

Sodexo volunteers chalk up over 1,400 reading sessions through platinum partnership with Chapter One

1 year ago



The Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation is a platinum partner to Chapter One, a charity aimed at improving educational outcomes, addressing a root cause of food insecurity. This National Volunteers Week (3-9 June) Sodexo is recognising around 140 employees and young family members who have supported Chapter One this academic year.

Since September 2023, 105 of Sodexo's employees have chalked up over 1,400 30-minute reading sessions with children aged 5-8 across 15 schools in: Bradford, Doncaster, East Sussex, Glasgow, London, Manchester and Middlesbrough. By the end of the academic year this will rise to over 2,000 sessions.

In addition to this, 34, including young family members, took the time to participate in a story competition run in conjunction with Chapter One and Sodexo's Parents and Carers employee network.

With more than 30,000 employees Sodexo's operations are intrinsic to many communities across the UK and Ireland, and as a purpose-led business Sodexo is committed to ensuring its operations positively impact all those within those communities.

The Sodexo [Stop Hunger Foundation](#), a UK-registered charity, is an employee-led initiative and a key enabler of Sodexo's Social Impact Pledge, delivering impact for the most disadvantaged communities.

Sodexo's volunteering policy enables its employees to take three paid volunteering days each year supporting those who need in the most in our communities.

Chapter One has been a charity partner with the Stop Hunger Foundation since 2021. In September 2023 Stop Hunger became a platinum partner increasing the number of volunteering opportunities and expanding its support. In addition to the ongoing volunteering, Stop Hunger's grant of £33,380 has enabled Chapter One to support over 3,000 children.

Sean Haley, CEO Sodexo UK & Ireland and Stop Hunger Foundation trustee said: ""We are committed to improving the communities where we work, serve and live. By providing a diverse range of volunteering opportunities we empower our colleagues to directly contribute to combating food insecurity in their local community. The Chapter One reading programme is an excellent example of this and has been very popular. By volunteering to spend just 30 minutes a week our colleagues are making a significant and measurable impact on literacy development, creating educational opportunities and future success."

In November 2023, in conjunction with Sodexo's Parents and Carers employee network Stop Hunger and Chapter One launched a story-writing competition for Sodexo employees and their families.

The competition attracted 21 entries, with stories co-authored by young people from employees' families. Stories followed the theme of 'bringing people together through food'. Entries were initially judged by a panel of Sodexo volunteers, deciding on a shortlist. The shortlisted stories were then judged by a panel of children.

On the International Day of Families (May 15) 95 school children were invited (online and in person) to a special story-telling event at Sodexo's London head office where the winning story was revealed and read aloud to the children by Sodexo's chief finance officer Jean Renton.

Authored by Victoria Eames from Sodexo's procurement arm, Entegra, the winning story, Cooking Pot Woods, has been professionally illustrated and a small number of copies published. The story is now available on Chapter One's reading platform, which is used by 4,700 children, and on Chapter One's free global online library.

Sean added: "Well done to Victoria and our two runners up. Thousands of children will now be able to enjoy the story of Badger who, with the help of the animals of Cooking Pot Woods, create a delicious soup with foods they each brought – a story that truly conveys the message of the role food plays in bringing people together and the benefits of having a strong community spirit."

Emma Bell, CEO Chapter One UK, said: "It's been an absolute delight working with Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation and the Sodexo Parents & Carers network on the story competition. We love their engagement, inspiration and the way they have involved young people in all aspects of the contest. Huge congratulations to everyone involved – we can't wait to share the story with the world on the Chapter One Global Free Library."

Charities like Chapter One are key in helping break the cycle of food insecurity, through means beyond food aid. In 2023, 40% of 11-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds in England left primary school unable to read at the expected level (Department for Education). [Research](#) has shown that children who are eligible for free school meals do significantly worse at every stage of school. Chapter One's online reading volunteers programme challenges this by working with schools that have a higher-than average number of pupils receiving Free School Meals.

[Stop Hunger](#)'s work goes beyond immediate food aid activities. It is focused on changing lives by

addressing the root causes of food insecurity with a focus on women's empowerment. Thanks to the financial support of Sodexo, donations made to Stop Hunger go directly to financing activities and sustainable solutions for disadvantaged communities to exit food insecurity.