

9th August 2020

Arise Restoration Centre's Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

Project Arise Covid-19 Crisis Intervention 2020

Project Arise is the “Crisis Intervention, Restoration, and Empowerment” programme of Arise Restoration Centre. We live in unprecedented times, with new and extraordinary challenges due to the emergence and rapid spread of COVID-19 around the world.

It has re-shaped our lives and has adversely affected virtually every aspect of our day to day living, especially the vulnerable and homeless population.

Arise Restoration Centre has responded to this pandemic by implementing;

“Project Arise Covid-19 Crisis Intervention 2020.”

Project Arise Covid-19 Crisis Intervention 2020 has two main components:

- (1) **Food Distribution** ---(To the vulnerable & needy)
- (2) **Community Gardening** ---(Wellbeing & Coping Support)

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

(a) Project Arise is one of the community partners working with **SAMS COMMUNITY & BUSINESS PARTNERS** delivering the “**Covid-19 Food Scheme**” sponsored by **DEFRA** (Department of Environment, Food, & Rural Affairs).

Arise's Community Outreach Team canvasses the neighbourhoods in Blackburn and Darwen, identify and interview needy, vulnerable persons who are “**not shielding**,” this includes individuals or families. When they express their need for assistance we give them a “**Covid19 Food Scheme Application**” to complete, we take the applications to SAMS located at Energy Zone, Newfield Drive, Blackburn BB2 3UA. One of SAMS' staff contacts our clients by telephone and set an appointment for them to collect their food package, then our clients call us and we transport them to SAMS, collect their food package and return them to their homes. We provide transportation to all who do not have transportation but those who can arrange transportation go directly to SAMS and collect their packages.

The aim of this Covid-19 Food Scheme is to provide food packages for 50 (non repeat) individuals or families weekly within Blackburn and Darwen.

(b) **Arise Community Food Distribution** began November 2019, delivering food directly to the needy and homeless in Blackburn and Darwen.

Our main food source has been SAMS COMMUNITY & BUSINESS PARTNERS, and this programme is sponsored by **Food Share**.

With the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic, we experienced a significant increase in the amount of people in need of food assistance which was a bit overwhelming in the months of April and May 2020, however, we were blessed in securing another Food Donor.

On **28th May 2020, Morrisons – Community Champions**, approved Arise Restoration Centre to receive regular food donations which significantly increased our distribution capacity.

So with these two major food donors, Arise is distributing food directly to over 300 needy persons weekly (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays), including three Hostels in Blackburn housing homeless people.

COMMUNITY GARDENING

On 6th March 2020, Project Arise launched its Community Gardening Project at the Bank Top Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Blackburn, called “**Grow Your Wellbeing,**” which is the “**Health & Wellbeing**” component of the Project Arise Empowerment Toolbox.

This is a collaborative effort between Arise Restoration Centre, Bank Top Neighbourhood Learning Centre, and Blackburn with Darwen Adult Learning.

Our target population is vulnerable people in Blackburn and Darwen, in particular the homeless, so we invited the Salvation Army Bramwell House, the Union House, The Islington, and the Lupin Foundation to permit their homeless residents to participate, which they did with great enthusiasm. After three weeks into our gardening project, we were abruptly interrupted by Covid-19.

The Importance of Gardening During Covid-19 Pandemic

Although the physical health of our communities is largely dependent on adhering to safe practices such as frequent hand-washing, wearing a mask, and social distancing, with efforts aimed at preventing the spread of Covid-19, these practices come at a price.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), social distancing is directly associated with a higher incidence of:

- Depression
- Loneliness
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Frustration
- Boredom

Research has demonstrated that spending time outdoors is not only good for our bodies but also our minds. It helps in the following areas:

- Mood Booster * Increase confidence * Improve Self-esteem * Enhance positive thoughts
- Reduce anxiety and stress

Physical Benefits of Gardening

- Exercise in the garden does the body good.

Exercise has shown to:

- Improve immune function
- Reduce stress, depression, and anxiety
- Improve mood
- Ward off a myriad of chronic ailments and conditions
- Get better sleep
- Help you live longer

Final Thoughts

With mounting concerns about food supply, our environment, quality of food, exposure to Covid-19, and increased awareness of the need to eat healthy, more individuals are turning to gardening. Whether you have an entire plot of land or just window boxes, you too can experience the joy, pride, and health benefits of growing your own food, and you'll likely feel better too.