



### LewCAS

LewCAS is a small charity which is completely run by volunteers. It aims to support the many people in need in the area and was set up in 1996, becoming a registered charity in 1998.

It organised food collections for asylum seekers who were stripped of access to state benefits.

Originally, it also raised funds to enable asylum seekers to attend English classes. Sadly, the classes are now subject to fees and the asylum seekers can no longer afford to attend. As a result, LewCAS now concentrates on

providing food to those who are destitute, taking referrals from the Refugee Council, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN) and Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL). It provides food parcels, clothing and basic household supplies, such as toothpaste and soap, to destitute asylum seekers. It also campaigns on their behalf, and prays for justice and a loving response to their needs.



On a Tuesday morning food is distributed from 11.00am to 1.00pm at St John, Lewisham Way. People who come receive a collection of dried and tinned goods and some fresh food plus cash for travel expenses. Most often they receive corned beef, tuna and small fish such as sardines or mackerel, 1kg each of rice and pasta, a tin of tomatoes plus beans or pulses, tea, biscuits, long life milk, cereals, two toilet rolls, razors and a bar of soap. Once a month they get flour, oil and sugar. FareShare supplies LewCAS with fresh produce and each week those who come to the food bank will get a selection of bread, potatoes, vegetables (for example, onions, carrots, greens) and fruit (apples, perhaps, or oranges or bananas).

From time to time, those who use the food bank receive extra items such as more toiletries and cleaning products, including shower gel, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste and brushes, washing-up liquid, bleach, or washing powder. Feminine hygiene items and nappies are distributed every two weeks.

The pandemic has changed the way in which LewCAS works and has doubled the number of people seeking help. The need is now much greater than ever. LewCAS has

worked hard to ensure that individual boxes are pre-prepared for collection so that those visiting the church spend as little time as possible inside. They have also started to deliver boxes to asylum seekers who are shielding, self-isolating, or who have new babies.

The asylum seekers want to thank those who have supported LewCAS over the years. They also say: “We want to work, but we are not allowed to. We are not lazy. We are not criminals.”



## Lunchbox Library

Many of you will be aware of the campaign by the footballer Marcus Rashford in 2020 to ensure that the government continued to give food vouchers during the summer holidays to schoolchildren in receipt of free school meals. His campaign helped to highlight that, for parents who are on a low income, school holidays are akin to a juggling act: balancing the family budget in order to be able to put an additional meal on the table, taking care of household duties and looking after children. They also often need to try to find free activities provided in or close to their areas.

Recognising this need, Together Southwark started to run Lunchbox Library in 2016. This programme is designed to offer a safe and warm space for children and an accompanying adult during the day. It offers a combination of a warm main meal, often accompanied by a dessert, and activities and reading for fun with the children. The latter helps to prevent the trend for children’s reading skills to dip over the school holidays.

Children are read stories by volunteers in a happy and relaxed atmosphere and are encouraged to take a storybook to read at home.

In 2020, St Katharine with St Bartholomew, Bermondsey, supported around 50 children and young people aged 7-16, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Tuesday to Friday, from July to August. They offered 1,200 meals, 50 activity bags, 150 breakfast packs and 300 Take and Make boxes. The last of these contained raw ingredients and a recipe card for children to learn to prepare meals with their families.



St George, Camberwell, initially planned to support 69 children and young people aged 4-11. However, the need increased and the church supported 116 children three days a week in July and August. The need in 2021 will be no less great as the long-term effects of the pandemic continue to be felt. Lunchbox Library helped to serve more than 2,000 meals in 2020, and the need for the work of LewCAS also increased because of the pandemic.

Please pray for all those who volunteer to be involved in this work and those who receive help from the projects. If you can, please think of those who would otherwise go hungry just as the 4,000 would have done without the loaves and fishes, and support the work of those involved in offering food and hope to the people of the Woolwich Episcopal Area. If you can give to support the work of these services in Woolwich please consider doing so through the Bishop of Southwark’s Lent Call: [southwark.anglican.org/lentcall](https://southwark.anglican.org/lentcall)