

WE ASK

Pause. Ask. Listen.

12 MONTHS • 12 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

FILL A SHELF

OCTOBER 2026

Little hands can make
a big difference.

FREE TO TAKE PART

This October, we're asking little people across the UK to do something big. Join early years settings, childminders and primary schools in collecting for their local food banks.



#WeAskUK

A We Ask initiative by The Early Years Edit

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

This October, we're asking children across the UK to help fill the shelves of their local food banks.

But Fill a Shelf is about more than collecting tins. It is an opportunity to help even our littlest children begin to notice the community around them and discover that they can be part of making it better.

For some children, that might mean bringing a donation from home. For others, it might mean decorating the collection box, sorting tins, counting packets, making a poster or helping to pack everything ready for delivery.

No child needs to bring a donation to take part. Families are never expected to give.

**Nobody has to give
something to be part
of something.**

Every child belongs in this initiative, regardless of whether their family is able to donate.



PAUSE. ASK. LISTEN.

Pause and notice the people and community around us.

Ask simple questions about what people might need and how we could help.

Listen to children's thoughts, questions and ideas as the project unfolds.

WE ASK



YOUR OCTOBER MISSION

One box. One community. Lots of little hands.



Taking part should be simple. We've done the thinking so you don't have to. Choose your local food bank, find out what they currently need and let your families know. Then let the children take it from there.

01

FIND

Choose a local food bank or community food project. Contact them first and ask what they currently need, where donations should go and whether there are any items they cannot accept.

02

SHARE

Tell your families you're taking part in We Ask: Fill a Shelf. Use the ready made message in this pack and make it clear that donations are completely optional.

03

FILL

Put out your collection box. Let children help add, sort, count, organise and talk about the donations as they arrive. There is no target and no minimum amount.

04

TALK

Use simple We Ask prompts: What have we noticed? Why might somebody need a little help? What could we do? How does helping make our community stronger?

05

DELIVER

Take your collection to your chosen food bank or community organisation. Where possible, involve the children in packing or handing over the donations so they can see where their actions led.

THAT'S IT.



No fundraising target.

No fee to join.

No competition.

No expectation for every family to donate.

Just your community doing something useful together.

- ☐ Choose your food bank
- ☐ Ask what they need
- ☐ Put out your collection box
- ☐ Share the family message
- ☐ Involve the children
- ☐ Deliver your donations
- ☐ Tell We Ask what you achieved



However much or little you collect, you took action. That matters.

BRING THE CHILDREN INTO THE CONVERSATION

Fill a Shelf should not be something adults organise around children.
Let them notice. Let them wonder. Let them ask questions.
And really listen to what they have to say.
You do not need a planned lesson or perfect answers.
Use the moments that happen naturally as you fill your shelf together.



01

PAUSE

Give children time to notice what is happening.
Look at the collection together. Handle the tins and packets.

Notice when something new arrives. Watch the box begin to fill.

For younger children, this might simply mean exploring, carrying, sorting and being part of what is happening.

02

ASK

Use simple, genuine questions rather than testing children for the “right” answer.

For younger children:

What can you see?

Can you help me put this in?

Where should this one go?

Shall we carry it together?

For older children:

Why do you think we are collecting food?

What do you think a food bank does?

Why might somebody need to use one?

What do you think would be useful to collect?

Is there another way we could help?

03

LISTEN

This bit matters. Children may say something funny, unexpected, thoughtful or difficult.

They might ask questions you were not expecting or connect the conversation to their own experiences.

Listen. Acknowledge what they say.

Answer honestly and appropriately for their age. Let their thoughts influence what happens next.

**WE ASK IS NOT ABOUT GIVING CHILDREN THE RIGHT WORDS.
IT IS ABOUT GIVING THEIR WORDS SOMEWHERE TO GO.**

FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS, PARTICIPATION IS THEIR VOICE

Children do not need to understand charity or food insecurity to belong in this project.

A baby passing you a tin. A toddler carrying pasta to the box. Two children sorting packets together.

A child pointing to something new that has arrived. These are meaningful ways to participate.

Remember

We can talk about food banks without frightening children or making assumptions about the families who use them.

Keep language simple, respectful and free from judgement. Our job is not to decide who needs help. It is to notice that our community has asked for help and see whether we can respond.

Pause. Ask. Listen. Then let little hands do something with what they discover.



WE'VE WRITTEN IT FOR YOU

Copy it. Paste it. Add your dates. Done.

No writing another parent message at 9pm.

Use or adapt the wording below and add the details for your own setting.



01

MESSAGE TO FAMILIES

We're taking part in We Ask: Fill a Shelf this October. We'll be joining children and settings across the UK to support our local food bank and helping our little people understand that even small actions can make a difference.

We'll be collecting the items our chosen food bank has told us they currently need and involving the children in filling, sorting and packing the collection.

If you would like to contribute, our current most needed items are:

[ADD ITEMS REQUESTED BY YOUR FOOD BANK]

Please send any donations by: [DATE]

Our donations will be going to: [FOOD BANK / Community Organisation]

Donating is completely optional.

Your child will be included in Fill a Shelf whether or not you send anything from home.

Thank you for helping our little people support their community.

Pause. Ask. Listen.

02

SHORT VERSION

For WhatsApp, parent apps, newsletters or reminders.

We're taking part in We Ask: Fill a Shelf this October and collecting for [FOOD BANK]. They currently need:

[ADD ITEMS] If you would like to contribute, please send donations by [DATE]. Donations are completely optional and every child will take part regardless. Thank you for helping our little people make a difference.

03

YOUR COLLECTION BOX

Print the Fill a Shelf poster from this pack, add your local details and attach to any box or basket you already have. No special display needed.



PLEASE DON'T GUESS WHAT TO COLLECT

Food banks' needs change regularly. Contact your chosen organisation before sharing your list with families and collect what they have told you they can currently use.

LESS ADMIN. MORE ACTION.



WE ASK 

PAUSE. ASK. LISTEN.

FILL A SHELF

**THIS OCTOBER, WE'RE SUPPORTING
OUR LOCAL FOOD BANK.**

Little hands can make a big difference.

WE'RE SUPPORTING

THEY CURRENTLY NEED

PLEASE DONATE BY

Please only donate unopened, in date
items requested by our chosen food bank.



**DONATIONS ARE
COMPLETELY OPTIONAL**

Every child will be part of
Fill a Shelf whether or not
their family contributes an item.



Our children are joining
others across the UK
to notice their community,
lend a hand and do
something that matters.

WE ASK

12 MONTHS • 12 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

#WeAskUK

A free We Ask initiative by The Early Years Edit

WE ASK 

PAUSE. ASK. LISTEN.

WE DID IT.

WE FILLED A SHELF.

Together, our little people noticed their community,
got involved and chose to take action.

OUR SETTING

WE SUPPORTED

CHILDREN INVOLVED

ITEMS DONATED

SOMETHING OUR CHILDREN NOTICED...

**HOWEVER MUCH OR LITTLE WE COLLECTED,
WE CHOSE TO TAKE ACTION.**



And that matters.

**ONE SETTING CAN FILL A BOX.
TOGETHER, WE CAN FILL SHELVES ACROSS THE UK.**

#WeAskUK

A free We Ask initiative by The Early Years Edit

WE ASK **FILL A SHELF**

We're collecting for: _____

Most needed: _____

Last day to donate: _____

_____  _____

Donations are always optional.

#WeAskUK

WE ASK 

PAUSE. ASK. LISTEN.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING.

We Ask is 12 months of simple actions
designed to help little people make a real difference.



OCTOBER

FILL A SHELF

Supporting local food banks through
one simple community action.



COMING IN NOVEMBER

A LITTLE WARMTH

Collect hats, gloves and scarves for people
in your local community who need them this winter.

**Free to take part.
Simple to join.
No pressure to give.
Just little people doing good things.**

**12 MONTHS.
12 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

Pause. Ask. Listen.

#WeAskUK

A free We Ask initiative by The Early Years Edit

Kind
choices
stronger
communities
♡

Where is our food going?

A We Ask visual story for Fill a Shelf

♡
Small
people
brighter
tomorrows
♡

1 We bring food to help.



2 We sort it together.



3 We take it to the food bank.



4 The food helps people in our community.



♡
Little hands can make a big difference.

What do we notice?

Prompt cards for Fill a Shelf



What can you see?



What has arrived?



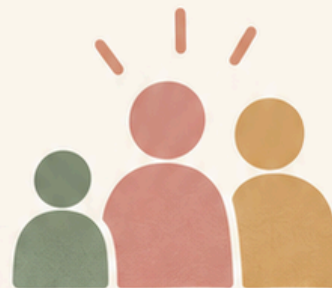
Where should this go?



What do we have lots of?



What do we still need?



Who will this help?



How can we help?



Where is it going?

Fill Our Shelf



Small
Donations
Brighter
Tomorrows

Each time a donation arrives, add it to our shelf.

Colour a space, add a sticker or place a picture card.

A
kinder
brighter
happier
community



Our setting: _____

How many have
we added?



Little hands can make a big difference. ♥



MY JOB TODAY



Collector

Name: _____



MY JOB TODAY



Sorter

Name: _____



MY JOB TODAY



Counter

Name: _____



MY JOB TODAY



Box Packer

Name: _____



MY JOB TODAY



Poster Helper

Name: _____



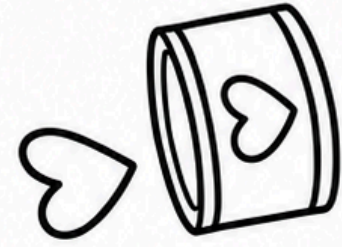
MY JOB TODAY



Delivery Helper

Name: _____





Thank you for
helping our
community.



From the little people
taking part in

We Ask: Fill a Shelf.



From: _____



WE ASK • Fill a Shelf

Thank You
for helping our community



STRONGER COMMUNITIES
BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

WE ASK • Fill a Shelf



Count Our Donations

Let's see what we collected.

	Picture	Tally	Total
Tins		/ /	<input type="text"/>
Packets		/ /	<input type="text"/>
Toiletries		/ /	<input type="text"/>
Other		/ /	<input type="text"/>

1 What did we collect most of?

2 How many did we collect altogether?

3 What did we notice?



Little hands can make a big difference. 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 

I took part in
WE ASK 
Fill a Shelf

Little hands.
Big difference.
 **WE ASK**
Fill a Shelf

I helped
Fill a Shelf
WE ASK 