



Cashless vending machines

Innovation > Science > Cashless vending machines provide daily essentials to homeless

CASHLESS VENDING MACHINES PROVIDE DAILY ESSENTIALS TO HOMELESS

 SCIENCE

Keycard-accessed vending machines are to be installed in safe spaces to provide the homeless with all-hour access to essentials.

With homelessness on the rise we've seen many projects aiming to provide some basic services for those without a fixed address, such as [secure storage lockers](#) or [contactless donation methods](#), and now a UK-based charity, [Action Hunger](#), is committed to providing access to essentials for those in need.

Action Hunger has developed vending machine units that can be accessed at any time of the day — running staffed services 24-hours a day is costly and limited by local funding levels, whereas the unmanned vending machines require only initial setup and restocking by volunteers. The vending machines are stocked daily with essential items such as food, sourced from overstock from local grocery stores, thereby recapturing food items that would otherwise go to waste, clothing and hygienic products, such as sanitary pads and toothbrushes. Access to the machines is excessively permitted to aid those in need, so a personal key card is provided by a local organisation partnered with Action Hunger, that grants each user access to up to three items per day. As continued engagement with local support services and professionals is crucial to alleviating the cycle of homelessness, users will be cut off if they fail to make these weekly scheduled meetings.

With the first location up and running at the Intu Broadmarsh shopping centre in Nottingham, Action Hunger is seeking further partners across the UK to find other safe, secure places for their vending

machines. Action Hunger is keen to stress the machines are complementary to other projects to combat homelessness, and shouldn't be a substitute for human contact and counselling.

We've seen how a [chatbot](#) can help homeless youth with legal advice. What other ways could technology help those without access to basic human rights?

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