



Food First- The values of the Worthing Food Foundation

The values of The Worthing Food Foundation are set against 7 premises around food need. These are

1. Top down, bureaucratic and professional approaches to systemically address food need have not successfully alleviated the scale of need.
2. For those seeking food support, there is a significant amount of mistrust of many of the organisations charged with addressing food poverty.
3. Many current practices of food support inadvertently 'other' those who require food support.
4. Those who need food support are largely excluded from meaningful involvement in the provision of food support.
5. Encounters with those who need food support need to be carefully protected from
 - a. The needs of support organisations to collect data
 - b. The needs of support organisations to show accountability for their strategic priorities
 - c. The urge to impel people toward healthy lifestyles
 - d. Parties who don't have the trust of those seeking food support
6. Every system of provision of food support is flawed.
7. Those seeking food support frequently experience food trauma (see below).

Our values in practice

Our values in practice are organised around three key

- A Food First approach
- Putting dignity at the heart of all food encounters
- Understand the complex nature of food trauma and the value of food stability as a means through which to build relationships

Food First approach-

- Our organisation adopts a 'Food First' approach to food support in the community. This model is based on the 'Housing First' approach to homelessness that offers permanent housing as quickly as possible to homeless people, and other supportive services afterward.
- Our Food First approach is based on the idea that a hungry individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain food stability. Other issues that may affect the household can and should be addressed once food support is obtained. We believe further that any process of referral at the point of need fails to pay attention to the nature of food trauma and the scale of shame and fear around asking for food.

The Food first approach operates by taking account of two key convictions:

1. Food is a basic human right
2. Once the chaos of food trauma is mitigated, social stabilisation can occur faster and is more enduring.

- There are no preconditions of food support with the Food First model. People have many different pathways into food trauma and the complexity of these pathways resists a top-down, bureaucratic approach to emergency food provision.

Putting dignity at the heart of all food encounters-

- Where possible we seek to avoid barriers to food support. The Worthing Food Foundation envisage a community where ensuring the dignity of people seeking food support is the key priority. We orient our food support around maintaining dignity and we prioritise compassion in how we relate to people seeking food support.
- The Worthing Food Foundation do not see those seeking food support as service users, clients or customers- rather they are understood as neighbours in need. We seek to avoid the othering of those needing food support.
- We draw on a 'Food mutual aid' model of organisation that seeks to resist professional/client relationship. As such, our organisation is a wholly volunteer- run endeavor, drawn from community members in Worthing.
- Our Food mutual aid model is founded on dignity, compassion, humanity and trust as the key drivers of food support relationships. As such, we seek to develop food support practices that reflect warmth, kindness and solidarity. We seek to avoid the more bureaucratised transactions of traditional provider/client models. This means in practice that we seek to
 - To provide those who need food with sufficient food.
 - To provide those who need food with food that they request rather than the food that we think they should eat.
 - To provide lots of healthy food for those who want healthy food.
 - To provide children's treats, extras, recipes and seasonal and calendar event gifts as we understand the sense of humanity and mattering that these practices reflect for people.
 - To provide a range of toiletries, sanitary products and other support that are central to people's capacity to live dignified lives
 - To avoid, where possible, any barriers between neighbours and their access to food

Understand the complex nature of food trauma and the value of food stability as a means through which to build relationships

- Food trauma is complex and multifaceted. Those seeking food support frequently experience profound anxiety and desperation that leaves them unable to focus on a range of goals due to the immediate need to organise food for themselves and/or their family.
- The move to reach out for food support can feel intensely shameful and undignified. The realisation that you are struggling to feed yourself and/or family is profoundly debilitating, as is the release of control of your food supply to an external agency. This desperation, together with a mistrust of what other people and organisations will make of the need for food support, means that food support encounters must be nuanced and carefully protected.
- If nuanced and carefully protected, food support can provide a level of stability, a sense of mattering and a humanising impulse that alleviates some of the trauma, builds trust and can provide the basis for relationships, further possibilities, support and signposting.

- Food First is an under-utilised model of food support and one which can facilitate food stability in such a way as to avoid some of the challenges of some models of food support.

1/6/2021