

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - STORY

Name	Fans Supporting Food Banks, Sam Spong and John Ratomski
Details, area of experience	<p>Sam Spong is a life-long Charlton Athletic fan who, in December 2018, created the London branch of Fans Supporting Foodbanks after being inspired by a similar initiative in Liverpool. He helps organise foodbank collections for Greenwich foodbank.</p> <p>John Ratomski is the organiser of Irons Supporting Foodbanks a group of football fans who collect donations for Newham Foodbank in Beckton. Supported by West Ham United FC, the WHU Foundation, LS185, London Legacy Development Corporation, Newham Council, the Met Police, Spire London East Hospital, Expedient Security, and a large number of West Ham and football fans.</p>
Interview date	December 2020
Issues addressed	Rise of food banks; child poverty; food poverty; impact of the pandemic on the need for foodbanks
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Dates mentioned	September/October 2020
Locations referenced	Newham; Greenwich; Liverpool; Everton; Fulham; Newcastle United
Campaigns, movements, protests	Fulham Community Trust Fans Supporting Foodbanks National Network

Historical context	Growing need for foodbanks in the last decade. Football clubs are rooted in their community and have been for over 100yrs
Tactics	Meetings with foodbank managers to tell the about their initiative; Emailing managers of Charlton Athletic and meeting with them to discuss the issue; Using social media and match programmes to give information to the fans about local foodbanks and details of when the group would be collecting on match days; Banner made; Organising an assembly at a local primary school who then helped with the collection at the Saturday match – the kids were rewarded with a ticket to the game!; online game shows and raffles set up in September/October 2020 to raise funds for the local foodbanks.
Key words	Community – energy, focus, care Football Support Child poverty
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reaching out to other fan and supporter groups. ● Sparking conversations about foodbanks and poverty in an everyday (football stadium) space. ● Collaborative working and ‘the right channels’ can effect change. ● Issue of child poverty. ● Rise in demand due to pandemic (60% rise at Greenwich). ● Key to activism is to harness what people truly care about.

Story summary	<p>Sam Spong and John Ratomski of Fans Supporting Food Banks used various creative tactics to organise foodbank collections at the West Ham and Charlton Athletic football stadiums. By galvanising the community through the medium of football, significant amounts of money, food and other basic provisions have been donated to foodbanks in the UK</p> <hr/> <p><i>John’s story:</i> In December 2019, the Irons Supporting Foodbanks began collecting donations for the Newham Foodbank based in Beckton. Collections started at West Ham home games at the London Stadium after the idea was sparked at an away game in Liverpool. John noticed that Liverpool and Everton fans were involved in collecting food bank donations and he wanted to do the same. He organised a collection point at the West Ham stadium for Newham Foodbank in Beckton and started to collect donations of both money and food on match days every two weeks. When lockdown happened, John raised some money online and West Ham donated a van for Newham foodbank so that it could supply other foodbanks in the area more easily.</p>
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	<p><i>Sam's story:</i> Also inspired by Liverpool fans, in December 2018 Sam contacted Charlton Athletic to ask if they would support setting up a collection points before games for Greenwich Foodbank. He connected with a large group of people, through the medium of football to set up a foodbank truck and collected 1,000 meals from donations outside the stadium in the first two weeks! He worked with local schools and community trusts to grow the collections each time.</p> <p>The foodbanks and their work are still going and continue to support people in need.</p>
Stand-out quotations	<p>"There are no more food banks in the UK today than McDonalds restaurants."</p> <p>"Going to football every Saturday, I knew I was sitting around people with a huge amount of community energy and community focus."</p> <p>"People's natural instincts is to work together."</p> <p>"Make sure your activism is married to something that you have always had an interest in."</p> <p>"Food is a human right."</p>
Main themes for learners	<p>How collaboration can grow a campaign.</p> <p>Key to successful activism is identifying access points for your idea and message.</p> <p>The message that it's OK to get it wrong when promoting your blueprint for change.</p> <p>Campaigns are organic, they are built as they go.</p>

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