Trussell
Ending hunger together

2027

Unleashed Leadership Course

Information pack



trussell.org.uk

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Thank you for your interest in the Unleashed Leadership course

We're so pleased that you're interested in finding out more about Trussell's Unleashed Leadership course.

The course is an exciting, nine-month development opportunity designed for people just like you, who care deeply about creating long-term solutions to poverty.

It's much more than just training - it's about building a movement of confident, connected anti-poverty leaders who can tackle hunger and hardship and help create a future where no one needs emergency food aid. So far nearly 40 anti-poverty leaders have completed the course, and we intend to accept up to 60 people to join the next cohort.

If this sounds like something you want to get involved with, we would love you to join the course! The first part of this pack should tell you everything you need to know about the course and help you decide if you do want to apply. If the answer to that is a yes, and we hope it is, then the second part of the pack will give you all the info you need about what to do next

Section 1: What's the opportunity?

What's the Unleashed Leadership course?

The Unleashed Leadership course is a nine-month training programme designed to equip food bank leaders and other anti-poverty leaders with the confidence, skills, and networks to drive lasting change. Anti-poverty leadership isn't about a formal title - it's about inspiring action, influencing decisions, and shaping solutions that tackle the root causes of hunger and hardship. This course is an exciting opportunity for you to grow as an anti-poverty leader, connect with others who share your vision, and turn ideas into action.

What does the course involve?

The course runs from March to November 2027. It's hands-on and action focused. Everything is designed to help you put your learning straight into practice.

The original course structure and shape was co-designed with people with lived experience of hardship and with leaders from food banks, so the content speaks directly to the real challenges you face.

It's also designed to take place in a safe and supportive environment, where we value diversity and focus on the strengths and experience that each person brings. We will also be asking each participant to find a 'sponsor' in their food bank, who can help you to reflect on your learning and put it into action.

The learning sessions will be co-facilitated by the Trussell Unleashed Leadership team and expert facilitators.

Across nine months, you'll have the opportunity to join a range of sessions – we expect participants to attend all elements of the course:

- **A three-day residential (March 2027)**
  A safe, creative space to start building relationships and explore some of the programme's key themes

- **Monthly interactive online learning spotlights**
  Each module focuses on a specific leadership capability and is designed to give you practical tools and techniques you can use right away

- **Regular peer learning groups**
  Small groups of 10 people, meeting regularly online to reflect, problem-solve, and support each other through real-world leadership challenges

You will also develop and receive a **unique personal leadership profile** to help you understand your leadership strengths and preferences.

By the end of the course, our aim is that you will have deeper **knowledge, skills and confidence** to lead transformative action in your organisation, community and beyond, to help end the need for emergency food aid.

Who is the course for?

This course is designed for people who want to strengthen their leadership skills, influence change, build partnerships and play a bigger role in tackling hunger and hardship in their community. Through the course programme, you'll develop a deeper understanding of yourself as a leader, build confidence in working with others and strengthen your ability to influence change and support others to lead.

To get the most from the programme, you should already be engaging with local partners and stakeholders or have the opportunity and support to step into these spaces over the coming year.

You do not need to be an experienced anti-poverty leader to join this course. However, you should have a genuine interest in developing your ability to influence change, build partnerships and help shape solutions to hunger and hardship beyond the day-to-day delivery of services.

The course is particularly suited to people whose role currently involves, or is beginning to involve some of the following:

- Building relationships and collaborating with organisations across your community
- Influencing local decision-makers, services or systems
- Shaping anti-poverty strategy, plans or priorities
- Acting as a champion, ambassador or advocate on issues relating to hunger and hardship
- Bringing people together to take collective action to tackle hunger and hardship
- Supporting, enabling or developing others to contribute, lead and create change

This course could be a good fit for you if...

- You want to play a bigger role in addressing the causes of hunger and hardship, not just responding to their effects.
- You want to build your confidence in working with partners, decision-makers and networks across your community.
- You are keen to develop your skills in strategic thinking, influencing, communication and collaboration.

- You want to better understand your strengths, leadership style and how to lead effectively in different situations.
- You are passionate about helping others contribute, grow and lead alongside you.
- You believe stronger partnerships and collective action are key to tackling poverty.

This course may not be the right fit for you if...

- You already have extensive experience and confidence in influencing decision-makers, building partnerships and leading anti-poverty change, and are looking for a more advanced leadership programme.
- Your role is primarily focused on operational delivery and you have limited opportunity to engage externally, influence others or shape wider anti-poverty activity.
- You are unlikely to have the time, support or flexibility to apply your learning during the programme.

Eligibility

We welcome applications from people with lived and/or learned experience of hardship, including:

- People who are part of one of Trussell's lived experience groups, bringing direct experience of hardship
- People who work or volunteer in a Trussell food bank
- People who are part of the Independent Food Aid Network and work or volunteer as part of an independent food aid provider.

If you're unsure whether the course is right for you, just drop us a message at leadership@trussell.org.uk and we'd be happy to have a chat!

There are 60 places available on the course – we will select participants following a straightforward application process. You can find out more about how to apply on page 11.

What does the course cover?

Through the residential and online learning spotlights, we'll be exploring a set of interconnected leadership themes. The whole course is designed to enable you to feel more **skilled, knowledgeable and confident** as an anti-poverty leader, and equip you to continue driving local, regional, national and UK wide change to end the need for emergency food aid.

During the course we'll explore the following themes:

- **Self-awareness** – you'll have the opportunity to discover your unique leadership style and build strategies to support your wellbeing and enable you to lead in a way that protects the wellbeing of those around you.
- **Inspirational communication** – learn how to share your vision and story in a way that connects, motivates, and inspires action
- **Understanding poverty** – explore how to use data, local insight and the experiences of people with lived experience of hardship to better understand poverty in your community, including its causes, impacts and drivers of food bank use.
- **Strategic thinking** – you'll be supported to deepen your strategic thinking skills, enabling you to clarify your priorities and develop plans that will deliver meaningful impact
- **Understanding power** – we'll explore different forms of power and how to map who holds the power to create change within our communities
- **Influencing & consensus-building** – we'll explore techniques to support you to build consensus and influence people in power
- **Generous collaboration** – we'll explore the principles that underpin effective working and hear examples of impactful collaboration
- **Inclusive leadership** – you'll have the opportunity to deepen understanding of power and inequity and explore how to create environments where everyone feels valued and included
- **Empowering others to lead** – we'll explore how to coach, delegate, and nurture other leaders in your community and how to create opportunities for people with lived experience of hardship to contribute, influence and lead.

While the core themes and learning outcomes will remain the same, some elements of the course content may be adapted to reflect the needs, interests and experiences of the cohort.

It is our hope that, by the end of the course, you will feel more confident, skilled and equipped to:

1. adapt your leadership style to suit different contexts and challenges
2. take action to protect the wellbeing of yourself and your team
3. champion practical solutions to address hunger and hardship
4. inspire others within your community to take action to help address hunger and hardship
5. define the change you want to see and develop plans and make decisions that help you achieve your goals
6. inspire diverse audiences to believe that change is possible
7. build agreement about the kind of change that is needed, amongst a wide range of people in your community
8. influence decision makers whose choices and actions affect your community
9. enable and empower others to lead and drive change – especially people with lived experience of hunger and hardship

What are the benefits of the course?

Taking part in the Unleashed Leadership course is an investment in you, your food bank and your community. The course is designed to help you grow as an anti-poverty leader, by building on and strengthening the work you're already doing and giving you the tools and confidence to create real, lasting change.

Benefits for you

- Grow as a leader — build confidence in your ideas and opinions, your judgement and your unique approach to leading change
- Deepen your understanding — gain new perspectives on how to tackle poverty and who holds the power to make decisions and create change
- Feel more equipped - expand the range of tools in your toolbox to help you assess new opportunities, plan effectively and create change
- Connect with others — learn alongside a diverse, inspiring group of leaders who understand the realities of anti-poverty work
- Feel supported and energised — benefit from peer support and a learning environment that prioritises wellbeing

Benefits for your food bank

- Gain renewed leadership energy — bring fresh skills, ideas and inspiration into your organisation
- Strengthen strategic thinking — gain confidence in assessing opportunities and staying focused on the long-term change you want to see
- Build meaningful partnerships — work confidently with others, including people with lived and learned experience of hardship
- Shape local systems — influence decision-makers and contribute to better, more effective services and support
- Spread learning across your team — share tools and approaches that benefit the whole organisation

Benefits for your wider community

- Grow local leadership — spark confidence in more people to lead change towards a future where nobody needs emergency food aid
- Build stronger community connections — strengthen networks across groups, organisations and places
- Challenge the drivers of poverty — work with others to influence change locally, nationally and across the UK
- Create lasting solutions — contribute to long-term, community-led progress that goes beyond quick fixes
- Build momentum for change — channel your learning into real projects and actions that matter to you and your community

What's the time commitment?

To get the most out of the course, it will be important to attend all the core sessions and make space to reflect on and apply your learning within your local context.

The core sessions include:

- **Introductory session** – 2 hours (online)
- **Residential** – 3 days (in person in Manchester, 22-24 March 2027)
- **Learning spotlights** – 7 sessions, 3 hours each (online)
- **Peer learning groups** – 5 sessions, 2 hours each (online)
- **Celebration event** – 2 hours (online)

Between sessions, you'll also need to find a) time to reflect on your learning and do some prep work and b) opportunities in your food bank or community where you can try out new approaches.

Need help finding the time?

Grants of up to £10,000 are available to help food banks create additional staff capacity and cover course-related costs. See further details in the grants section below.

What support will people on the course receive from Trussell?

We are committed to making the programme as accessible as possible and want everyone to feel supported, included, and able to fully take part. The course itself is completely free, and financial support is available to cover all associated costs.

Practical and pastoral support:

- Support during the residential, including wellbeing support
- Digital support, for online sessions
- A named contact in Trussell's Unleashed Leadership team that you can reach out to throughout the course, if you have questions or concerns

Financial support:

We recognise that finding time for leadership development can be challenging. Grants are available to help remove practical and financial barriers to participation. Funding can be used to cover course-related costs and, for paid staff, create additional capacity within your food bank so you have time to attend, reflect and put your learning into practice.

Applying for a grant

1. Complete the course application.
2. Complete the grant application at the same time.
3. Tell us what costs you need support with.
4. If you are offered a place and your grant is approved, funding will be transferred to your food bank before the course begins.

Eligible costs

The following may be included within your grant application.

Equipment

- A laptop and headset to enable your participation in the online learning sessions.

Residential costs

- Trussell will pay directly for 2-nights of accommodation and for all meals while you are attending the residential. You may include within your grant application your travel costs and any additional overnight accommodation you need for the residential.
- Costs related to additional child-care or other caring costs incurred while you are away at the residential.

In addition, for paid members of staff only, eligible costs also include:

Salary costs

- To help free up your capacity to engage fully in the course, the food bank can apply for funding to increase your working hours by up to a day a week for one year, if you currently work part-time, or, alternatively, to increase the hours of a different member of the team (up to a day a week for a year), in order to free you up to join.
- For example, if you currently work three days a week, funding could be used to increase your hours for the duration of the programme. Alternatively, funding could be used to increase the hours of a colleague so that some of your responsibilities can be covered while you participate in the course.
- The extra capacity created at the food bank is intended to help enable you to join all the learning sessions, reflect with the team and, importantly, put your learning into practice.

Please note, the total grant that can be requested is a maximum of £10,000.

Section 2: I'm interested, what else do I need to know?

If the Unleashed Leadership course sounds right for you, this section will tell you how to apply and provide some extra bits of information that it will be helpful for you to know, before you submit your application.

The application process

We are able to accept 60 people onto this year's course. They will be selected through a simple online application form, which we will use to assess suitability for the course.

You'll be able to find the application form here from Thursday 3rd December on the Trussell website.

If you require grant funding, you must submit your grant application at the same time as your course application. Successful applicants will be notified of the outcome of both applications together. Funding will be transferred to the food bank before the course begins, following return of the required paperwork.

If accessibility issues mean that a form is not the right way for you to apply, please contact us at leadership@trussell.org.uk for a chat about alternative ways to make an application.

The deadline for submitting an application is **midnight on Friday 22nd January.**

Date	
3 December	Applications open
22 January (midday)	Applications close
w/c 15th February	Applicants notified and grants confirmed

If you are not successful in being given a place this year, don't worry. There will be opportunities to apply again in the future. You can still access a selection of the online modules via the Leadership Academy as well.

Extra details about eligibility

We're looking for people from a range of backgrounds who are passionate about creating a future without the need for emergency food aid. If this sounds like you, here's what we're looking for:

In an applicant:

- You are in a position of leadership within your food bank.
- You believe in ending the need for emergency food aid.
- You are aligned with Trussell's values of compassion, dignity, community and justice. Further details about these values can be found in the application form.
- You can fully commit to completing the different parts of the course – attending a residential in Manchester on 22-24 March 2027, the online core sessions, time for reflecting on your learning and opportunities to put it into practice.
- You have ideas about how you'll apply your learning from the course in your community.
- You're keen to share ideas, problem-solve and connect with peers.
- If you're applying as a volunteer, you've been involved with your food bank for at least three months.

Requirements related to the food bank of the applicant:

Trussell food bank:

- Your application needs to be supported by the leadership of the food bank you work or volunteer in. We are asking each person taking part in the course to identify a sponsor. This is someone in your organisation who can support you to reflect on your learning and put it into action. Your sponsor will need to complete a few questions about the support they will provide, as part of the application form. See further details below.
- The food bank's governing charity must meet its statutory obligations.
- Your food bank must have signed the latest franchise agreement.

Independent food bank:

As part of the Memorandum of Understanding for successful applicants, a trustee of the governing body of the food bank will be required to confirm that:

- The food bank's governing body is aligned with the vision of an end to the need for emergency food aid.
- The food bank's governing body meets its statutory obligations.
- There are no current significant concerns regarding the sustainability of the food bank.
- Your application needs to be supported by the leadership of the food bank you work or volunteer in. We are asking each person taking part in the course to identify a sponsor. This is someone in your organisation who can support you to reflect on your learning and put it into action. Your sponsor will need to complete a few questions about the support they will provide, as part of the application form. See further details below.

Additional factors that will be taken into consideration as part of the selection process:

In order to ensure that we have a diverse range of people participating in the course and that the course will have maximum benefit to the food banks involved, we will take into consideration the following when assessing applications:

- Location of the applicant – we are committed to ensuring that we have participants from across Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.
- The role of the applicant – we are keen to ensure that the group of participants includes people from a range of strategic roles (both paid and voluntary).
- Any known live risks at the food bank which may make the food bank unsuitable (e.g. significant concerns regarding sustainability or governance).

For Trussell food banks we will also take into consideration the following:

- Outstanding Governance Health Check requirements may result in an applicant from a food bank not being accepted onto the course.
- Whether a food bank has previously participated in other Trussell programmes (e.g. Pathfinder Programme).

Finding a sponsor

Having someone in your organisation who supports you to reflect on your learning and put it into action is going to be really key. **We will be asking people taking part in the course to identify a sponsor.**

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is someone from your organisation who supports you throughout your time on the Unleashed Leadership course. They act as a named point of contact for you, offering encouragement, practical help and senior-level backing. Your sponsor does not need to be a leadership expert.

Why is a sponsor important?

The sponsor's role is simply to champion you, create the right conditions for your learning, and ensure the food bank is committed to your development as an anti-poverty leader. A sponsor will:

- Ensure you have enough time and space for your learning and reflection
- Offer you encouragement and a chance to reflect on what you are learning
- Help you connect what you are learning to real-life projects and responsibilities

Who can be a sponsor?

A sponsor should know and understand your role at the food bank, believe in your potential as an anti-poverty leader and be committed to supporting you throughout the course. Ideally, the sponsor should:

- Hold a leadership, supervisory or governance role within your organisation
- Have the ability to help you put your learning into practice
- Make time for check-ins with you
- Support Trussell's vision of ending the need for emergency food aid and understand the critical role that developing anti-poverty leaders plays in driving change.

What does a sponsor need to commit to?

The role is light-touch, but meaningful. Sponsors will need to:

- Confirm their support during the application process
- Attend a short, online introductory session for sponsors
- Check in with the participant 2-3 times during the course
- Help create the conditions for success (e.g. time for course activity)
- Join a short mid-course online 'Sponsors check-in' to reflect on the course so far and its impact at your food bank

We will be asking successful applicants and sponsors to sign a Memorandum of Understanding – this will be sent out during the induction process, but you can see a sample version in Appendix 1, on page 15.

Suggested next steps

1. Speak to your manager, leadership team or trustees within your food bank to explore the opportunity and discuss making an application**. Please note that we are only able to accept one applicant per food bank.**
2. Identify someone who could act as your sponsor.

After 3rd December when applications open:

3. Complete your section of the course application form. You'll be able to find the application form here from Thursday 3 December on the Trussell website.
4. Ensure your sponsor completes their section of the course application form
5. Complete the grant application form (if required)
6. Send the course application form and grant form and paperwork (if required), back to us by midnight on Friday 22 January.

Getting in touch with us

If you have any questions that we've not answered, please drop us a line on: leadership@trussell.org.uk and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

If you'd rather arrange time for a chat (on the phone, Zoom or Teams), just let us know.

Appendix 1

Memorandum of Understanding

Please note this is a sample agreement for information only. It shows the agreement that applicants and sponsors would be asked to sign, if a place on the course is offered and accepted.
Unleashed Leadership course: March 2027 – November 2027

Memorandum of understanding between:
THE TRUSSELL TRUST, Unit 9 Ashfield Trading Estate, Ashfield Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 7HL. Reg. Charity in England & Wales (1110522) and Scotland (SC044246)
And
[Insert name of governing body of the food bank]

1. Purpose of this agreement

This Memorandum of Understanding sets out the commitments that the **participants** and their **sponsors** make when joining the Unleashed Leadership course, as well as the commitments made by **Trussell** to support participants and sponsors.

Please note, this is not a legal contract. It is a shared understanding of what each person agrees to contribute so the learning experience is positive, supportive, and successful.

It will help to ensure that expectations are clear, everyone is meaningfully supported and the course can have the greatest impact for individuals, organisations, and communities.

2. Commitments of the Participant

As a participant on the Unleashed Leadership course, I agree to:

A. **Upholding the values of Trussell throughout the duration of the course** (see Background Information on page 19, for a description of Trussell's values)

B. The vision of an end to the need for emergency food aid

C. Engage fully with the course

- Attend the **three-day residential** in March 2027
- Attend the **online introductory session**
- Take part in **seven online learning spotlights** (3 hours each)
- Participate actively in **five small learning group sessions** (2 hours each)
- Complete my **leadership profile**
- Join the **end-of-course celebration** (November 2027)
- Provide feedback to support with course evaluation (duration of course)

D. Make time for learning and reflection

I understand that the course requires adequate time to prepare, review and apply learning, in between core sessions, including:

- Reading or other preparation
- Reflection
- Trying out new approaches in my food bank or community

E. Contribute to a positive learning environment

I will:

- Bring curiosity, respect and compassion
- Listen to others and value different experiences and opinions
- Support peers and contribute to group discussions
- Follow the group agreements set at the start of the course

F. Use the course to create positive change

During and after the course I will:

- Apply my learning in real-life situations
- Work with my sponsor to identify opportunities to lead, influence or collaborate
- Share ideas and insights with others in my organisation

G. Communicate openly

I agree to:

- Let the Unleashed Leadership team know if I cannot attend a session
- Contact the Unleashed Leadership team if I need additional support, adjustments or help
- Discuss challenges or changes in circumstances with my sponsor

3. Commitments of the Sponsor

I agree to support the participant so they can fully benefit from the course and apply their learning.

A. Provide organisational support

I will:

- Confirm that the leadership team of the governing body of the food bank supports the participant taking part
- Enable time for them to attend sessions and undertake leadership activities
- Help ensure their role continues for the length of the programme

B. Attend sponsor sessions

I will join:

- The online introductory session for sponsors (March 2027)
- The mid-course online check-in (September 2027)

C. Provide regular check-ins and encouragement

I will:

- Meet with the participant at least 2-3 times during the course
- Offer constructive support, celebrating progress and helping with challenges
- Create or support opportunities where the participant can apply their learning

D. Help connect learning to real work

I will:

- Encourage the participant to use their skills in projects, influencing, collaboration or community engagement
- Share organisational insight that will help their leadership development
- Act as a point of contact for the Unleashed Leadership team if needed
-

4. Commitments of the Trussell Unleashed Leadership team

We agree to:

- Deliver a high-quality, safe, inclusive learning programme
- Provide clear communication about dates, expectations and requirements
- Offer pastoral support and connections to wider resources
- Make reasonable adjustments where these are needed
- Support both participants and sponsors, throughout the programme
-

Accessibility, wellbeing and support

We recognise that people have different needs and responsibilities.
The course team will work with participants and sponsors to ensure reasonable adjustments, pastoral support and financial assistance (where eligible) are in place. If at any point a participant's circumstances change, we ask the participant and/or sponsor to contact the Unleashed Leadership team, so we can help find solutions.

7. Agreement

Participant: I understand what the course involves and agree to the commitments outlined above.

Name	
Food bank	
Signature	
Date	

Sponsor: I understand my role in supporting the participant and agree to the commitments outlined above.

Name	
Role/Position	
Food bank	
Signature	
Date	

Unleashed Leadership Team (Signed on behalf of Trussell).

Name	
Role	
Signature	
Date	

Background Information

Overview of Trussell's values

Our values of **compassion, justice, community and dignity** are the fundamental driving principles that underpin all our work. Developed in consultation with food banks, they encapsulate our passion and motivation for the work we do.

Compassion- We stand in solidarity with people that need the help of food banks. We put the wellbeing of people served by food banks above everything else.

Justice - We are motivated by a desire to see a more just society. It's not right that anyone is facing hunger and poverty. Everyone should have enough income to afford the essentials.

Community - We believe we share the responsibility to support one another in our communities. To create change, we must work together for the kind of society we want to live in.

Dignity - We recognise the innate value of each individual person, regardless of background, and seek to prioritise their needs and concerns – in the spirit of mutuality and friendship.

Trussell
Ending hunger together

Unit 7, Ashfield Trading Estate,
Ashfield Road, Salisbury SP2 7HL

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trussell.org.uk

Trussell is the operating name of The Trussell Trust a registered charity in England & Wales (1110522) and Scotland (SC044246).
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