Donations from Merton-based supply chain compliance expert, CHAS, are helping fund the essential work of local environmental charity Sustainable Merton.

Founded in 2007, Sustainable Merton is dedicated to inspiring, mobilising and enabling the Merton community to respond to the climate emergency while also improving local quality of life. With the support of its army of volunteers, it works to champion sustainability and make a difference through community-led projects that address issues around waste, air quality, energy and food.

CHAS, a leading provider of risk prevention, compliance and supply chain management services, has been making donations to the charity every time a member chooses to opt-out of receiving paper accreditation certificates or CHAS van stickers. As a result, it has donated more than £6,500 towards Sustainable Merton's sustainability initiatives and community projects in the last 12 months.

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Commenting on the initiative, CHAS Managing Director, Ian McKinnon, explains: "An important part of CHAS's work involves helping businesses demonstrate how they are meeting their obligations towards the planet and society through our environmental and corporate social responsibility accreditation schemes. Naturally, this means we are committed to ensuring our own organisation strives to have a positive impact."

“Working with Sustainable Merton provides the perfect opportunity to improve our environmental credentials while supporting our local community."

"As we celebrate our 25th year of operation in 2022, we are proud to have played a key role in simplifying health and safety prequalification and raising standards of risk management in the UK. This initiative reinforces our ongoing commitment to promoting responsible business practices."

Diana Sterck, CEO of Sustainable Merton, adds: "The flexibility of getting donations from businesses such as CHAS makes an enormous difference for us. Unlike grant funding, the donations enable us to build our activity without being beholden to pre-specified commitments or restrictions. When we get money from CHAS, we can really put that anywhere."

This means Sustainable Merton can adapt as needs shift, allowing the charity to focus predominantly on its 'Growing Spaces' and 'Merton's Community Fridge' initiatives in recent times.

Growing Spaces is about bringing people together and addressing food poverty by helping residents of all ages access, grow and cook fresh, healthy, nutritious food. The spaces allow residents to learn more about the food system, develop new skills, improve health and wellbeing, and feel more connected with their community.

The Community Fridge initiative has also seen exponential growth in recent times. It involves collecting food that would otherwise go to waste from businesses and redistributing it. In addition, the surplus from the Growing Spaces allotments provides a source of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Since May 2020, Sustainable Merton has given out the equivalent of 64,000 meals to people living in food insecurity, with even higher quantities expected to be needed in the months

ahead.

Ian McKinnon adds: "At a time when the cost of living is spiraling, it's heartening for both CHAS and our customers to hear about the positive impact our donations are having on the lives of local people."

"We would urge any business in a position to support their local community to consider working with charities such as Sustainable Merton because as well as being extremely rewarding, it is an ideal way to demonstrate your commitment to improving your social value, an issue which is fast rising up the business agenda."

Beyond its food initiatives, Sustainable Merton works to encourage energy-saving behaviours and raise awareness of alternative energy options. It is also promoting means to improve air quality in the borough, while volunteers are carrying out air quality monitoring and working closely with the council. Waste is another key area for the charity, which encourages residents to upcycle items that would otherwise be thrown away. Project Preloved, for example, is a community hub for everything sewing, mending, and textile upcycling.

"We're a small, grassroots operation," adds Diana Sterck. "We try to connect the different elements of what's going on in our community to make the borough a better place and to achieve the climate change targets. We really appreciate the funding we receive from businesses like CHAS and we can make the money go a long way. It's about helping the local community and contributing to something that affects our lives and our children's lives."

For more information on Sustainable Merton, visit: www.sustainablemerton.org