

## Sodexo Stop Hunger funding supports opening of social supermarket in Ashford, Kent

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Sodexo's [Stop Hunger Foundation](#) has provided vital funding to SE Kitchen (part of Social Enterprise Kent) to support in the opening of the community interest company's second social supermarket in central Ashford, Kent introducing affordable, nutritious shopping for the local community.

SE Kitchen offers healthy, budget-friendly options including its popular £1 fruit & veg bag, making fresh produce accessible to everyone. Recognising that unexpected bills can strain even the best of budgets, the social supermarket operates a no questions asked policy and aims to help those who may be facing temporary financial pressures or simply need a little extra support.

Patrick Forbes, Chair of Trustees for the Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation said: *"Social supermarkets offer another option for people who need help with food but don't qualify for foodbanks. We are so pleased to be able to provide SE Kitchen with financial support to help with the opening of their second social supermarket. This initiative is set to positively impact the lives of more than 28,000 families in Ashford – not only offering low-cost food but also, social support, and opportunities for connection. They tackle the systemic causes of poverty, making them a vital model for community support and sustainability."*

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. Colleagues living and working in the Ashford area will be offered the opportunity to volunteer at the store.

In addition to providing affordable food, SE Kitchen is committed to reducing food waste and will redistribute surplus items and near sell-by-date stock – a sustainable measure which also ensures more

people can benefit from quality food options.

SE Kitchen offers a comprehensive wrap-around support service designed to tackle the root causes of food poverty. Members of the community can access support and guidance on budgeting, digital skills, job searching and CV support, as well as benefits checking. These services are designed to equip individuals to gain financial stability and long-term independence boosting overall health and wellbeing.

Rebecca Smith CEO of Social Enterprise Kent said: *"Our mission at SE Kitchen is to support the community by making nutritious food available to everyone, especially when life throws a curveball."*

*"Thanks to the support of Sodexo and the Stop Hunger Foundation, we're able to create a space where affordability, sustainability, and inclusivity go hand in hand. Our wrap-around support services further ensure that we're addressing the underlying issues behind food poverty and, being a social enterprise means that any profit made, is re-invested back into the community."*

2025 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation](#). Launched in 2005, the Foundation initially focused on providing food aid to communities in urgent need. Over time, it has built a network of charity partners and shifted its focus to addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity, with an emphasis on empowering women to help drive change.

In the 12 months to 31 August 2024 the Foundation supported 2.8 million people by redistributing more than 160,000 meals and dedicating 56% of its funding to projects targeting the root causes of food insecurity.

The Foundation supports 106 charities through fundraising, hands-on and skills-based volunteering, grant-giving and building partnerships, strengthening their organisations and benefiting their beneficiaries.