“It was amazing. I didn't leave the house for 6 weeks with my kids being a single parent meant I was unable to manage to go shopping. We did go and collect our meals from Bridgend Farmhouse which allowed us to leave the house.”

### **Volunteer Testimonials**

“Whilst working with the team, I found the professional attitude of the volunteers amazing, not a professionally trained team but they managed to keep a professional system in place at all times. I quickly realised myself that the place was a community hub and without it many would have struggled during lock down.”

“It was wonderful being part of such a fantastic team of people and playing some small part in helping our community.”

### **Driver Testimonials**

“The Bridgend Farmhouse COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Project initiative was an amazing project that I was proud to be part of. It was a great piece of teamwork and I enjoyed the experience immensely. It helped give structure to my days during lockdown and also gave me an insight into food poverty.”

“I was impressed by the good organization of the project. It was very efficient and using WhatsApp meant it was easy to keep in touch. Well done!”

# CONCLUSION

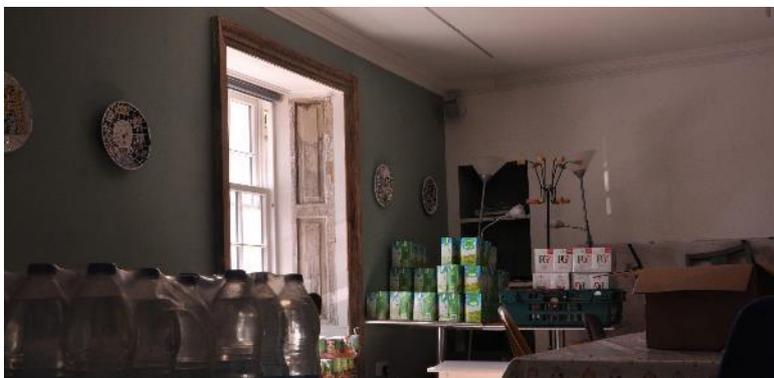
In conclusion, Bridgend Farmhouse successfully set up and ran a COVID-19 Food Resilience Response Food Project, the scale of which we were unable to anticipate from the start. This lasted for four months and provided over 75,000 meals to over 500 individuals who were vulnerable and shielding within the EH16 and EH17 postcode areas. The people receiving this service told us they managed to eat more healthily and felt less alone. We also established that the food project helped volunteers feel less isolated through the lockdown as they were able to use their time to help the more vulnerable.

Overall, the project was a huge success helping those who were most in need. We found that the need continued to grow after our initial set up, and we are very grateful for the assistance from Saltire Hospitality Ltd that allowed us to increase our capacity.

It has shown us how everyone pulling together and working as a team can create a successful and beneficial service to those in need. Although, with any project, we came up against the hurdles and challenges, everyone at Bridgend Farmhouse worked hard as a team and can be proud of the outcome.

Everyone at Bridgend Farmhouse would like to thank all our donors and volunteers during this project. They were the reason this project was such a success and we are happy they had faith in us based on our previous track record working in the community.

For more information on how this emergency response sits within the broader needs of our community and how our community food initiatives seeks to address them, please [read this blog](#) from Will Golding, a Bridgend Farmhouse founder and Trustee.



*Figure 7: The Bridgend Farmhouse cafe turned packaging and distribution hub*

# Appendix 1 - Evaluation data

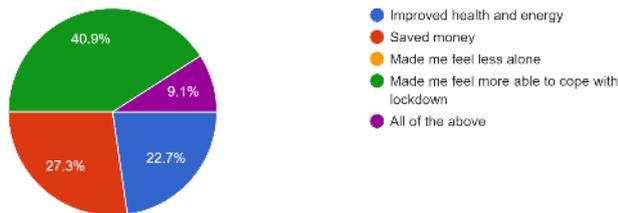
Evaluation data was gathered throughout the project and at the end, we set about collecting feedback from our clients, volunteers and drivers. This was done using a google form which was either distributed through text, whatsapp or email. For our clients, our logistic team called them over the course of a week and filled this form in on their behalf.

We aimed to target and receive responses from 50 clients, however it proved difficult to get people to answer the phone or respond to communication from us. There was also a large portion of our food that was delivered through a third party such as Liberton Kirk. They unfortunately didn't have the facility to contact everyone who had received food during the pandemic and complete the questionnaire. We managed to hear back from 23 clients, 15 volunteers and 19 drivers.

## Client Evaluation

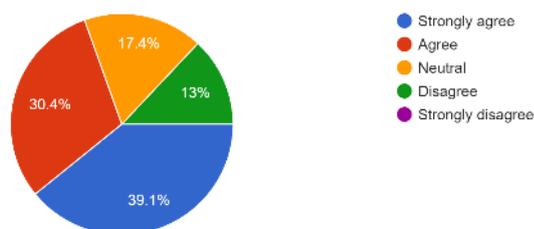
### 1.1

Did this have any of the following impacts:  
22 responses



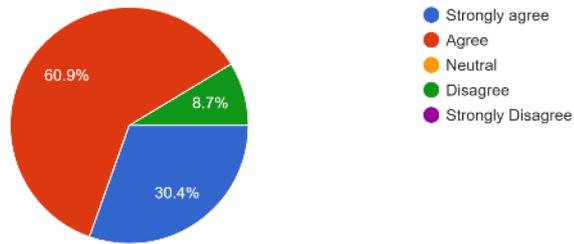
### 1.2

Did you feel less isolated because you received this service?  
23 responses



### 1.3

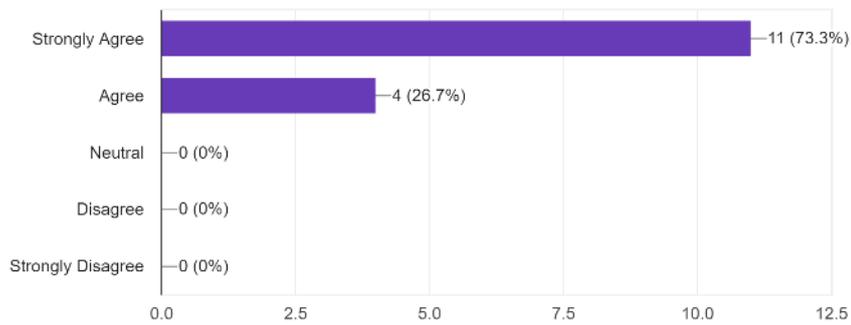
Did you feel more connected to the community  
23 responses



## Volunteer Evaluation

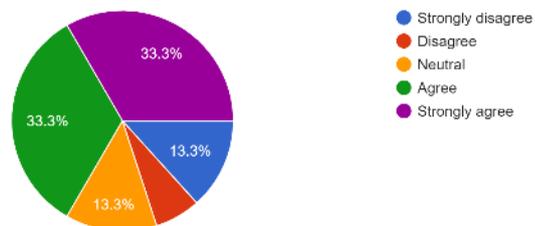
### 1.4

I felt less isolated while helping in my community  
15 responses



### 1.5

Through this service I have gained new friendships.  
15 responses

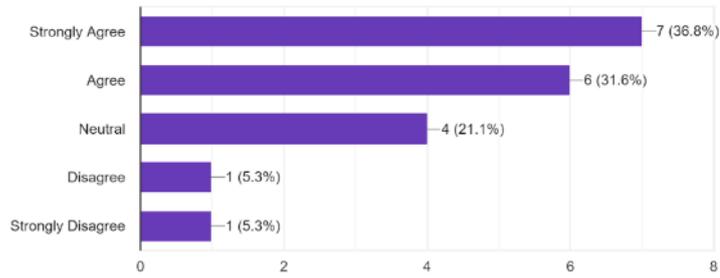


## Driver Evaluation

### 1.6

I felt less isolated while helping in my community

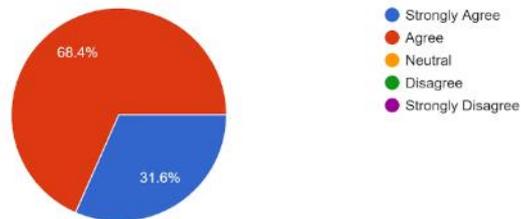
19 responses



### 1.7

I felt more connected to the community while delivering

19 responses



### 1.8

Through this service I have gained new friendships.

19 responses

