

Message sent on 23 July 2020 from **Karen Creavin, Chief Executive – The Active Wellbeing Society** to all the volunteers who have been supporting the emergency effort in Birmingham.

“As we have moved out of the emergency phase for Covid and are now entering a more open phase in social connections and services, The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) will now stop individual food parcels and bulk collections from Aston University Students’ Union on Thursday 30th July. Similarly, we will be ceasing the delivery of hot meals on Thursday 30th July. We will be notifying all of those currently in receipt of a food parcel or hot meal and signposting them to alternative services providing support in their local area.

We are extremely grateful to Birmingham City Council for their support over the last 4 months. You will all be aware that the bulk of the food going through the food distribution centre, initially at Ladywood and then more recently at Aston University, was provided by the city. Their funding at this time has come to an end, and the funding we drew down from Defra will also come to an end at the end of July. While we know that the additional food provided was only ever intended to be temporary during the Covid crisis, like you, we remain extremely concerned about the potential for growing numbers of people in our city who are experiencing food poverty because of the impact of Covid on society.

We are so grateful to all our partners and co-conspirators for all their hard work over the last 4 months. Fareshare and TRJFP Birmingham kept the city going with their additional food supplies... food that in many cases would have ended up in landfill. So many of you in the community stepped in and made sure that as much as we could, we rose to the challenge and supported our citizens during the worst of the initial lockdown phase. It has truly been a pleasure getting to know you all better and working together with such a clear shared purpose around meeting need and providing food.

We know that we are not returning back to ‘an old normal’, which in some ways is right as we know there were issues for food poverty in our city pre Covid. Plans are under way to bring together a food justice network for the city to work with BCC and other key partners to tackle poverty and inequality in the city as we move forward into the next phase of dealing with the pandemic. Thank you for all your help, support and the work you have done to feed our communities and make the #BrumTogether campaign a success.

As a result of the last four months, we will be taking the exceptional decision to close the whole organisation that is TAWS for a week between 3rd and 9th August. Our phone and website will be updated to reflect this closer to the time. We need to ensure our staff have time to rest and take a well-earned week off before we gear up for the autumn and what could be a difficult winter.

As part of the #BrumTogether campaign, we have together distributed 48,748 food parcels, helped provide 931 bulk collections for partners to distribute food and 13,181 delivered hot meals to those most in need.

Going forward, TAWS will be continuing to work with Aston University Students' Union to take receipt of food for community groups who have pre-registered with FareShare, during the school holidays for a holiday hunger programme.

From 10th August, we will also use Aston Students' Union to pack a limited number of emergency food parcels each day and our community cafes will be reopening.

We are also keen to keep up the momentum and improved partnership working the food theme group has established, and as we have said above will be working with colleagues and partners on a food justice network. If you are keen to stay involved – and have not already let us know of your interest in staying in touch – please let us know.

Here is a link to our website that lists a range of organisations that may help to refer citizens to if they need support <https://theaws.co.uk/partners/>. From August 10th we will deliver a smaller quantity of emergency parcels (approx. 50-11 max per day) so if you would like to still be involved please let us know.”