



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

POVERTY

Torbay Council

Collaborative Alliance Supporting Those in Food Poverty

When the pandemic hit it became apparent very quickly that there were an increasing number of residents in Torbay who needed support in accessing food. To tackle this Torbay Council, who are committed to being co-operative, helped facilitate the Torbay Food Alliance, a consortium of 10 food banks and community voluntary organisations.

When the Food Alliance came together they united with a common goal, which was to ensure that no-one in Torbay goes hungry during the Covid-19 crisis.

The Alliance brought together community food resources and fundraising efforts, so that they could provide a co-ordinated support to those who were, and still are, struggling to access food. These were people who may have been self-isolating, who had no money to buy food, or have lost their usual support networks. The Food Alliance is there to help the poorest and most vulnerable in their local community and they provide parcels of groceries and essentials, or meals for those who are unable to prepare their own.

The Alliance was set up in April 2020 and by July 2021 they had provided over 540,000 meals to those who needed it across Torquay, Paignton and Brixham – the three towns that make up Torbay. This included more than 20,000 food parcels, and over 127,000 prepared meals for people who were unable to safely cook due to mental or physical disabilities, or those who lacked cooking facilities. This also included over 6,600 emergency family meal kits which had been provided to local schools for distribution to families by pastoral support teams. Also in December 2020 the Alliance provided more than 400 Christmas hampers to struggling families. This was to try and give them some normality and a special meal at a very difficult time. Two member organisations also undertook a Christmas present scheme so that children and teens received a wrapped gift on Christmas morning.

A single online referral for food support was co-produced with Torbay Council. This provided a streamlined pathway which is used by both professionals and trusted partners across a range of sectors. This ensures that support is provided by the right local organisation to meet a person's needs. Wherever possible, self-referral for food support through a local Community Helpline was encouraged. The Helpline is community-led and supported by a range of voluntary sector partnerships who specialise in different areas of need. This included financial issues, mental health, domestic abuse, and more. These partnerships work collaboratively with each other, and with local statutory services, ensuring that people are connected with

person-centred support, enabling individuals to address the underlying reasons for their situation. The goal is to empower them to improve their current situation.

The organisations and groups that formed the Torbay Food Alliance said that joining up and working together has benefited them all in so many ways. Linking up enabled them to join up all their assets and use them better. As well as sharing their knowledge and contacts, those in the Alliance also learned from each other. By working together in this way they could also bid for a range of funding streams and ultimately get more money. This collaboratively way of working also really improved their trust and relationships with the statutory organisations. A quote from one of the organisations summed it up for all partners, they said “we can move forward by working together and this will really benefit the people we are supporting.”



Building on this approach Torbay are now co-operatively developing a sustainable food partnership and plan. This will take a long-term collaborative approach, creating a resilient local food system. The aim is to tackle food system issues and collaborate to explore creative, innovative solutions and establish a vibrant resilient food system, where good, healthy and sustainable food is available to all.

This newly formed food partnership is from a range of sectors and will be working together in a way that involves and connects key players from across all parts of the food system. The partnership will take a strategic and co-operative approach to good food governance. Their priorities are to:

- Tackle food poverty, diet-related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food
- Support the creation of a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy,
- Tackle the climate emergency through an end to food waste, and
- Build public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement.
- Finally, connecting communities through food.

This example of Torbay Council's co-operative approach embodies how they are committed to the principles of co-operation, social responsibility, solidarity and equality.

For further information please contact:

Kate Spencer

Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement, Torbay Council

kate.spencer@torbay.gov.uk | 01803 207014 | www.torbay.gov.uk