

FAQs for New Referrers

The Food Chain faces a continued high demand for our services which means we have to look closely at the situations of those who we take on board. Our services are designed to provide temporary and immediate support to those facing acute nutritional crisis and food insecurity.

Who can I refer?

The Food Chain is an HIV nutritional support charity that can help people living with HIV when they are in nutritional need. The only requirements we have are that the person is living with HIV, lives in a London Borough, and is experiencing a time of crisis. This crisis could be financial, physical or mental health, housing or anything else that means they are experiencing barriers to food. We do not have any requirements around the person's status in the UK, housing status or background. We are able to and experienced in supporting those in temporary or insecure housing situations, including Home Office accommodation and those experiencing homelessness.

It is vital that you include as much information as you can about the reason you are referring someone in the referral form. There is a freetext box in step 3 of the referral form asking "Is there anything else you think we need to know about the person being referred?" A short narrative about the person and their situation, namely why you are referring them, is all that's needed here, but the more information you provide, the better we will be able to make a decision about how best to support them. If this field is left blank, we will need to come back to you with questions before we can contact your referral, so completing the box saves considerable time!

What happens after I refer someone?

Once the referral is submitted, it will be picked up by one of our 2 staff Dietitians, Luke and Lucy. They will make contact with the person referred directly to conduct a telephone assessment. *We endeavour to do this within 5 working days.* The telephone assessment is a chance for the Dietitian to confirm the information provided in the referral, to understand of the person's physical and mental health, to give specialist Dietetic advice and to decide which of our services are the most suitable for the individual.

What can I refer people for?

When you access the referral form, you will need to decide which service to refer to:

1. Home Delivered Food "Grocery Delivery Service"

We use an online supermarket website to make up grocery deliveries which will be sent directly to their homes (or a suitable alternative address). The contents of these deliveries is informed by the Dietetic plan devised during the telephone assessment, and decided based on a conversation between The Food Chain and the Service User. The number of deliveries they receive will depend on their level of crisis, so the more information you can provide us in the referral the better placed we are to make this decision.

<https://www.foodchain.org.uk/get-support/grocery-deliveries/>

Please note: We are operating with a referral cap on the Grocery Delivery service, we will close periodically when we reach capacity and then reopen when we have some space. If you find that the grocery referral option is closed, please do not automatically refer to Eating Together unless it is an appropriate option for that person i.e they are willing and able to travel to our location, and are ready to engage with in-person support services.

2. Communal Meals “Eating Together”

Eating Together is a free communal eating service that aims to combat isolation amongst people living with HIV in London by bringing people together for a hot, nutritious meal and some good conversation. We also hold talks on nutritional topics and other relevant support services. It runs every Wednesday and Saturday and people can attend for three months. We reimburse travel expenses (with proof).

<https://www.foodchain.org.uk/get-support/eating-together/>

If you are referring for one service, it does not preclude the possibility that they will be considered for both. This will be at the discretion of the Dietitian conducting the assessment.

What do we need from Referrers?

The more information we have about a person’s current health and social situation the better we can judge our level of support. Please be very clear on the referral form why our support is required.

Where possible, we also ask referrers to submit a medical report with as much of the following information as possible. This is to ensure our Dietetic input is as safe and effective as possible:

1. Bloodwork, specifically:

- kidney and liver function (helps us to identify dietetic interventions that will help with this)
- CD4 count (alerts us to potential food and water safety needs) and Viral Load (informs an overall picture of HIV health)
- Cholesterol, vitamin deficiencies and blood glucose levels (enables us to work out dietary adjustments and interventions that will help these to improve)

2. Weight history and current weight: gives us the best idea of a person’s current nutrition status and what the “normal” level for that person looks like (e.g. if a low/high BMI is related to any drastic weight loss/gain).

3. Medical history and information on medical conditions: builds an overall picture of health so that we know whether our dietetic impact will impact on any existing conditions, and more practically whether there are any physical or mental barriers to independent cooking and/or engagement

4. Details of medications: ensure that we are aware of potential interactions, plus are able to assess if any weight fluctuations are related to ARVs.

You can upload a medical report directly into our secure online referral form in step 3 “Support details”, or you can email it with personal details redacted to referrals@foodchain.org.uk

If for any reason you are not able to provide any of the information requested on the form, call us on 02078431800 or email referrals@foodchain.org.uk

Can someone be re-referred?

Our support can only be accessed once in a 12 month period, except in very exceptional circumstances. If you are unsure when the person you are working with was last referred, or if you feel their circumstances are exceptional, call us on 02078431800 or email referrals@foodchain.org.uk

What do I do if I have questions or concerns about someone I referred?

Please email the Dietetic Team on referrals@foodchain.org.uk for:

- Dietetic, health and updates
- Medical reports (with personal details redacted)
- Continuing conversations about particular patients/clients
- To check for an update on someone's service/how many deliveries they have left

Our Dietetic Team share workloads and frequently cover each other's work. All this being said please don't worry if you email the wrong person - we are a small enough team that your message won't get lost!

What on-going support is there?

The Food Chain is a short-term nutritional support service that can only provide help during a crisis. However we will always endeavour to signpost and refer people to further support as and where we are able. We have contacts at a number of other support services both within and outside the HIV sector. Our website also has an extensive food bank database of other food support services which is updated every 6 months – you can download it [here](#) under “Other food support by borough”.

If you have any questions not covered here, or if anything isn't clear, please feel free to call us on 02078431800 or email referrals@foodchain.org.uk