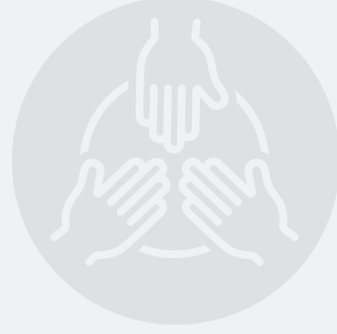




# Tools for tackling food poverty

Lessons from local food poverty alliances



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## Introduction

This booklet showcases some of the tools used by local food poverty alliances that belong to the Food Power network.

From building robust approaches to evaluation in Middlesborough using the Collective Impact Tracker, mapping community food service provision in Greater Manchester, building and strengthening community food networks through collective action in Oxfordshire, working in partnership to survey food poverty in Brighton and Hove, co-designing and using various tools to capture and tell food stories, to using feminist and intersectional approaches in Tower Hamlets.

This booklet is not comprehensive but rather seeks to highlight and provide signposts to just some of the good practice from the Food Power network.



# Middlesborough Food Power Alliance

## Using the Food Power Collective Impact Tracker

The **Collective Impact Tracker** was created to support food poverty alliances explore the difference they are making and how they are working.

Middlesborough Food Power alliance was one of the Food Power alliances provided with financial support to carry out local evaluation of their alliance's work, including testing and refining the **Collective Impact Tracker Tool**.

Before using the Collective Impact Tool, Middlesborough Food Power alliance were collecting data but they didn't have the capacity to analyse it in detail or drawing connections across different datasets. Support from Food Power enabled members of the alliance to dedicate time to look at what was and wasn't working in more depth. The tool was used to gather evidence and used this evidence to inform action plans, identify what was working and those areas that needed improvement. Andrea Burrows explains the tool "helped us to identify difficulties and allowed for reflection and action to develop a better working relationships with partners."



### Top tips from Middlesborough Food Power alliance for using the Tracker:

#### 1. Use the tool regularly

As Andrea reflects: *"if you can do that year on year, at the end you will have had a really robust project evaluation."*

#### 2. Make a plan – but be fluid with it

*"Don't think you can do it all at once. Just work your way through it. Make a plan. Stick to your plan. You might have to go off route a little bit but as a general rule if you just work your way through...make a plan but be fluid with it. Let the communities you're working with support you, and support them in exchange."*

#### 3. Share trackers findings

Share findings and results with alliance members to show what has been collectively achieved over a period of time – this can be helpful both via ongoing updates to alliance members as well as via mid-term and final evaluation reports.

#### 4. Work collectively

Talking through how to use the tool as well as sharing findings and results with alliance members helps support knowledge exchange and build good practice.

#### 5. Share good practice beyond the local alliance.

*"What doesn't work in your area might work somewhere else and its these tips and tricks that other people use that I like to think lead to a better society for everybody."*

Sharing what you are doing, what has worked well and what hasn't worked well can help strengthen other alliances. Using the 'Roots of a successful food strategy' diagram in the Brighton and Hove food strategy action plan <sup>1</sup>, Middlesborough was able to understand how different elements of the action plan can address a direct need whilst also connecting together to support the wider objective of reducing food poverty.

#### 6. Use it

Robust project evaluation can give people the confidence to support the project further.

# Good Food Oxfordshire

## Scaling Collective Action from City to County

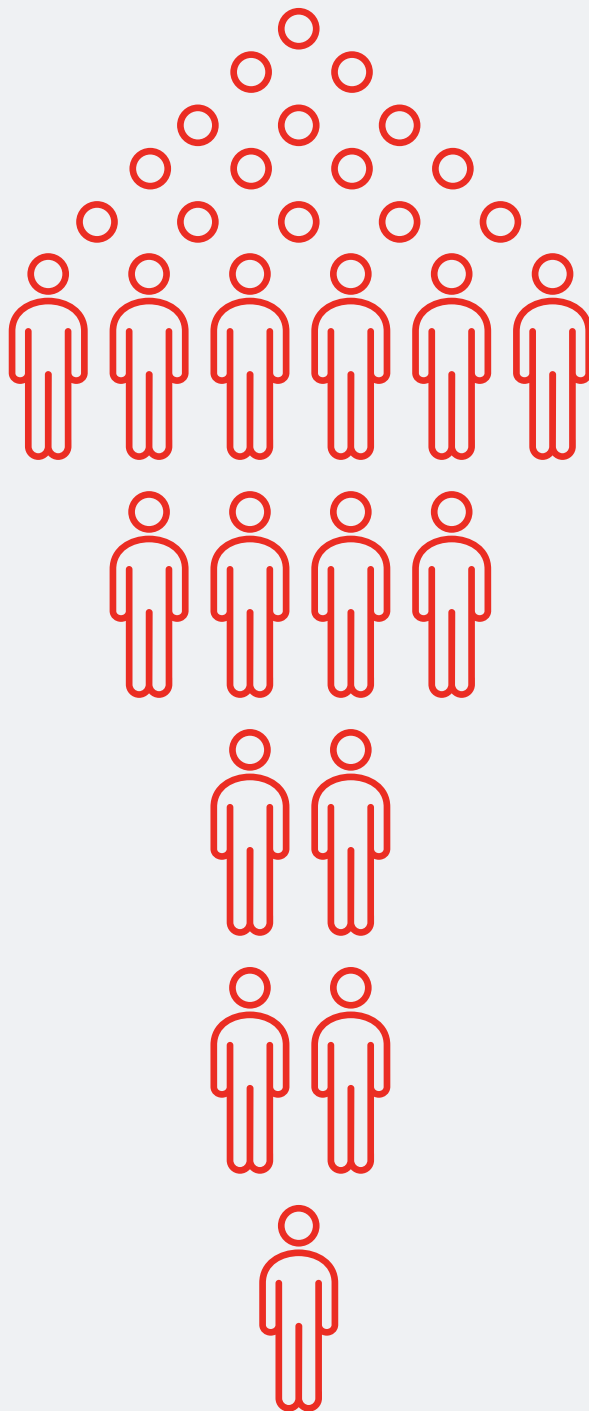
In response to COVID-19, Good Food Oxfordshire (GFO) and Oxfordshire County Council, working with the City and District Councils, partnered to gain a better understanding of Oxfordshire's community food services, building upon the work of the Oxford Food Access Alliance<sup>2</sup>. GFO led a survey of all community food services in the county, finding a threefold increase in users since the start of the pandemic, a large proportion of whom had not used food services before the pandemic<sup>3</sup>. As a next step, GFO recommended setting up district-level networks and linking them into county-wide initiatives, taking a collective action approach.

“Collective action involves bringing disparate actors to the table in order to foster dialogue and generate ideas based on diverse perspectives and experiences.”<sup>4</sup> [p.12]

In July 2020, GFO convened the first Oxfordshire-wide Community Food Networks (CFNs) meeting, followed by regular district-level meetings with community food services, city and district councils, voluntary groups, and local food businesses. The CFNs aim to facilitate communication and coordination across community food services, as well as to enable county, district and city councils to better understand how best to support community food services.

Whilst experts by experience are not directly involved in CFN meetings, the importance of using lived experience to improve services is recognised by CFN members. Stories from service users inform discussions and decisions – such as the expansion of **community larders**, an alternative to food banks and fridges, underpinned by recognition that some people accessing assistance would prefer to contribute financially and in turn get access to a greater choice of foods. The voices of those with lived experience has also informed the content of GFO's **food poverty training and food insecurity toolkit**.

Thanks to the work of the Oxford Food Access Alliance taken forwards by GFO, food poverty has moved up the policy agenda, with city and district councils now collaborating with community food services and local communities through the CFNs to address food poverty.



### Top tips from GFO for taking a collective action approach:

#### 1. Same goal, adaptive strategies

Whilst GFO's central aim has remained constant over time, the approach has evolved over time in response to changing circumstances, opportunities and needs, as evident in the transition from Alliance to Network.

*“Sometimes it's about being opportunistic, see where the energy is, let's go there.”*  
(GFO staff member)

#### 2. Valuing the network

Time spent networking can provide multiple benefits for individuals involved in collective action – from exchange of knowledge, information and resources to practical and emotional support.

#### 3. Valuing participants

Sustaining interest and engagement in Alliances and Networks requires navigation of diverse needs, priorities and ways of working. Multiple communication methods and adaptive methodologies to fit with schedules and needs can help sustain momentum.

#### 4. Listening to those with lived experience

Bringing the voices of those with lived experience into collaborative forums such as the CFNs helps ensure services respect and dignify service users.

*“The time and energy required to ensure that experts by experience can contribute in whatever way they wish needs to be taken into account when planning and allocating resources for such collaborations. It may also be important to ‘unlearn’ usual ways of working to create the conditions for experts by experience to contribute”<sup>5</sup> [p. 13].*

# Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance

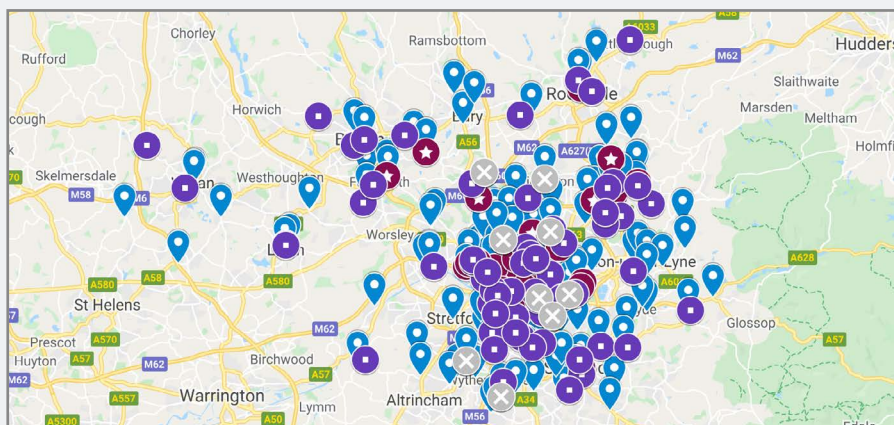
## Mapping Food Providers

Mapping local response to food poverty can be useful for food poverty alliances. By presenting information in a clear, concise and engaging way, maps are useful for a range of people – from those experiencing food insecurity to decision-makers. Maps can also be useful tools in calls to action<sup>6</sup>.

**The Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) Food Providers Map** includes food banks, pantries and pay-as-you feel cafes. As Chris Bagley, Communications Manager at GMPA explains:

*“we created the map back in 2017 as there wasn’t a single source of data about where food banks were situated in Greater Manchester and we thought it could be useful. There were 136 pins on the map when we launched it. Now there are over 240 pins and we’ve added food clubs, pantries and free meal providers using different pins.”*

The GMPA Food Providers Map is hosted via Google Maps, which collects data via a spreadsheet then uploaded to the map. Chris reflects that Google Maps is user-friendly and easy to upload data. However, it is important to consider how the information is stored, maintained and reviewed. The background data can be accessed by anyone who has reasonable IT skills.



### Top tips on mapping food providers from GMPA:

#### 1. Be realistic

Be realistic about capacity to create and maintain the mapping before starting out. At GMPA, the Communications Manager amends map entries on a weekly basis. They have also had support with data checking the map from placement students.

#### 2. Stay up-to-date, but include a disclaimer

*“No one wants someone who desperately needs a food bank to spend their last few pounds on a bus fare just to find that the opening hours have changed.”*

Include a disclaimer that explains that whilst the information is kept as up-to-date as possible, users should check the provider website or make contact before visiting.

#### 3. How can your map be useful?

GMPA aim to provide as much data about each provider as possible on the map such as restrictions about who can use the facility and whether vouchers are needed.

#### 4. Communicate with those who are mapped

It is important to check providers give consent to being mapped – some providers may not want to be on a public-facing map, especially if they are already at capacity. However, including providers at capacity can be useful as it gives a more accurate picture of the demand. If providers at capacity consent to be listed clearly state ‘currently fully subscribed’ on the map.

#### 5. Call to action

Maps can help strengthen networks and encourage providers to do more than simply provide food. The GMPA **food security referral tool** currently being piloted in Tameside takes an advice and cash first approach, the aim being that wherever someone turns to for help when experiencing food insecurity, they are referred to income maximisation support. The GMPA food security referral tool is working to make this as straightforward for providers as possible.

# Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

## Working in partnership to survey food insecurity

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) is pioneering how to take a city-wide approach to understanding food poverty<sup>7</sup>. Working with university, community and statutory partners, they collect a range of data to inform policy, planning and community food provision.

### 1. Annual survey of emergency food use

Since 2014, BHFP have conducted an annual survey of **emergency food providers** to build understanding of emergency food use in the city. Using the Trussell Trust's categories for why people use food banks allows for national comparison. The survey also asks emergency food providers for information about volunteers, training interest, support needs and the future of the **Emergency Food Network** – a collaboration of food banks and other organisations providing food to those in need because of food poverty.

### 2. Emergency food beneficiary survey

In 2020 BHFP conducted a 'beneficiary survey' of people who have been in receipt of emergency food parcels and those who consider themselves 'struggling to afford food' to learn more about what is happening and how better to support people experiencing food poverty. In 2020, 230 people responded to the survey. The survey was promoted via leaflets in foodbank parcels, SMS text messages to those who had received a council referral, social media posts and via emails to the Emergency Food Network<sup>8</sup>. Evaluation of the Affordable Food Projects has further built understanding of those experiencing household food insecurity via 66 phone, online and face-to-face interviews<sup>9</sup>.

### 3. City Tracker survey

In collaboration with the Brighton and Hove City Council, BHFP have worked to include a question in the Council's City Tracker Survey since 2014 to track household fuel and food insecurity. According to the 2018 survey findings, 1 in 5 residents disagreed (including 8% who strongly disagreed) that they will be able to meet basic living costs (including food, water and heating) after paying for housing<sup>10</sup>.

### 4. Food poverty and nutrition questions in JSNA

BHFP worked with the Brighton and Hove City Council public health team in collaboration with a University of Brighton Master's placement to update the Joint Strategic Needs assessment<sup>11</sup> (JSNA) on food poverty and nutrition.

### 5. Postcode analysis

During COVID-19, BHFP worked with the City Council to lead emergency food response. Analysis by the City Council public health data team of postcodes of people using food banks (using data provided by food banks) helped inform emergency food provision response.

Postcode analysis has also helped understanding of uptake for Healthy Start Vouchers. In a 2019 survey one area had much higher uptake (80%) compared to the city average (65%). The postcode tracker helped ascertain that a children's centre receptionist was playing a key role in proactively promoting the vouchers via displays and by mentioning it to everyone using the children's centre where she worked<sup>12</sup>.



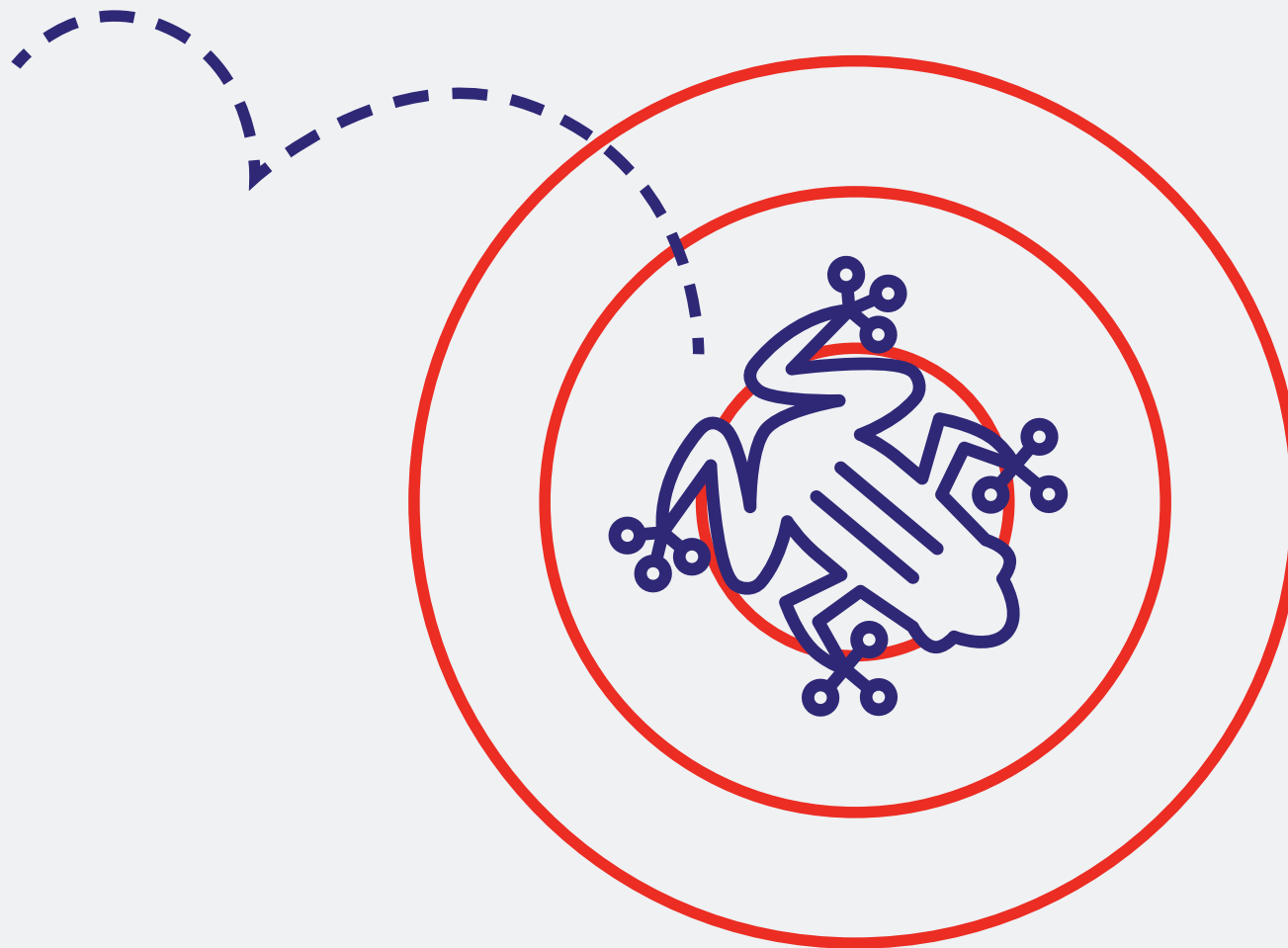
# Leapfrog Toolbox: Tools for Food Stories

## Flexible ways to capture and tell stories about food and food poverty

Over a period of ten months, a group of experts with lived experience of food poverty in Lancashire and the Byker Estate in Newcastle worked together with Leapfrog (an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded research project based at Lancaster University) to co-design a range of tools to capture and tell stories about food and food poverty.

Each co-designed tool comes with visual instructions on how they can be used and adapted to capture stories and experiences about food and food poverty.

The toolbox can be downloaded for free [here](#).



### Gemma Coupe from Leapfrog highlights some of the tools available:

#### 1. Talking Food Card Deck

45 ways to help start conversations around food and food poverty. These cards can be used to build trust, explore food and if and when the circumstances are right and people are comfortable to share experiences talk about food poverty. Designed to help build trust, they include three kinds of questions to help people get to know one another.

#### 2. Food Safari Menu

A menu of 12 mini research challenges and a big map can help people explore local food. In April 2019 a group of young people designed this tool and used it to explore local food in Darwen (Lancashire). Designed to help empower people to investigate food, people can choose where to go and which research activities to use.

#### 3. Food Places

This tool helps make conversations about food, budgeting, shopping and cooking more visual. Scribble on sheets to kick start discussions about buying and cooking food.

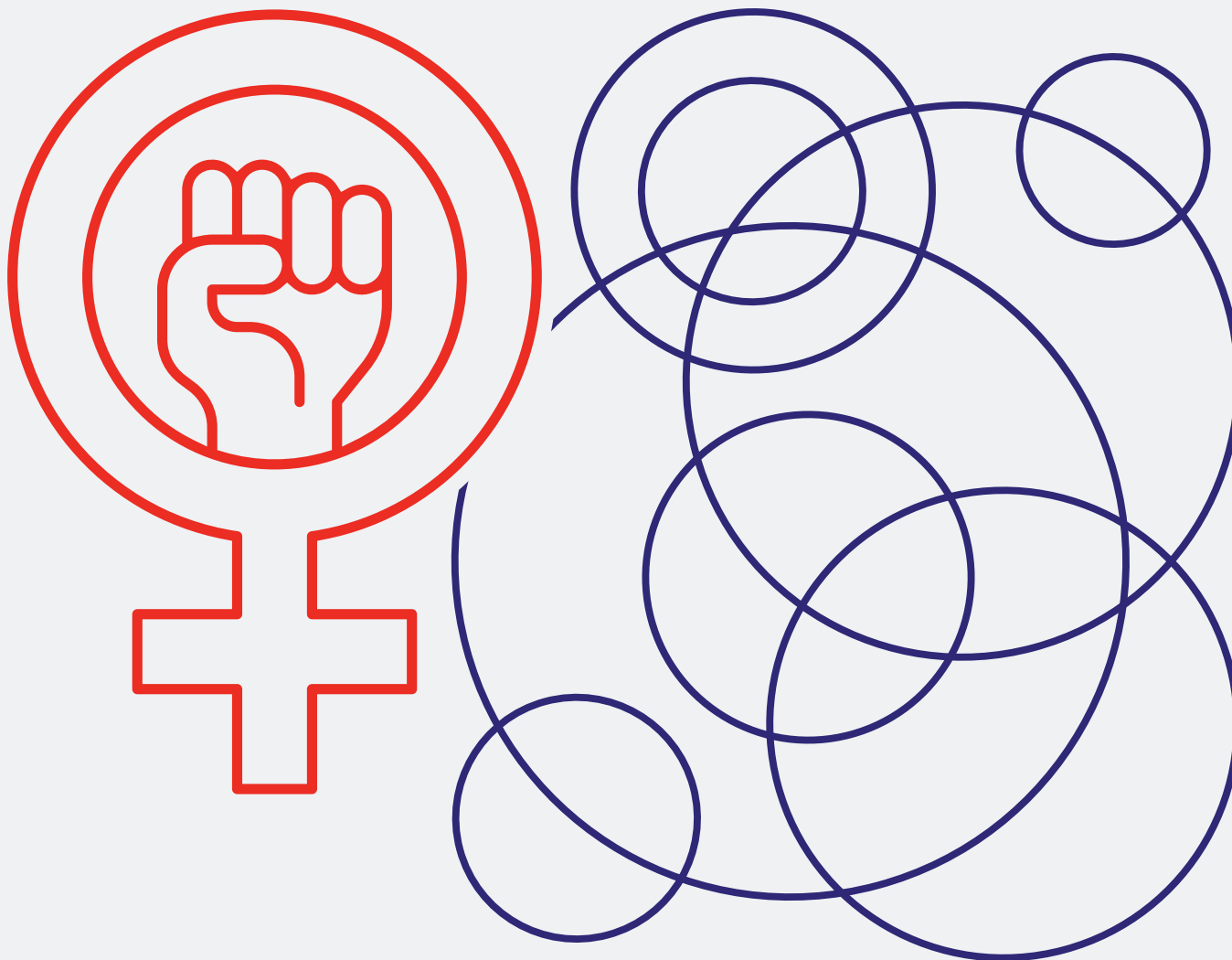
*"It's not so much for the people that are needing the help, this is for the people that are giving the help. Most people go and switch a kettle on and not think about it. But this is the difference, this is where these tools help people that are giving out the help and advice to understand that this is the amount of money it costs just to boil a kettle. It's something that most people that help out, like the people in the food banks, council workers, everybody like that that's on a decent wage, they don't think about how much money it costs. I'm always having to help people make their money go further. I can use the high street sheet to show people where and when to shop for cheap food on Byker – something they can keep hold of afterwards."*

(Penny Walter, Expert by lived experience)

# Tower Hamlets Food Partnership

## Feminist/intersectional approaches to food insecurity

A pre-pandemic survey<sup>13</sup> found that 40% of food insecure people in London were Black or Asian, and that East London had the highest levels of food insecurity. The East London-based Tower Hamlets Food Partnership takes an intersectional perspective on shaping a better food system, recognising the cumulative disadvantage people face relating to gender, race, sexuality and class. A key part of their approach is to work alongside communities, and bring their voices into decision-making.



### Recent projects have included:

#### The Food Store

This **council-commissioned pantry** supports residents to access discounted food each week, as well as referrals to services supporting them into a more stable position. The pantry serves an ethnically diverse community, the highest proportion being British Bangladeshi. Nourishing, culturally-appropriate food is a priority, so partners regularly bulk-purchase grains, pulses and spices, and fruit and vegetables are free. Regular growing and cooking workshops are offered to the pantry users. Partnership members are developing plans to open a network of similar services across the borough over the next 12 months.

#### Blueprint Architects

This partnership lead **Women's Environmental Network (WEN)** secured 5 years of National Lottery funding to deliver **Just FACT**, a five-year programme supporting community-led climate action in Tower Hamlets. Working with local residents and community organisations, the project focuses on reducing the environmental impacts of our food system. A newly formed community group, the Blueprint Architects, is developing a blueprint to influence community action and influence local and London-wide policy and decision-making.

#### Ethics of food research

In collaboration with academics, Tower Hamlets Food Partnership have been critically reflecting on how to support minoritised groups to talk about their food lives in ways which enable consciousness-raising, resistance and creativity, and new forms of policy making. This is in contrast to the way that people – particularly marginalised groups – are often encouraged to talk about their food practices across the media. This includes hosting a two-day symposium on the ethics and politics of food stories, and developing a community research programme in Tower Hamlets to put communities in the lead of telling their **food stories**.





This guide is written by Dr Poppy Nicol, Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University. With thanks to: Simon Shaw, Food Power Programme Coordinator, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, Cecily Spelling, Food Power Programme Coordinator, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, Dr Hannah Pitt, Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University, Dr Kate Knowles, Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University, Cardiff University and Dr Ana Moragues Faus, Universitat de Barcelona and Ben Pearson, Church Action on Poverty and Leapfrog Initiative.

With many thanks to representatives from Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, Good Food Oxford, Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance, Middlesbrough Food Power Alliance and Tower Hamlets Food Partnership for their collaboration and thoughtfulness.

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## Endnotes

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- 2 The Oxford Food Access Alliance was convened by Good Food Oxford (GFO) from 2018 to 2020. Its central aims were to empower local communities and organisations in the city of Oxford to reduce food poverty and, to support an appropriate local policy response to food poverty. The Alliance pursued these aims by facilitating dialogue on root causes and potential solutions to food poverty among service providers, policymakers, and people with lived experience of food poverty. It also supported the development of food-related community initiatives.
- 3 Good Food Oxford. 2021. Collective Action to address Food Poverty in Oxfordshire: What Have We Learned So Far? Good Food Oxford Evaluation Report by Frances Hansford, Fiona Steel, Hannah Fenton, Good Food Oxford. Available at: <https://goodfoodoxford.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GFO-Report-to-Food-Power-2021-FINAL.pdf>
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