

# Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food



## **Foreword**

In recent years, the focus on sustainable food systems has gained significant momentum, driven by the imperative to address food insecurity, promote healthy diets, and support resilient local economies. This collection of reports showcases cooperative efforts to transform food systems in various communities across the UK through innovative, resident led approaches. Each report encapsulates unique projects that align with the principles of sustainability, community engagement, and cooperative values, offering valuable insights and practical solutions for wider application.

### **Report on Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food**

The “Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food” report, prepared by the University of Salford, FoodSync, and Oldham Council, delves into the effectiveness of cooperative models in creating sustainable food systems. By leveraging the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework and the Cooperative Councils’ Innovation Network (CCIN) principles, this study explores a series of case studies that highlight best practices, innovative stakeholder engagement, and economic creativity. The report emphasises the potential for replication of these models and provides a critical analysis of the barriers and opportunities they present. It underscores the need for embracing cooperative principles to foster a just and sustainable food system that can be resilient against future challenges.

### **Final Report on the Community Fed Oldham: Oldham Food Security Challenge Prize**

The Final Report on the “Community Fed Oldham: Oldham Food Security Challenge Prize” chronicles a one-year collaborative program aimed at addressing food insecurity in Oldham. Initiated by Stir to Action and Shared Assets in partnership with Oldham Council, this project focused on developing community-led food initiatives that provide affordable and culturally appropriate food options. The report outlines the co-production themes, the approaches taken to build a resilient local food system, and the outcomes achieved. By documenting the successes and learnings from the project, this report serves as a comprehensive guide for other communities seeking to tackle food insecurity through cooperative efforts and community engagement.

### **Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food: Values and Principles**

The “Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food: Values and Principles” emphasises the alignment of cooperative values with the development of sustainable food systems. It illustrates how adopting cooperative approaches not only maximises social value but also enhances the sustainability and impact of local food projects. The report encourages the broader application of these principles to foster more inclusive and effective food systems.

Together, these reports offer a comprehensive view of the transformative potential of cooperative approaches in building sustainable food systems. They provide actionable insights and evidence-based strategies for policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners committed to addressing food insecurity, improving public health, and supporting resilient local economies. The collective knowledge and experiences shared in these documents pave the way for more equitable and sustainable food systems for all.

# Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food

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Presented to the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network

*Prepared by the University of Salford, FoodSync and Oldham Council*



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economy • health • environment • social



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## 1. Executive Summary

**‘Sustainable food systems deliver food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.’**

**(United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation)**

Sustainable food is high on the agenda of international bodies, national and local government, charities, housing associations, private businesses and a host of other organisations. Yet, despite this interest, many approaches to creating a sustainable food system are often argued to be disjointed, fragmented and poorly implemented<sup>1</sup>. Recently, there have been calls for more co-production and a move away from traditional ‘top-down’ models with pursuing the concept<sup>2</sup>. Recent research suggests that adopting a cooperative approach to sustainable food can lead to a more ‘just’ system, maximising social value and the sustainability of schemes<sup>3</sup>.

This project critically explored innovative practice around cooperative approaches to sustainable food. Through using the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework, and the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) principles, we have devised a series of case studies to enable members to learn from good practice. The case studies provide examples of schemes which maximise social value, demonstrate new ways of engaging local stakeholders, display novelty in relation to co-production, showcase economic creativity and other forms of innovation. The case studies are models to be replicated, with a critical analysis undertaken to allow members to understand the barriers to projects, potential elsewhere and long-term impact in their areas. The report draws on interviews, Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis and other tools to provide an in-depth review of the case studies.

<sup>1</sup><https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2013.797156>

<sup>2</sup><https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0042098019832486>

<sup>3</sup> <https://party.coop/2019/11/05/working-co-operatively-for-sustainable-and-just-food-systems/>

We reveal how pioneers, from Greenwich to Middlesbrough, have transformed local food systems through adopting a cooperative approach, using tools such as charters to bring together key stakeholders around the idea. The GIS analysis shows the wider impact of schemes, addressing environmental quality, health and other issues in communities. However, we also highlight the precarious nature of schemes, with many overly reliant on grant funding and small teams, resulting in impacts dwindling in a few over time. Our findings also highlight the international cooperative movement around sustainable food, through interviews with global pioneers; providing information on potential lessons to be learned on a wider scale.

This report concludes by reflecting on the current CCIN membership base and highlighting practices around sustainable food. Our analysis focuses on those with SFP awards, which recognise excellence in pursuing the sustainable food agenda. We highlight how there is a wealth of good practice amongst CCIN members, yet only

5 hold SFP awards. Amongst our recommendations, we call for more engagement with SFP, either as an awardee or member, as recognition could lead to more funding and enhance existing practices.

Our overarching recommendations also focus on the need for more tools to support cooperative approaches to sustainable food; we particularly emphasise the need for charters, as research shows that these are powerful enablers which can bring together stakeholders in an equitable manner. Alongside the careful replication of case studies, we call for more engagement with the international scene, particularly in North America which features an array of novel models around the subject, such as in Portland (Oregon, USA), Toronto (Canada) and other areas.

Ultimately, the report emphasises the need to embrace the cooperative principles in relation to enabling a sustainable food system and highlights a series of pioneering case studies in the UK.

## 2. Introduction

Sustainable food is a high priority area with Government policy, funding bodies and other actors pushing the concept<sup>4</sup>. Recently, the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated this interest, with consumers demonstrating more interest in locally-sourced produce and pushing for a green recovery within the food system<sup>5</sup>. Sustain argue that there is no legal definition for sustainable food and instead offer a working definition of their own. In this sense, Sustain explain that sustainable food must: i) contribute to thriving local economies and sustainable livelihoods - both in the UK and, in the case of imported products, in producer countries; ii) protect the diversity of both plants and animals and the welfare of farmed and wild species; iii) avoid damaging or wasting natural resources or contributing to climate change and iv) provide social benefits, such as good quality food, safe and healthy products, and educational opportunities.

**‘Climate change is currently the biggest threat to food security: perhaps the most serious the world has ever seen. The problems it creates are likely to be disruptions of supply rather than demand.’**

**(UK National Food Strategy, 2020)**

With climate change affecting conventional production, sustainable food is now important than ever before. This project aimed to explore cooperative approaches to sustainable food across the UK. To date, much of the research base on this subject is mainly based in the Global South, with studies exploring cooperative approaches to food sovereignty in South America<sup>6</sup> to work around agro-food chains in Kazakhstan<sup>7</sup>. One of the few UK-based studies to explore cooperative approaches to sustainable food undertook a systematic review of the existing evidence base; highlighting good practice around local beef groups in Ontario to

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<sup>4</sup> <https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/current-grants--food>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thescottishfarmer.co.uk/news/18659513.covid-19-accelerated-public-interest-sustainable-food-production/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/633164/azu\\_etd\\_17195\\_sip1\\_m.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/633164/azu_etd_17195_sip1_m.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030396084>

cooperative producers in North Carolina<sup>8</sup>. The paper highlights the nascent cooperative movement but concludes by arguing that as ‘innovative models of cooperative and civic food provisioning emerge, replicate, and transform the foodscape, there is a need for a more systematic and cooperative research agenda’. In particular, the paper argues for a need for a more critical lens on models to enable replication.

This study undertook a scoping analysis of good practice around cooperative approaches, using the Sustainable Food Cities principles as a guiding framework. In doing so, we highlight a range of case studies for potential replication, providing detailed information on funding, the project’s journey alongside other vital information. Crucially, we draw on primary data, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and secondary material to critically review practice; enabling CCIN members to understand the impact of the various schemes and obstacles to overcome if they were to be replicated. The following report provides a background on key policies around sustainable food, before exploring our methodological approach and case study analysis.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://curve.coventry.ac.uk/open/file/6a78abe6-2091-4442-8b8e-74d236d38279/1/JAFSCD-Cooperatives-Editorial-June-2014.pdf>



### 3. Methodological Approach

#### Research Approach

The research team undertook an approach which included the collection of primary material and secondary data. Figure 1 provides a meta overview of the wider approach and how this linked together to produce the case studies later in the document. Firstly, SFC's principles were used as a guiding framework to explore good practice around cooperative approaches to sustainable food. The research team's expertise also accelerated this process, with many of the team members having worked with such projects across the UK previously.

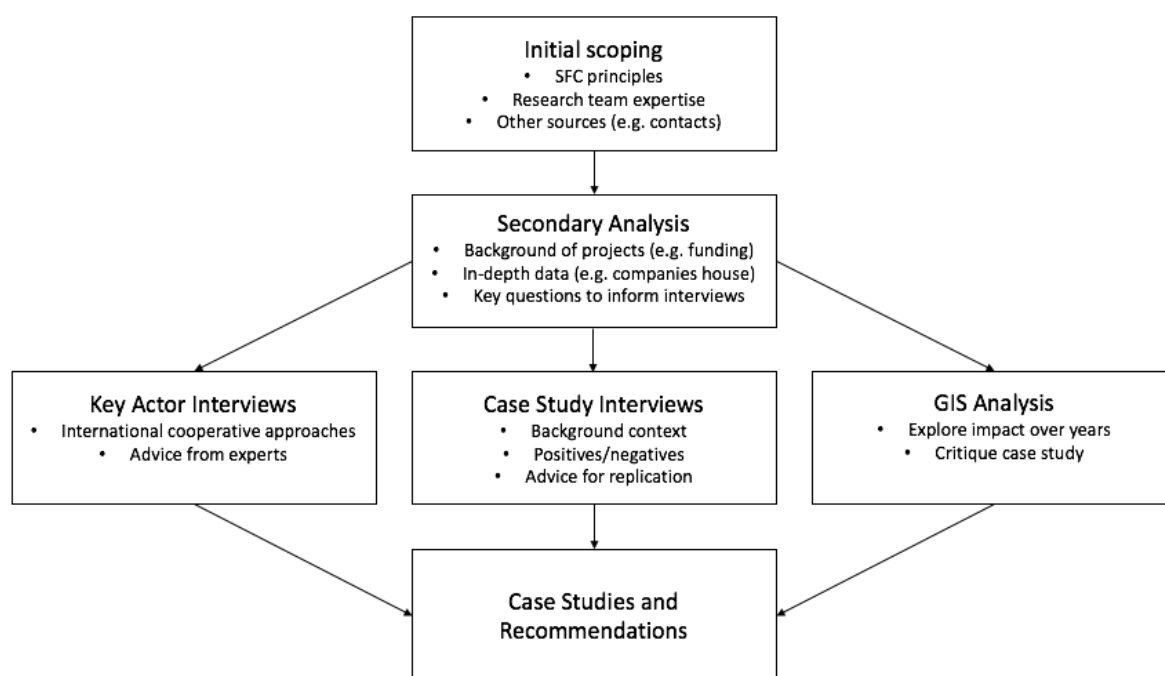


Figure 1: the overarching research approach

As figure 1 shows, the team proceeded to undertake secondary analysis of the selected case studies to ascertain funding, impact, the sustainability of the project and other crucial bits of information; a particular focus was on missing elements, which influenced the interview stage. Following the secondary analysis, semi-structured interviews formed the brunt of the primary data collection. This format allowed for some structure, but also for participants to

expand on the questions posed<sup>9</sup>. GIS analysis added further weight to the case study critique, enabling the team to ascertain the impact. Data was sourced from a variety of areas, including national government, local authority and related sectors; ArcGIS and QGIS were used to generate the mapping datasets. A core focus throughout all of the above was around the cooperative approaches agenda, with the case study results focussing explicitly on this element and demonstrating the potential to the CCIN member base.

An added element of the data collection surrounded key actor interviews, including an international reflection on cooperative approaches around sustainable food. The sustainable food literature base often cites Canada as a global leader in this environment<sup>10</sup>, and thus a conscious effort was taken to include pioneering countries and actors in the data collection. This international element provides an insight into cooperative practices at a wider level and potential for replication within the UK context by CCIN members. The primary data was analysed using thematic coding and NVivo.

Ethical approval for the research was obtained by the University of Salford. COVID-19 impacted on the primary data collection, mainly due to many of the key personnel being based in public health departments or local authorities. The pandemic resulted in a change to the research strategy, with telephone interviews replacing physical visits and focus groups being changed for one-to-one discussions; the international element was brought in to add an extra lens to the data collection.

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<sup>9</sup> Silverman, D (2017) *Doing Qualitative Research*, London: Sage.

<sup>10</sup> Hardman, M. and Larkham, P. (2014) *Informal Urban Agriculture*, London: Springer.

## 4. Case Study Analysis

As per figure 1, the initial scoping analysis relied on previous experience and the SFC principles. The principles provided a framework around the concept of sustainable food and for the team to highlight good practice around cooperative approaches. In August 2020, SFC transitioned to become Sustainable Food Places (SFP) to move away from the urban centric model previously employed; as part of this, the principles were slightly tweaked, although merely in wording with the same meaning still carrying over from their previous format. The principles followed for this research include:

<b>Key Issue 1: Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public</b>
<b>Key Issue 2: Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill health and access to affordable healthy food</b>
<b>Key Issue 3: Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects</b>
<b>Key Issue 4: Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy</b>
<b>Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and food procurement</b>
<b>Key Issue 6: Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system</b>

Table 1: an overview of the principles adopted for the case study analysis

The sample of case studies selected include:

**Key Issue 1** – Real Food Wythenshawe – selected due to its ability to attract significant funding and impact on a deprived area in South Manchester. The cooperative model employed here is also highly novel.

**Key Issue 2** – Greenwich Community Development Agency – selected due to cooperative approach to enabling local food businesses and supporting umbrella groups.

**Key Issue 3** – Brighton & Hove Community Kitchen – selected due to its work around cooperative working with local stakeholders, including chefs, and community kitchens.

**Key Issue 4** – Bristol Pound – selected due to its cooperative model and its impressive work around impacting on the local food economy.

**Key Issue 5** – Growing Middlesbrough – selected due to its cooperative model for food growing and multi benefits (e.g. impact on the food economy).

**Key Issue 6** – Stockport Food and Drink Show – selected due to its cooperative model and embracement of the Stockport food economy; reducing supply chains and waste.

In each case study, we analyse the project's development, its aims, operational activity, funding model and key contacts. We then proceed to analyse impact (online presence, funding obtained etc) and the cooperative models employed in each case. Finally, we reflect on the challenges and barriers, drawing on primary data, before providing concluding thoughts on each. In doing so, we highlight the potential for replication, alongside the obstacles and opportunities for following the model; explicitly highlighting the cooperative models and link to the CCIN's core priorities.

## Key Principle 1: Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public



## Real Food Wythenshawe

### What is Real Food Wythenshawe?

Real Food Wythenshawe's motto is "grow it, cook it, eat it". The project offers food-based activities across Wythenshawe, structured around 3 key themes: growing, cooking, and learning.<sup>11</sup>

In the first phase of Real Food Wythenshawe (2013-2018), there were 5 main projects:<sup>12</sup>

- **The Geodome**

Educational space at Manchester College Wythenshawe Campus launched in 2016.<sup>13</sup> Demonstrating aquaponic and hydroponic methods of sustainable farming, and

encouraging people to grow their own food and eat seasonally.<sup>14</sup>

- **Green Spaces to Growing Spaces**

Encouraging people to grow food in their own gardens. Also identifying unused open/green land that could be used to grow food.<sup>15</sup>

- **Mapping and Harvesting Abundance**

Working with Abundance Manchester to map, harvest, and preserve produce from allotments and orchards. Aim is to make the best use of surplus food from these growing projects.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup>

[https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/1/PQyN7?\\_s=cLApcS%2F8LB2L11FWJpDMqTIEH1o%3D](https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/1/PQyN7?_s=cLApcS%2F8LB2L11FWJpDMqTIEH1o%3D)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Geodome-Flyer.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/geodome/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/green-spaces-growing-spaces/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/mapping-harvesting-abundance/>



- **Wythenshawe Park Walled Garden and Farm**  
Provide a hub for community growing and training. Produce grown is sold in the Farm shop.<sup>17</sup>
- **Cooking and Eating Sustainably**  
Cooking demonstrations at a pop-up cooking shop in Wythenshawe Market.<sup>18</sup>

The RFW project is currently in its second phase (2018-21). There are currently 3 key projects:<sup>19</sup>

- **The Green Doctor**  
Gardening as social prescribing.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/wythenshawe-park-walled-garden-farm/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/cooking-eating-sustainably/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/real-food-wythenshawe-our-group-reconnects-people-their-food>

- **Cooking with Confidence**  
Twice a week at Wythenshawe Indoor Market Food Hall, giving out free food samples and recipe cards. Once a week running cookery classes.<sup>21</sup>
- **Real Food on Tour**  
Promoting the work of RFW in the community by delivering practical food activities to voluntary and community organisations.<sup>22</sup>

### **What does Real Food Wythenshawe aim to achieve?**

Real Food Wythenshawe aims to change people's behaviour, so that they live healthier and more sustainable lives. Through Real Food Wythenshawe, people can learn how to grow and cook their own food.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/cooking-with-confidence/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.realliveswythenshawe.com/real-food>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

As well as developing people's skills, the project improves wellbeing through "nature based activities".<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the project aims to help people save money, and to learn and share their food skills.<sup>25</sup>

Through their work, Real Food Wythenshawe has identified a need to address food poverty. Although this didn't form part of the original project scope, Real Food Wythenshawe have actively sought to weave in ways of addressing this need through their work.<sup>26</sup>

### How does it work?

All of Real Food Wythenshawe's projects are free to access, and, despite claiming to "particularly support young people, social housing tenants, hospital patients and unemployed people", seem to

be open to all.<sup>27</sup> Details of most projects are on their website, along with the contact details of the Co-ordinator responsible for that activity. It seems that individuals would pro-actively contact the right person in order to get more details of the activity they're interested in, rather than being referred to a project by, for example, their GP. There is no application process or other selection tool in place.

Specific details for each project are outlined below.

### ***The Geodome***

Volunteers meet every Monday afternoon to help maintain the plants and fish.<sup>28</sup> Community groups, schools, and other groups can arrange to visit the site to learn more about aquaponics, hydroponics, and closed-loop growing systems.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/about/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/DNA-Real-foods.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Page 16, [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

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<sup>27</sup>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/grants/0030112680>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/projects/geodome/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/realfoods-events/volunteer-at-geodome/>



Green waste from Manchester College is used in the Geodome's compost, and food grown in the Geodome is used by the Manchester College Wythenshawe Campus catering students, and also by RFW in their cooking demonstrations.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Green Spaces to Growing Spaces***

Initially, RFW identified 70 potential growing sites – all on land owned by WHCG. This was then whittled down to 20, and RFW worked to match interested community groups with appropriate plots.<sup>31</sup> The RFW 2017 impact report claims to support 72 growing groups.<sup>32</sup> However, the Real Food Wythenshawe website lists 8

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<sup>30</sup> [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Page 9, [https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/er\\_eval\\_communities\\_living\\_sustainably\\_learning\\_report\\_growing\\_green\\_space.pdf?mtime=20190906160359](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/er_eval_communities_living_sustainably_learning_report_growing_green_space.pdf?mtime=20190906160359)

<sup>32</sup> Page 36, [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

growing projects that it currently supports.<sup>33</sup> Support provided by RFW includes fact sheets and starter packs, funding advice, training, and seed swaps.<sup>34</sup>

The website calls for “community groups, with or without land, who are interested in becoming part of Real Food’s Green Spaces to Growing Spaces project” to email the Growing Co-ordinator in order to find out more and get involved.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Mapping and Harvesting Abundance***

This project was delivered in collaboration with Abundance Manchester, which is no longer operational.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the Abundance Manchester website makes no mention of Wythenshawe, and says that it operates “in the South Manchester area,

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/services/growing-projects/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/services/support-grow/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/services/growing-projects/>

<sup>36</sup>

<https://abundancemanchester.wordpress.com/2019/09/03/abundance-manchester-is-not-currently-operational-2019-onwards/>

encompassing Hulme, Moss side, Fallowfield, Ladybarn, Withington, Whalley Range, and Didsbury”.<sup>37</sup> It’s therefore unclear how this partnership worked, and there is very little information about the activities or impact of this project as far as Real Food Wythenshawe is concerned.

Interestingly, the RFW website claims that this project intercepts surplus food from the Wythenshawe Community Farm and Walled Garden, among other places.<sup>38</sup> However, both of these growing locations are also RFW projects. Ideally, one would hope, RFW would find uses for the food it grows rather than designating it as surplus.

### ***Wythenshawe Park Walled Garden and Farm***

Wythenshawe Community Farm was established in 1984, and is open to the public 7 days a week; opening times change seasonally.

There is a small shop selling meat, eggs from the farm hens, and seasonal vegetables.<sup>39</sup>

Wythenshawe Community Farm is an independent charity, and has a team of volunteers who help with the day-to-day running of the farm.<sup>40</sup> Real Food Wythenshawe have been involved in stocking and running the shop, with a part-time shop worker being recruited by WHCG.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Cooking and Eating Sustainably***

This activity mainly focused on cooking demonstrations at the local market, and 6-week cooking courses. RFW’s 2017 impact report states that its cooking courses ran for 6 weeks each, and each class

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<sup>39</sup>

[https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200073/parks\\_playgrounds\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/2242/wythenshawe\\_park/8](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200073/parks_playgrounds_and_open_spaces/2242/wythenshawe_park/8)

<sup>40</sup> <https://forevermanchester.com/wythenshawe-community-farm/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.wchg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Community-Farm-Shop-Support-PS-February-2015.pdf>

was 2 hours long.<sup>42</sup> This activity seems to have merged into “Cooking with confidence”, although both projects are still listed on the RFW website.

### ***The Green Doctor***

This group meets every Thursday afternoon at Wythenshawe Horticultural Centre to look after the plants and learn to grow their own food. Rather than being predominantly agricultural, the project is delivered with an emphasis on the social and health benefits of being in nature, being part of a group, and of sharing experiences with other people.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Cooking with confidence***

Every Tuesday and Thursday lunchtime, the Cooking with Confidence project delivers cooking demonstrations and hands out recipe cards at Wythenshawe Indoor Market Food Hall. Every

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<sup>42</sup> [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/real-food-wythenshawe-our-group-reconnects-people-their-food>

Friday afternoon the project runs a cooking class at Wythenshawe Civic Centre, teaching knife skills and food preparation skills.<sup>44</sup>

### **How is Real Food Wythenshawe set up?**

The initial bid for funding was led by Manchester International Festival, who had done some work with Wythenshawe residents and had noted an appetite for food-growing projects in the area.<sup>45</sup> For example, Manchester City Council’s “Growing Manchester” programme included a growing box in Baguely, where gardening sessions were well attended.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/cooking-with-confidence/>

<sup>45</sup> [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Page 51, [https://orca.cf.ac.uk/64901/1/UoM-FoodFutures-GrowManc\\_FINAL.pdf](https://orca.cf.ac.uk/64901/1/UoM-FoodFutures-GrowManc_FINAL.pdf)

This project was originally a partnership between eight organisations.<sup>47</sup> However, some partnership members have ceased their involvement. The current partnership consists of:

- Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG)
- LTE Group T/A The Manchester College
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (Wythenshawe Hospital)
- Wythenshawe Forum Trust
- Manchester City Council

WHCG are the overall project lead, and are responsible for the financial and reporting elements of the programme. The Real Food Wythenshawe staff are based at WHCG and oversee the day-to-day management of the project.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/DNA-Real-foods.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/network/>

Full-time staff consists of one Project Manager, and three Co-ordinators – one each for growing, cooking, and learning. There is also an administrator, and temporary seasonal staff are recruited as and when needed.<sup>49</sup>

Real Food Wythenshawe was originally planned as a 5-year project. However, in 2018 the project received additional funding and extended to run until 2021.

### ***Key contacts***

- General phone number 0161 946 9500
- **Jacqueline Naraynsingh**, Real Food Wythenshawe Programme Manager:  
Jacqueline.Naraynsingh@wchg.org.uk, 0161 946 7554
- **Kay Bamford**, Growing Co-Ordinator:  
Kay.bamford@wchg.org.uk, 0161 946 9116

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<sup>49</sup>

<https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/civicrm/ mailing/view?reset=1&id=2476>

- **Pam Moran**, Cooking and Behaviour Change Co-Ordinator:  
pamela.moran@wchg.org.uk, 0161 946 9167
- **Sarah Harrison**, Education and Sustainability Coordinator:  
sarah.harrison@wchg.org.uk, 0161 946 7553
- **Susan Law**, Administration Officer: susan.law@wchg.org.uk,  
0161 946 9115

## How is Real Food Wythenshawe funded?

Real Food Wythenshawe is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. A grant of £1m was awarded to Willow Park Housing Trust, a subsidiary of WCHG, in 2012, in order to run the project for 5 years.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, Real Food Wythenshawe received £337,125 from an undisclosed source.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/grants/0030112680>

<sup>51</sup> [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

In 2018, WCHG was awarded another £459,304 by the Lottery Community Fund to continue running Real Food Wythenshawe until 2021.<sup>52</sup>

Specific projects run by RFW have also received funding. The Pineapple Cooperative growing group received £4,000 from the Tesco Bags of Help fund in 2017.<sup>53</sup>

## Impact

### *Public outreach*

Since it opened, the Geodome has seen the following activity:

- 555 local children and young people have been involved with education sessions
- 470 adults have visited and learnt about innovative growing techniques

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<sup>52</sup>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/grants/0031058761>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.wchg.org.uk/real-food-bags-4000-from-carrier-bag-charge-fund/>

- 8 people highly trained in aquaponics<sup>54</sup>

At the 2018 Wythenshawe Games:

- 2603 people visited the Real Food Wythenshawe tent (3.42% of all the people at the event)
- 1332 healthy food samples tasted
- 604 healthy recipes taken away
- 5 volunteers gave a total of 66 hours<sup>55</sup>

In the first phase (2013-2018) of the project:

- over 17,000 people engaged through community events
- 838 community ambassadors trained
- over 16,000 households reached through guides and cookbook initiatives<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/the-green-doctor/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://prezi.com/p/rzvnmakfwrzb/rfw-evaluation/>

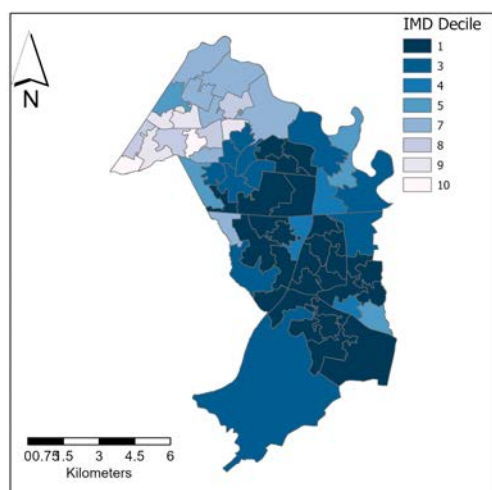
In 2019 RFW's "Cooking with Confidence" cooking courses were attended by over 100 people.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Spatial Impact***

An analysis of the spatial change in Wythenshawe, since RFW's operation, shows an improvement in terms of the environmental quality of the area. Although this cannot be solely attributed to RFW, their efforts in starting new community sites, green spaces, allotments and urban farms has certainly impacted on this metric. Plate 1 shows a cumulative Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) analysis, which features improvements in the health, environment and other deciles. Part of this could also be due to the Metrolink being built in the area; enabling people to travel to Wythenshawe easier than ever before.

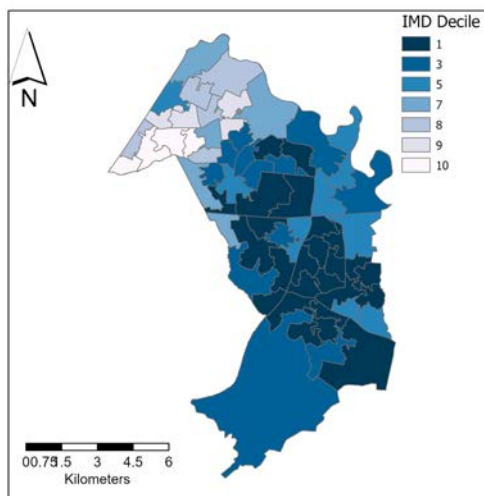
<sup>56</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/real-food-announce-3-year-lottery-funding/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/cooking-with-confidence-course/>



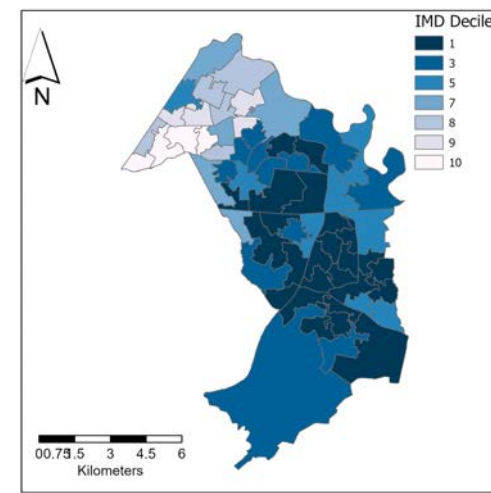
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015. Deprivations is mapped as deciles, with the lowest number showing the most deprived and the highest number the least deprived. Note there are no areas in the 2nd, 4th or 6th deciles in Wythenshawe.

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Health Deprivation derived from the 2015 IMD. Deprivations is mapped as deciles, with the lowest number showing the most deprived and the highest number the least deprived. Note there are no areas in the 3rd or 5th deciles in Wythenshawe.

(Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v2.0)



Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015. Deprivations is mapped as deciles, with the lowest number showing the most deprived and the highest number the least deprived. Note there are no areas in the 2nd, 4th or 6th deciles in Wythenshawe.

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Plate 1 – an analysis of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation from 2010 - 2019



### **Publicity**

The Real Food Wythenshawe project has been featured at several regional flower shows, in countrywide publications, and on national TV. This includes:

- Tatton Flower Show
- Gardeners' Question Time<sup>58</sup>
- Dig the City
- Wythenshawe Games
- Manchester Flower Show<sup>59</sup>
- Manchester Science Festival<sup>60</sup>
- CBeebies podcast<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> <https://www.wchg.org.uk/real-food-featured-bbc-radio-4s/>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/real-food-the-manchester-flower-show-2019/>

<sup>60</sup> ibid

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wchgs-real-food-team-meets-cbeebies-mr-bloom/>

This focus on media publicity was a deliberate move by the team, as part of an effort to change the perception of Wythenshawe and to create a more positive reputation for the area.

However, attendance at these events and doing these more promotional activities took staff resource and time away from delivering the project at a grassroots level.<sup>62</sup>

### **Awards**

- Finalist National Lottery Award 2015
- Excellence in Housing finalist 2015
- 4 Team WOW awards 2015
- GLT Award for Kay Bamford, Growing Coordinator 2015

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<sup>62</sup> Page 68, Investigating the Impact and Potential of Urban Agriculture in the UK:

Observations from an Institution-led Initiative in Wythenshawe, South Manchester, Rebecca St. Clair – available via <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>



- Gold Medal at Dig the City for ‘Fifty Shades of Green’ show garden 2015<sup>63</sup>
- PACE Award for Environmental Sustainability 2016<sup>64</sup>

### **Real Food Wythenshawe and co-operative working (operational)**

Real Food Wythenshawe worked with Macmillan Cancer Support to create the Macmillan community garden. This partnership was successful in that the garden ran well, but communication between RFW and Macmillan was not always effective. For example, Rebecca St Clair’s 2015 evaluation found that volunteers on the Macmillan community garden were largely unaware of RFW’s involvement, and had little knowledge of RFW’s wide goals.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Real Foods Wythenshawe presentation, available to download via <http://ontheplatform.org.uk/content/tell-us-green-spaces-and-health-event-july-2016-real-food-wythenshawe>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/real-food-geodome-wins-sustainability-award/>

<sup>65</sup> Page 85, <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20->

Real Food Wythenshawe’s “Poetry in Motion” campaign aimed to increase the amount of fibre in people’s diets, and was delivered in partnership with the local Aldi. RFW ran a staff training and cookery session, so that the shop staff would be able to actively advise customers on what to buy and cook to improve their levels of fibre.<sup>66</sup>

Additionally, RFW work with Wythenshawe Community Farm to run the Farm Shop, and with Manchester College to run the Geodome.

### **Real Food Wythenshawe and co-operative working (strategic)**

Real Food Wythenshawe is featured in Manchester’s Climate Change Strategy’s 2018 Annual Review, as an example of a successful “healthy communities” project. The RFW project is also

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[%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf](#)

<sup>66</sup> ibid

listed as a delivery example under the “food” theme.<sup>67</sup> The Real Food Wythenshawe project is also featured in The Manchester City Council Tree Action Plan,<sup>68</sup> and the Manchester City Council Draft Healthy Weight Strategy.<sup>69</sup>

RFW is part of the Manchester Green Health Alliance, alongside four other community growing organisations.<sup>70</sup> The Green Health Alliance is acting as horticultural advisors for the Mayfield

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<sup>67</sup>

[http://www.manchesterclimate.com/sites/default/files/MCCA\\_Annual%20Report%202018.pdf](http://www.manchesterclimate.com/sites/default/files/MCCA_Annual%20Report%202018.pdf)

<sup>68</sup>

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&ved=2ahUKEwjRjMnPuJrpAhXQYMAKHTVrBeMQFjAFegQICRAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.manchester.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F25574%2Fmanchester\\_tree\\_action\\_plan.pdf&u sg=AOvVaw2hWsOh44Ng\\_KupRRSTkVp4](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&ved=2ahUKEwjRjMnPuJrpAhXQYMAKHTVrBeMQFjAFegQICRAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.manchester.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F25574%2Fmanchester_tree_action_plan.pdf&u sg=AOvVaw2hWsOh44Ng_KupRRSTkVp4)

<sup>69</sup>

<https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s14369/Appendix%20Draft%20Healthy%20Weight%20Strategy.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.wchg.org.uk/real-food-involved-in-the-mayfield-project/>

Manchester development project in the city centre.<sup>71</sup> This major development will see Mayfield become an “iconic, £1b mixed-use community space... including a 6.5-acre public park, outstanding office space, and unique shopping and leisure experiences”.<sup>72</sup>

## **Real Food Wythenshawe and the SFC (Sustainable Food Cities)**

The Real Food Wythenshawe project is featured several times in Manchester’s 2017 Bronze SFC application. Their cooking demonstrations and recipe cards at Wythenshawe Market are included as an example of fulfilling SFC’s key issue one, “Promoting Healthy And Sustainable Food To The Public”.

Under SFC’s key issue two, “Tackling Food Poverty, Diet-Related Ill Health And Access To Affordable Healthy Food”, we are told

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.manchesterclimate.com/news/2018/01/pigeon-island-green-haven>

<sup>72</sup> <https://mayfieldmanchester.co.uk/mayfield-partnership/>

that RFW have run sugar campaigns and workshops in schools.<sup>73</sup> However, there is no mention of this campaign on the Real Food Wythenshawe website or in the 2017 Evaluation Report.

Real Food Wythenshawe is included again under SFC key issue six, “Reducing Waste And The Ecological Footprint Of The Food System”. The Geodome is highlighted as a case study at the end of the application.<sup>74</sup>

## **Challenges and limitations**

### **Staff recruitment**

The RFW Project Manager and Co-ordinators were recruited after the Lottery funding had been secured. The staff working on the

project were therefore not involved in developing the project’s plan or the bid for funding.<sup>75</sup>

Researcher Rebecca St Clair, who conducted an evaluation of RFW as part of her PhD, noted this, and concluded that this was a barrier to the project functioning as it was intended. For example,

*“a consultation exercise was carried out in the early stages of the bid process, [but there is] no indication that the [Real Food Wythenshawe] coordinators were aware of the feedback received during the exercise.”<sup>76</sup>*

### **Audience engagement**

The Real Food Wythenshawe project was designed to target the local population of Wythenshawe and encourage them to actively

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<sup>73</sup> Page 19,  
[https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/SFC\\_Manchester\\_Application\\_FINAL\\_PDF.pdf](https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/SFC_Manchester_Application_FINAL_PDF.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> ibid

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<sup>75</sup> Page 52,  
<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%2C%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Page 136, ibid

pursue healthier, environmentally sustainable life choices. Wythenshawe is one of the most deprived areas of the country, and has low levels of educational attainment and high levels of unemployment.

Crafting their message in a way that engaged this audience has been a struggle for RFW. For example, the RFW's team decided not to pursue the project's original goal of promoting organic food growing, partly for fear that it would put people off the project.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the team chose to prioritise messaging that focused on saving people money and time, rather than focusing on things that are primarily environmentally friendly.<sup>78</sup>

Even so, some of RFW's activities could be seen as quite middle-class, and therefore somewhat alienating. For example, at the Garden City Festival 2015 the RFW team served up green juice

smoothies made using a Nutri Bullet, which could be seen as a barrier for the audience.<sup>79</sup>

On a strategic level, none of RFW's activities seem particularly targeted to a specific audience. Most of their work is public facing, and the cooking courses and volunteering opportunities are open to anyone. The RFW 2017 Impact Report makes no attempts to clarify who exactly comprises their target audience; on page 48 we learn that "the target audience is well known."<sup>80</sup>

### ***Staff interpretations***

As part of her PhD, researcher Rebecca St Clair interviewed members of the RFW team. Her write-up highlighted that each staff member interpreted the meaning of "sustainable" differently.

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<sup>79</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1011927162190971&id=574853162565042&\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=-R](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1011927162190971&id=574853162565042&__tn__=-R)

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

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<sup>77</sup> Page 76, *ibid*

<sup>78</sup> Page 74, *ibid*

Similarly, staff disagreed on whether the project should work with supermarkets.<sup>81</sup>

Elsewhere, Jacqueline Naraynsingh, the RFW Programme Manager, explains that:

*“Limited access to electricity and gas leaves people reluctant to use their cookers, often relying on more predictable ready meals and takeaways. The resultant loss of cooking skills is compounded by the lack of affordable fresh food outlets, physical isolation and a lack of educational and employment opportunities.”<sup>82</sup>*

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<sup>81</sup> Page 80,  
<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%2C%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> <http://ontheplatform.org.uk/article/update-sustainable-consumption-and-production-under-mac>

However, Real Food Wythenshawe’s aims and goals do not address fuel poverty, spatial planning in terms of takeaway locations, business support for local fresh food businesses, educational training, or creation of employment opportunities. There is no recognition on the RFW website or reporting of these wider challenges facing the local community; the awareness seem to begin and end with the comment above.

Within the team and among the staff, there therefore seems to be some confusion over RFW’s precise aims and values.

### ***Implementing vs enabling***

The original vision for the RFW project was that the Manager would act as an organisational/strategic lead, and that the Co-ordinators would support grassroots organisations to run and expand their activities but would not be directly involved in leading them. However, the reality on the ground is that the Manager has taken on

a more operational role, and the project Co-ordinators lead on many of the RFW activities.<sup>83</sup>

As a result, the Co-ordinators do not have enough time to deliver on all the activities set out in the original funding bid. In turn, projects led by RFW were not given the chance to expand or develop to their full potential, leaving some volunteers feeling disheartened with their involvement.<sup>84</sup>

It would be interesting to note whether this was a result of their not being enough grassroots activity to support and so Co-ordinators had to step in and create that capacity, or whether this was due to a misalignment of staff perceptions and the project's strategic plan.

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<sup>83</sup> Page 133,  
<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%2C%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>

<sup>84</sup> *ibid*

### ***Temporary land agreements***

All of the growing projects founded by Real Food Wythenshawe used land belonging to the WCHG.<sup>85</sup> As a result, RFW did not have secure, long-term access to the land. For example, the Macmillan community garden ceased operating when WCHG notified them of their intention to reclaim the land for housing.<sup>86</sup>

The development of community growing projects is therefore dependent on having secure land that can be used, ideally indefinitely, to grow food on. Alternatively, if the land use will be temporary, it is important to set limited expectations and clear instructions to those managing the growing project; for example,

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<sup>85</sup>

[https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/er\\_eval\\_communities\\_living\\_sustainably\\_learning\\_report\\_growing\\_green\\_space.pdf?mtime=20190906160359](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/er_eval_communities_living_sustainably_learning_report_growing_green_space.pdf?mtime=20190906160359)

<sup>86</sup> Page 97,

<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%2C%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>

encouraging the use of raised beds and other alternative growing containers, rather than planting into the ground. This would allow a growing project to more easily re-locate, should this need arise.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Use of volunteers***

In some places, volunteers are framed as being part of the RFW's delivery. They are responsible for helping to run activities and sessions, and receive training to help develop their skills.<sup>88</sup>

In other places, volunteers seem to be the target audience.<sup>89</sup> For example, the RFW 2017 Report highlights its volunteer team as an example of its community engagement impact.<sup>90</sup>

Depending on the project, a “volunteer” could therefore mean someone delivering and leading on an activity, or someone taking

part in a growing project. This makes it difficult to gauge the true impact of RFW's outreach.

### ***Funding***

Real Food Wythenshawe is grant-funded, and there does not seem to be any ambition to make it self-sustainable. Most activities are offered for free, and where there are opportunities to generate revenue – for example, the sale of vegetables at Wythenshawe Park Farm – it's not clear whether this money comes back to RFW.<sup>91</sup>

Efforts by RFW to increase revenue from the Wythenshawe Farm Shop have been hampered by a lack of co-operation from farm staff. In turn, the staff who work at the Farm Shop are keen to prioritise

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> <https://financialhealthexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Real-Food-Whythenshawe.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/real-food-volunteers/>

<sup>90</sup> Page 48, [https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report\\_The-Story-so-far\\_Appendix-B.pdf](https://www.realfoodwythenshawe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Evaluation-Report_The-Story-so-far_Appendix-B.pdf)

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<sup>91</sup> Page 113, <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%2C%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>



the provision of low-cost, fresh food to local residents over turning a high profit.<sup>92</sup>

The fact that the project is Lottery funded was felt by some community growing volunteers to be a disincentive when it came to other local growing projects collaborating with RFW. Instead, there was a sense that other growing projects viewed RFW as competition, and relations between RFW and other growing projects in Wythenshawe Park were not positive.<sup>93</sup> The need for smaller gardening groups to bid against each other for funding and to demonstrate their impact is no doubt a driving factor in their lack of collaboration with RFW, which is a large fixed-term project with a secure funding stream.

### ***Partnership working***

Originally, 8 organisations were involved in the RFW partnership.<sup>94</sup>

However, several organisations left the partnership early in the

project. The remaining partners sometimes struggled to agree on a shared understanding of their goals and desired outcomes. With concerns over budget allocations, a lack of strategic vision, and a shortage of staff knowledge and time, partners gradually began to take a less proactive role to contributing to the project.<sup>95</sup>

This is tied to the fact that, in a departure from the original funding bid, WCHG decided to maintain overall budget control rather than divert resources to partners, who would then deliver aspects of the RFW project. This decision diminished the amount of time and resource staff at partner organisations could offer the project; instead they took on more of an advisory role.<sup>96</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Real Food Wythenshawe is a Lottery-funded project delivering cooking and growing activities in the Wythenshawe area. All of its

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<sup>92</sup> Page 140, *ibid*

<sup>93</sup> Pages 115 and 145, *ibid*

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/DNA-Real-foods.pdf>

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<sup>95</sup> Page 130,  
<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/44866/1/Rebecca%20St.%20Clair%2C%20Final%20PhD%20Thesis%20-%20Investigating%20the%20Impact%20of%20UA%20in%20the%20UK.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> Page 131, *ibid*



activities are free and available for anyone interested in taking part. It generates very little revenue, and self-sufficiency does not seem to be an aim for the project. As a result, it relies on grant funding; current funding will come to an end next year.

However, where there is potential to generate revenue – in the Wythenshawe Farm Shop – RFW have been very keen to maximise their opportunity. In turn, the charity who run Wythenshawe Community Farm have resisted pressure to ‘gentrify’ the farm shop, and instead feel that their ability to provide the local community with affordable fresh food should not be compromised. Real Food Wythenshawe’s particular interest in the Community Farm is out of step with the rest of the project, which is delivered for free and does not aim to cover its own costs.

RFW have received several awards for their work, and have featured in a number of well-known magazines, radio stations, and TV shows. They frequently attend large-scale public shows to promote their work, and are explicit in prioritising this media activity. It all

looks very impressive on the surface, but things on the ground are a little less seamless.

For example, there seems to be a discrepancy between the project as it was envisioned by the original bid writers and as it was outlined in the original funding bid, and how the project staff have interpreted their work. Without seeing the funding bids it’s impossible to confirm this, but it does seem that some of the staff are unclear on exactly how the project should be delivered and what the project’s primary focus is.

An alternative possibility is that the initial project bid overestimated the grassroots capacity that existed in Wythenshawe for a project of this scale. Perhaps the Co-ordinators had to take a more hands-on role because there was no clear leadership from a community level.

Related to this is the fact that the project’s Manager has taken on an operational role. Many of RFW’s photographs, for example, show the Manager ladling out stews at the market or digging up plants in a garden. As a trickle-down effect the Co-ordinators have also taken a

very hands-on approach to their work and are often the people delivering the RFW activities, rather than co-ordinating them and then allowing them to run autonomously. As a result, the staff are unable to fulfil the project's brief as outlined in the funding bid, and rely on volunteers to help 'plug the gaps' in their delivery.

This is only partly down to the project staff. They were recruited after the project's funding had been secured, and were not part of the conversations that scoped and designed the project. It's fair to say that growing the project from the ground up in a more grassroots fashion, rather than recruiting a brand new team to establish something new in the area, could have mitigated a lot of the problems encountered by RFW.

In terms of impact, RFW's numbers look very impressive. In particular, the number of people they've engaged with at their weekly Wythenshawe Market stall and at other public-facing events suggests that the public is interested in their work, and happy to hear what they have to say. It would be interesting to know how they gather these numbers; does someone keep track on the day, or are

they judging by how many leaflets they hand out? Or another metric?

However, there is less information available about the impact of RFW's more long-term engagements with the public. For example, do their cookery courses address and help resolve some of the challenges facing participants in cooking their own food? How many participants go on to cook healthier and cheaper meals at home? Likewise, what are the health impacts of RFW's Green Doctor sessions?

There was very little information about RFW's strategic aims, intended outcomes, and methods of evaluation. It would be useful and interesting to know how RFW keeps track of its activity, which outcomes it captures, and how it measures these. This work was presumably carried out at the end of RFW's first funding stream, and their impact must have been sufficiently good for it to be awarded additional funding.

## Further questions and research

- Are the 2012 or 2018 Lottery bids available? It would be interesting/useful to compare project outputs with the original plan
- Is there an action plan/strategic plan/business plan, and how does this relate to the Lottery bid?
- How do RFW capture their impact, and how do they evaluate their activities? Have they changed their delivery model or activities based on their own evaluations?
- Did RFW change their angle/focus in order to secure their second bid for funding? How much of RFW's strategic aims have been shaped by their need to bid for funding?
- Funding – RFW was awarded £337,125 in 2012; where did it come from? Have any other projects received additional funding for particular activities?
- Are RFW staff hands-on because there isn't enough grassroots activity? Or do they feel that their role is inherently hands-on, despite what the funding bid envisioned?
- Do RFW staff feel hampered in their efforts to deliver the project? Is there anything in particular they feel would improve the project's running?

## Key principle 2: Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill health and access to affordable healthy food



## Greenwich Community Development Agency (GCDA)

### What is the GCDA?

The Greenwich Community Development Agency (GCDA) is a charitable co-operative, originally established as an enterprise agency in 1982. The GCDA has since moved into delivering projects relating to food and poverty.<sup>97</sup> With the aim of “supporting communities to be healthy and sustainable”, the GCDA focuses on areas relating to food, health, and enterprise.<sup>98</sup>

In 2007, GCDA became an accredited OCN training provider, delivering training on sustainable food to participants across London. Between 2007-2009, the GCDA provided this training to over 5,000 people. GCDA also runs cafes and community hubs on a contractual/subsidised basis and provides specialist catering and food business support across England.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> [https://www.sustainweb.org/foodlegacy/greenwich\\_kitchen](https://www.sustainweb.org/foodlegacy/greenwich_kitchen)

<sup>98</sup> <https://gcda.coop/about-the-gcda/>

<sup>99</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2019/01/09/innovative-agency-opens-two-new-kitchens%E2%82%AC%81>

Current projects include:

- Good Food in Greenwich - a network of local stakeholders interested in creating sustainable and healthy food systems, responsible for leading Greenwich’s 2016 SFC application
- Made in Greenwich – shop stocking locally made and exclusive goods
- Adult education courses –includes culinary skills, and business start-up courses
- A Taste of Health – free cookery courses
- Weekly fruit and veg stalls at Children’s Centres and the community centre

GCDA CEO Claire Pritchard believes that this diverse portfolio is a contributing factor to GCDA’s longevity and stability. She also highlighted GCDA’s history of tapping into the passions and skills of its staff members, thereby shaping the GCDA around the interests of its team. It’s been a successful approach; “No one has left the office in 5 years!” Having a stable team and

a diverse array of projects has helped GCDA adapt to the changing landscapes and remain viable.

### What does the GCDA aim to achieve?

In order to achieve its aim of creating and supporting sustainable communities, GCDA has the following objectives:

1. To encourage local communities to develop enterprises
2. To provide training programmes (courses), especially relating to enterprise, health and the environment
3. To create community hubs that represent community-based and co-operative responses to community needs
4. To promote healthy lifestyles to the whole population, particularly those experiencing health inequalities<sup>100</sup>

### How does it work?

GCDA delivers a range of projects across Greenwich and the wider area, including Woolwich and Lewisham. Each project has its own

objectives, and many are commissioned by local authorities or other charitable trusts (see Funding section for more details).

On the GCDA website, projects are grouped into three categories: ‘Enterprise’, ‘Training’, and ‘Health’. Additionally, there is a list of ‘Venues’. There is some overlap. For example, Greenwich Kitchen is both an Enterprise project and a Venue; the GCDA use the Kitchen to run training courses, and also rent the space out to food enterprises.

The most strategically important project from a food systems point of view is Good Food in Greenwich; this is also, helpfully, the best-documented project.

Good Food in Greenwich is a network that “supports the development of a local healthy and sustainable food environment”<sup>101</sup>. It originally had a structure based on several sub-groups, each of which had their own action plan. However, as of

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<sup>100</sup> <https://gcda.coop/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GCDA-Business-Plan-2014-2016.docx>

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<sup>101</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2017/10/19/good-food-for-london/>



2017 the sub-group structure was considered unnecessary and only one sub-group, focusing on poverty, now operates.<sup>102</sup>

For more information about Good Food in Greenwich, see the “GCDA and Sustainable Food Cities” section below.

## How is it set up?

GCDA is a not for profit company, run as a co-operative and governed by its members. Members pay an annual fee to join. They are responsible for governance of the GCDA, participate in the AGMs, and voting on the rules of the organisation. Members get discounts on GCDA training, volunteering opportunities, and access to a members-only area of the website.<sup>103</sup> As of 2019, GCDA has 114 members, up from 101 in 2018.<sup>104</sup>

The GCDA CEO is Claire Pritchard, who is also Chair of London Food Board and leads the Good Food in Greenwich steering group.<sup>105</sup> The GCDA has 5 Directors.<sup>106</sup>

The GCDA employs 38 staff, most of whom are based at the two main business/community hubs in Greenwich and Woolwich.<sup>107</sup>

On the Companies House database, Claire Pritchard is listed as a Director of an organisation called “Greenwich Community Food Co-Op Ltd”, which was incorporated in 2002 and dissolved in 2017.<sup>108</sup> There are two further companies listed on Companies House: Greenwich Co-Operative Development Agency Limited (no further information given); and Greenwich Co-Operative Development

<sup>102</sup> Page 14, <https://www.foodmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Governance-and-Structures-Guide-Final.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> <https://gcda.coop/674-2/>

<sup>104</sup> Page 3, GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2019 and page 10 GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2019, both accessible via <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>

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[https://www.sustainweb.org/news/apr18\\_mayor\\_appoints\\_new\\_food\\_board\\_chair](https://www.sustainweb.org/news/apr18_mayor_appoints_new_food_board_chair)

<sup>106</sup> Page 2, GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2019, accessible via <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>

<sup>107</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2019/01/09/innovative-agency-opens-two-new-kitchens%E2%82%AC%80>

<sup>108</sup> <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/04515815>

Agency Ltd (incorporated 1982, dissolved 2014). Neither of these are linked to Claire Pritchard.

There is also no record of individual projects such as Greenwich Kitchen or Made in Greenwich being listed independently on Companies House.

However, the Financial Conduct Authority does have current details about GCDA.<sup>109</sup> Documents available via the Financial Conduct Authority include annual return and account records, although no details about staff or governance are listed.

### How is the GCDA funded?

Since 2010, the GCDA has made a conscious effort to move away from grant funding. In an interview, CEO Claire Pritchard explained:

“We raise funds through our business; 49 percent is running our own restaurants and consultancy. We’ve won private

<sup>109</sup> <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>

contracts with the council, two to public health, two under economic training. It’s a very competitive process.”<sup>110</sup>

For instance:

- the holiday meal for children service is delivered by GCDA and funded by RBG<sup>111</sup>
- GCDA’s food business training courses have been funded by Croydon Council<sup>112</sup>, RBG<sup>113</sup>, and BowArts.<sup>114</sup>
- Greenwich Cookery Clubs have been funded by RBG<sup>115</sup>
- The Learning to Nordic Walk for Health 4-week course was funded by Lewisham Council<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.weekender.co.uk/articles/spotlight/need-change-face-food-greenwich-food-agency-boss-focuses-making-borough-healthier>

<sup>111</sup>

[https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200234/children\\_young\\_people\\_and\\_families/2108/holiday\\_meals\\_for\\_kids](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200234/children_young_people_and_families/2108/holiday_meals_for_kids)

<sup>112</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2016/01/20/732/>

<sup>113</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2018/02/20/pre-post-business-support/>

<sup>114</sup> <https://gcda.coop/eventbrite-event/free-10-week-food-business-training/>

<sup>115</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2018/09/28/greenwich-community-cookery-clubs-free/>

<sup>116</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2017/09/28/next-free-learn-nordic-walk-health-courses/>



However, GCDA does receive grant funding for specific projects.

For example:

- Co-op Loan Fund and Big Issue Invest provided the funding for GCDA to set up new kitchens/cafes in Newham and Thameshead.<sup>117</sup>
- Fitting the Made in Greenwich shop was sponsored by Ikea.<sup>118</sup>
- In 2018 GCDA received £213,125 grant funding from RBG, and a further £134,632 from Public Health Greenwich; this is listed separately to GCDA's incoming fees.<sup>119</sup>

Additionally, the GCDA generates income from a number of enterprise activities, including:

- PLENTY – range of frozen ready meals
- Lock Side Kitchen – training and production space at Royal Albert Wharf
- Henri's Café – subsidised café at Bracton Centre<sup>120</sup>

### What is the project's impact?

This is a snapshot of GCDA's activity in 2019:

- Held 1131 walks, which were attended by over 10,000 people
- Provided 8,400 holiday meals for children
- Held 560 4-week cookery courses
- Provided affordable fresh produce for 150 families a week
- Held 150 business skills training courses
- Provided free meeting spaces for 17 businesses

<sup>117</sup> <https://gcda.coop/2019/01/09/innovative-agency-opens-two-new-kitchens%E2%BB%BF/>

<sup>118</sup> <https://gcda.coop/read-all-about-it-gcda-opens-its-first-shop/>

<sup>119</sup> GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2018, accessible via <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>

<sup>120</sup> GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2019, accessible via <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>

According to the GCDA, their activities in 2019 reached over 80,000 individuals.<sup>121</sup>

Online presence:

- Google search for 'Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency' yielded 1,700 results. A search for 'GCDA Greenwich' generated 7,020 results
- Twitter account (@GCDAUK) has over 2,600 followers, and almost 14k tweets
- Facebook page (@GCDAUK) has 647 'likes', 744 'followers', and 8 check-ins
- Instagram account (gcdauk) has 573 Instagram followers, and 149 posts

Additionally, Claire Pritchard has been interviewed on BBC

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<sup>121</sup> All figures taken from GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2018, accessible via <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>

London's Richard Elms show, talking about her favourite London hotspots and memories.<sup>122</sup> She has also been interviewed – and featured on the cover of – The Masthead, South East London's Chamber of Commerce magazine, talking about her work with GCDA.<sup>123</sup>

### ***Spatial Impact***

GCDA coordinates courses to enable people to start growing projects, box schemes and even food banks. With the latter, Greenwich has a good spread of emergency food aid for those in need; unlike other cities, the spatial distribution of these assets appears to fit with the most deprived areas (see Plate 2).

Although it is difficult to prove that the GCDA is responsible for much of this, their efforts have certainly enabled emergency food aid to geographically located to those who require it. Spatial analysis of food growing projects also shows an increase, adding further evidence that GCDA is making substantial impacts in the area.

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<sup>122</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05t623h>

<sup>123</sup> [https://issuu.com/benham/docs/the\\_masthead\\_january\\_2019](https://issuu.com/benham/docs/the_masthead_january_2019)

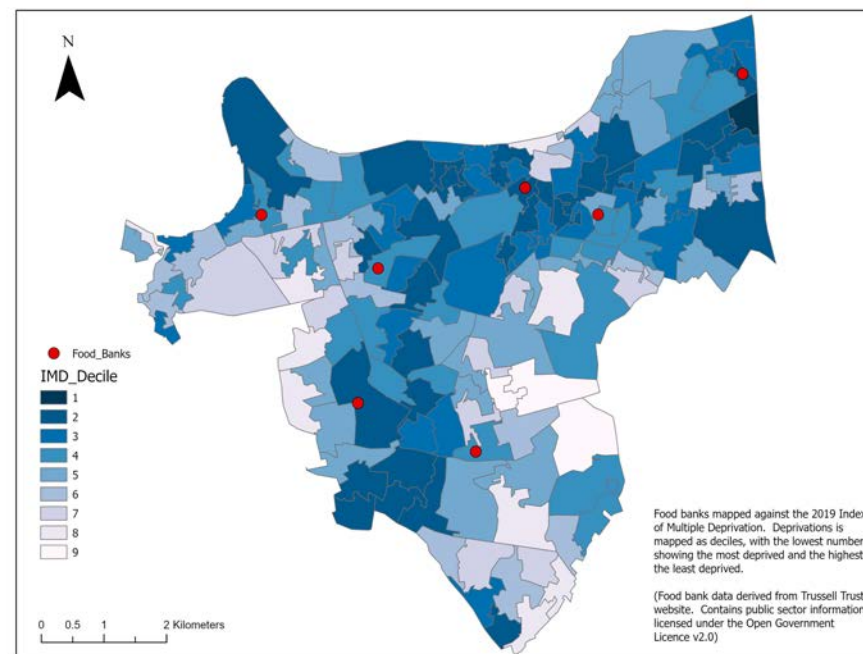
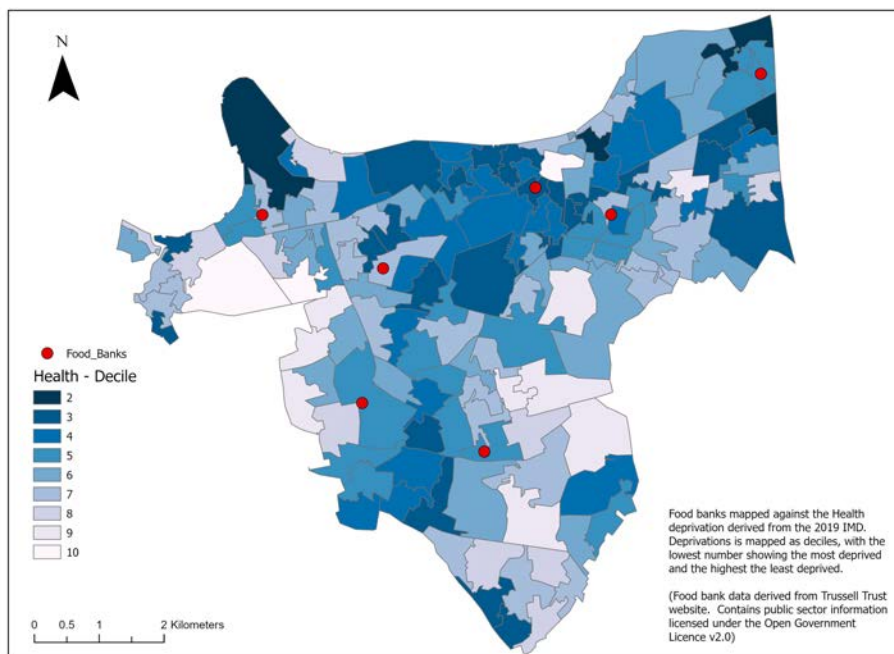


Plate 2 – food banks mapped against the IMD 2019 (overall and health)

## The GCDA and co-operative working

The GCDA is “a flagship partner” of Good Food Lewisham (GFL), and provides office space to host the GFL co-ordinator.<sup>124</sup> The contact telephone number and postal address is the same for both organisations, and the contact email for Good Food Lewisham is an @gcda.org.uk address.<sup>125</sup> Other partners in the GFL network include Public Health Lewisham and Lewisham Homes.

This partnership is responsible for one of GCDA’s largest projects, Be Inspired Lewisham. This project delivers training and mentoring schemes, healthy walks, and cookery clubs.<sup>126</sup>

In a recent webinar, GCDA was named the lead body for the London Food Alliance, which includes Fare Share, City Harvest, and the Felix Project.<sup>127</sup> This alliance is leading Greenwich’s response to Covid. There is no mention of GCDA’s involvement in any announcements about the London Food Alliance, and the

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.goodfoodlewisham.org/partners>

<sup>125</sup> <https://gcda.coop/contact/> and <http://beinspiredlewisham.org/Contact/>

<sup>126</sup> <https://gcda.coop/be-inspired-lewisham/>

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.anymeeting.com/729-518-989/EA50DA89814F3F>

London Food Alliance is not mentioned on the GCDA website.<sup>128</sup>

However, links between this response work and GCDA are included in other recent news stories, though not under the name ‘London Food Alliance’.<sup>129</sup>

The CCIN website lists GCDA’s ‘Holiday Hunger;’ project as an example of co-operative working.<sup>130</sup> The project, which is funded by Royal Borough Greenwich and branded by them as ‘Summer Feast’, is delivered through Good Food in Greenwich.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>128</sup> <https://fareshare.org.uk/news-media/press-releases/charities-form-pan-london-alliance-to-feed-vulnerable-londoners-during-covid-19-lockdown/>

<sup>129</sup> <https://cact.org.uk/news/loyal-partner-steps-in-to-help-support-vulnerable-residents>

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.councils.coop/case-studies/holiday-hunger-greenwich/>

<sup>131</sup> <https://prod.goodfood.gcda.webarch6.co.uk/2018/07/06/summer-feast-2018/>

## The GCDA and the SFC

Greenwich is a founding member of the SFC network, having been approved as a member in 2013. The GCDA co-ordinated Greenwich's initial application to join the network.<sup>132</sup>

The Good Food in Greenwich (Good FiG) network was established in 2014, to build on Greenwich's status as an SFC city. The Good FiG Terms of Reference specifies that the Steering Group is chaired by the Chair of GCDA (currently Claire Pritchard).<sup>133</sup> As a result, GCDA's relationship with SFC is primarily delivered through Good Food in Greenwich; for example, Greenwich's Bronze SFC application was co-ordinated by the Good FiG partnership.

In Greenwich's 2016 Bronze SFC Award application, examples of Good FiG's work are included under all 6 SFC principles. Similarly, the GCDA is mentioned in every section of the application. This demonstrates GCDA's close strategic link with Greenwich's status

<sup>132</sup> <https://gcda.coop/good-food-in-greenwich/>

<sup>133</sup> <https://prod.goodfood.gcda.webarch6.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Steering-group-ToR.pdf>

as an SFC city, and places Good Food in Greenwich firmly at the centre of that relationship.

Claire Pritchard highlighted the importance of SFC to GCDA, explaining that the key principles provide a framework against which GCDA can measure its activities. It also saves Greenwich from having to reinvent things at a local level.

Greenwich is currently preparing for its SFC Silver Award Application. Claire explained that within the borough there have been some assumptions that GCDA will lead on all work relating to SFC. But the aim of GCDA is to support other groups and businesses achieve their actions for SFC, not to deliver all the activity itself. This close working between GCDA, Good FiG, and SFC can therefore be a challenge to communicate and explain.

## Challenges and limitations

### ***Transparency***

The GCDA website does not contain much up-to-date information about the organisation's structure, finances, business or delivery

plans. The information listed on the website dates from 2014/15, which has limited relevance for the organisation's situation today.

Similarly, the GCDA is not easy to find on Companies House or the Societies Register. The Financial Conduct Authority had up to date financial information available, but a lot of this information if not reflected on the GCDA's website.

For example, GCDA's PLENTY (frozen meals) does not appear on the website's list of projects, while the Made in Greenwich shop does not feature in the financial documents.

This makes it difficult to get a clear handle on how the GCDA operates, and whether its structures and processes are sustainable.

### ***Dynamic leadership***

Claire Pritchard, GCDA's CEO, is crucial to its success. A long-standing leader in London's food sector, she has built strong links with a number of key organisations, including the local council and local health trusts. Through her position as Chair of the London Food Board, she is well-placed to promote and support the GCDA's work.

This is not a limitation for the GCDA itself. But for local authorities looking to replicate the GCDA's work, it is worth noting that strong, well-connected, and firmly established links are a major contributing factor in the GCDA's success.

### ***Funding***

The GCDA has made conscious efforts in recent years to shift its funding model away from grant-based funding. Instead, the focus has been on stabilising its revenue through competitive tenders and contracts. This has largely been successful, in terms of increasing the amount of income generated by contracts.

However, the 2018/19 Annual Return and Accounts show that the GCDA lost £48,388 in that year.<sup>134</sup> Clearly, generating enough income to cover their costs continues to be an issue.

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<sup>134</sup> Page 16, GCDA Annual Return and Accounts 2019, accessible via <https://mutuals.fca.org.uk/Search/Society/7569>



## ***Communications***

The GCDA runs a wide range of projects, both independently and in partnership with other organisations. Only a fraction of this activity is detailed on the website. The blog is regularly updated, but detailed information about specific projects is difficult to find. Most projects have a static information page, with further details being scattered throughout the rest of the website in the blog or events section.

Some projects, such as Good Food in Greenwich, have their own website. This makes it difficult to quantify and clarify GCDA's links to the project, or to get a clear picture of how each project operates.

## **Conclusion**

The GCDA is a well-established and widely successful part of the South London food sector. The CEO, Claire Prichard, was recently appointed Chair of the London Food Board, and the GCDA's 'Good Food in Greenwich' network helped the borough secure a Bronze SFC Award.

Through its public-facing projects, the GCDA has reached over 80,000 people. It is regularly commissioned by RBG and Public

Health Greenwich to deliver on specific contracts, including holiday meals for school children.

Funding has been a challenge for the GCDA, which has made a conscious effort to shift away from grant funding and towards a more stable model of contract commissions. However, the GCDA's costs were higher than its income in 2018/19.

## **Further questions and research**

- marrying up projects listed on the annual account and returns, and comparing this to what is included on the website. What's missing? Why?
- How are the projects run? Who manages each one – separate managers? Do they all feed directly into GCDA? Or are some more autonomous, report to RBG, or to another authority?
- Up to date business plan? Most recent one is from 2014-16



## Key issue 3: Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects



## Brighton and Hove Community Kitchen

### What is the Brighton and Hove Community Kitchen?

The Community Kitchen (BHCK) was opened in May 2018 and delivers cookery courses and classes on a range of food-related and community-focused topics. In addition to running cookery classes and courses, the Community Kitchen is available to hire for events, private parties, and group/team building activities.<sup>135</sup>

The Community Kitchen was set up by the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP). BHFP describes itself “as a hub and network builder” across the many community food projects in Brighton and Hove.<sup>136</sup> It provides grant funding, training, networking opportunities, and advice for these groups.<sup>137</sup>

BHCK is based on Queens Road in central Brighton, close to Brighton train station. The building is owned by Community Base, a

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<sup>135</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/category/community-kitchen/>

<sup>136</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/directory-hub/>

<sup>137</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/directory-hub/support-for-community-food-projects/>

charity that provides office space and meeting rooms for community and voluntary groups in Brighton.<sup>138</sup>

Although the focus on this report will be on the Community Kitchen, there will also be opportunities to evaluate the BHFP’s longer-term history of delivering cookery courses and classes to the general public.

### What does the Brighton and Hove Community Kitchen aim to achieve?

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP), which runs the Community Kitchen, aims to help people learn to cook, grow food, eat a healthy diet, and waste less food. They prioritise work with vulnerable adults and people experiencing deprivation, isolation, poor health and other life challenges.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> <https://communitybase.org>

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.brightonchamber.co.uk/member/brighton-and-hove-food-partnership>

By the time the Community Kitchen was founded in 2018, BHFP had been running community-based cooking classes for 10 years.<sup>140</sup> BHCK was established, presumably, to build on this strong track record. It also offers BHFP a permanent and visible base, thereby acting as a ‘shop window’ to promote the Partnership and give it clear visual identity.

### How does it work?

There are two main elements to the Brighton and Hove Community Kitchen (BHCK): the cookery classes, and the community cookery courses.

Cookery classes are open to everyone, and cover a range of subjects including desserts, vegan menus, and healthy meals. There are also one-off ‘MasterChef’ classes, offered on an ad-hoc basis and led by guest chefs from some of Brighton’s top restaurants.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/our-story-the-community-kitchen/>

<sup>141</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/meet-the-cooks/>

Any profits from these cookery classes are used to subsidise the BHCK’s cookery courses. These courses are run over a number of weeks and are specifically tailored for certain vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups. Current examples include a dementia-friendly group, cooking for people with learning disabilities, and cooking on a budget. These are offered at very low cost or are free.<sup>142</sup>

To take part in a community cookery course, potential attendees need to complete an application form. The exact process differs from course to course, and there is no information given about what criteria BHFP use to select participants for courses.

BHCK is also available to hire for private parties, events, product launches, team building activities, and the like. The profits from this also go towards the BHCK cookery courses.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/community-cookery-courses/>

<sup>143</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/hire-the-space>

How is it set up?

### ***Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP)***

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) began as a joint venture initiated by the City Council's Sustainability Commission and the Primary Care Trust. Food Matters, who are one of the three organisations behind Sustainable Food Cities and are based in Brighton, facilitated early meetings of this loose food partnership.

In 2006 the food partnership became an Unincorporated Association. It gained an Organising Committee, elected its first board members, and hired its first part-time member of staff (paid for by Food Matters).

In 2008 the shift was made to establish BHFP as a not for profit Limited Company by guarantee. Interestingly, they were turned down for charitable status because they “were deemed to promote certain businesses and to work with private enterprises”. The BHFP

made a conscious decision not to cease those activities, and to pursue a different status for the Partnership.<sup>144</sup>

BHFP currently has 6 Directors and 12 employees; this is down from 26 employees in 2018.<sup>145</sup>

### ***Community Kitchen***

BHCK opened in May 2018.<sup>146</sup> Just over six months later, BHFP lost an important contract, which meant they had to downsize their team and re-evaluate their financial situation.<sup>147</sup> It was therefore

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<sup>144</sup> Page 19,  
<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Governance%20and%20Structures%20Guide%20FinalAM.pdf>

<sup>145</sup> Brighton and Hove Food Partnership Financial Statements and Accounts 2019; and 2019 (available via <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/05636575/filing-history>)

<sup>146</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/our-story-the-community-kitchen/>

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Brighton-and-Hove-Food-Partnership-FINAL.pdf>

crucial that the Community Kitchen bring in revenue for BHFP, and that it be commercially viable from the outset.<sup>148</sup>

There is not much information about how BHCK is managed day-to-day, except that there is a Community Kitchen Co-ordinator (Jo Glazebrook, contact details below). Volunteers also play a big role in organising and supporting the activities that run.<sup>149</sup>

### **Key contacts**

- Jo Glazebrook, Community Kitchen Co-Ordinator:  
[jo@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:jo@bhfood.org.uk)
- Emily O'Brien, Policy & Partnerships Manager:  
[emily@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:emily@bhfood.org.uk)
- Vic Borrill, Director: [vic@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:vic@bhfood.org.uk)

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<sup>148</sup> <https://www.creativebloomrocks.com/brighton-and-hove-food-partnership-case-study>

<sup>149</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/behind-the-scenes-at-the-community-kitchen/>

### **How is the Community Kitchen funded?**

#### ***Building work and renovation***

The building in which BHCK is based is owned by Community Base, a charity that provides volunteer organisations with office space and meeting rooms. The space was left empty when Credit Union relocated.<sup>150</sup>

The building work cost £85,000, which was funded by Veolia Environmental trust, the Rampion Fund, and the People's Postcode Lottery, with support from the Jamie Oliver Foundation.<sup>151</sup> A further £27,305 was raised through crowdfunding to cover the cost of kitting out the kitchen. Donations to this campaign included £10,000 from the Santander Changemaker fund.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/construction-students-roll-up-sleeves-for-brighton-hove-food-partnership-community-kitchen/>

<sup>151</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/our-story-the-community-kitchen/>

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/community-kitchen-btn>

### ***Cookery classes and community courses***

BHCK runs cookery classes and one-off ‘MasterChef’ classes, which cost between £40-60pp to attend.<sup>153</sup> In addition, the Community Kitchen generates revenue from hiring out the kitchen. Depending on the size and type of the organisation or group hiring the space, and their chosen time slot, the cost of venue hire ranges from £155-£375. There are additional charges for things like corkage, a kitchen assistant, and use of tea-towels and aprons.<sup>154</sup>

As a social enterprise, any profits made from these activities offset the cost of BHFP’s community cooking courses. Additionally, the Community Kitchen offers bursaries to fund 1 place per person per year on a class of their choice.<sup>155</sup>

Some community cooking courses run for free; for example, the “Dementia friendly cooking group” is funded by the NHS Brighton

<sup>153</sup> [https://bhfood.org.uk/events\\_cat/cooking-classes/](https://bhfood.org.uk/events_cat/cooking-classes/)

<sup>154</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/hire-the-space/>

<sup>155</sup> [https://bhfood.org.uk/events\\_cat/cooking-classes/](https://bhfood.org.uk/events_cat/cooking-classes/)

and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group.<sup>156</sup> However, other courses, such as “Cooking on a Budget”, require a £5 deposit from attendees. Additionally, applicants on this course are encouraged to donate a small amount each week towards the cost of ingredients, though this is not compulsory.<sup>157</sup> Meanwhile, some of the one-off ‘Chef Masterclasses’ are run specifically as fundraisers, with the proceeds of that class covering the costs a particular community cooking course.<sup>158</sup> This suggests that the income generated by the more regular classes doesn’t always subsidise the full cost of running the community courses.

### ***Running and overheads***

The BHFP financial records do not give a breakdown of the Community Kitchen’s running/overhead costs or incoming revenue.

<sup>156</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-food-project/>

<sup>157</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/events/cooking-on-a-budget-5-week-course-8/#booking>

<sup>158</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/community-kitchen-is-half-a-year-old/>



However, Community Base, the company that own BHCK's building, typically charges £22.50 per square foot of office space.<sup>159</sup>

BHCK is based on Queens Road, in the centre of Brighton. In 2019, Brighton Fringe Festival was selling advertising space on a large smart screen located on the side of the Community Kitchen building. They reported that the smart screen would receive around 270,000 views a month.<sup>160</sup> We can safely assume that if someone sees the advertising screen, they can also see the Community Kitchen. BHCK clearly occupies very high-value commercial space.

In previous FoodSync modelling, it was calculated that the overhead costs of running a community kitchen would be prohibitively high, especially considering long-term, on-going costs such as maintenance, insurance, and equipment replacement. For example, the Cornwall Food Foundation's restaurant, Fifteen Cornwall,

<sup>159</sup> <https://communitybase.org/our-services/office-space/>

<sup>160</sup> Page 9,  
<https://www.brightonfringe.org/files/1f7e89f52dada83ea44972933f1ab036.pdf>

trained unemployed and disadvantaged workers as chefs. Its recent closure highlights the difficulties of covering the running costs of a food-focused community project.<sup>161</sup>

## Impact

Wrestling with the issue of measuring the impact of the Community Kitchen and BHFP's wider work, Emily O'Brien, BHFP's Policy and Partnerships Manager, comments that:

*"... even where there is evidence of impact, there are issues with attribution. In general, due to the high levels of complexity, we can only talk about contribution rather than attribution."*<sup>162</sup>

For example, in the BHCK's first year:

- 1,200 people attended a cookery class

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/cornwall-food-foundation-closes-immediate-effect/finance/article/1668879>

<sup>162</sup> <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/3039/Online%20article#N1>



- 18 community cooking courses were run
- supported by 60 volunteers
- 3,000 meals eaten around the kitchen table<sup>163</sup>

However, these numbers do not necessarily show that the people who attended the community cooking courses changed their cooking behaviours long-term, or that the challenges they faced before attending a course have been addressed.

Furthermore, whether or not course participants changed their cooking behaviours long-term is not necessarily a reflection of BHCK's work. Behaviours change for a variety of reasons; BHCK is just one piece of the puzzle. For example, course participants might not be able to get the right ingredients in their local shops, or

else might not have a dining table around which they can share a family meal.<sup>164</sup>

As a rough comparison point, in 2014/15 BHFP engaged with over 5,500 people across all of its activities, not just cooking classes.<sup>165</sup> Beyond this, it has not been possible to find any solid numbers for BHFP pre-Community Kitchen cooking-related outreach. It's therefore difficult to gauge whether the numbers above represent an increase or decrease in BHFP's cooking education activities.

In terms of online presence, Community Kitchen:

- **GOOGLE SEARCH GENERATED 238 RESULTS**
- **TWITTER ACCOUNT (@BTNKITCHEN) HAS 829 FOLLOWERS, AND 1,487 TWEETS**

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<sup>163</sup> <https://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Brighton-and-Hove-Food-Partnership-FINAL.pdf>

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<sup>164</sup> Page 8, <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CFHS-impact-cooking-courses-families.pdf>

<sup>165</sup> <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/City%20Sustainability%20Action%20Plan%202015-17.pdf>

- **FACEBOOK PAGE (@BTNKITCHEN) HAS 797 'LIKES' AND 875 FOLLOWERS**
- **INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT (BTNKITCHEN) HAS OVER 2.3K FOLLOWERS**

Online presence (BHFP):

- Google search generated 10,900 results
- Twitter account (@btnhovfood) has 9k followers, and 13.5k tweets
- Facebook page (@btnhovfood) has over 3,600 'likes' and over 4,200 followers
- Instagram account (btnhovfood) has over 2.2k followers

Additionally, BHFP receive over 50k unique website visitors each year, and have over 5k people signed up to their email newsletter.<sup>166</sup>

Among digitally literate people with access to the Internet, then, BHFP has a strong online profile. However, these online numbers do

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<sup>166</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BH-SFC-Gold-Award-Submission-Nov-2018.pdf>

not give an indication of how closely connected the Community Kitchen is to the more vulnerable community groups it hopes to engage through its community cooking courses.

### The Community Kitchen and co-operative working (operational)

BHCK benefits from a range of co-operative relationships with local chefs. For example, the one-off Chef Masterclasses are led by chefs from some of Brighton's most well-known restaurants.<sup>167</sup> However, it isn't clear whether the chefs are offering their time on a voluntary basis.

The Community Kitchen also relies heavily on volunteers, who help with everything from organising the stockrooms to doing washing up after the classes. This is fairly typical of local food projects of this sort. However, on their venue hire page BHCK stipulates that a kitchen assistant will be an additional cost.<sup>168</sup> Presumably this is a way of BHFP increasing their revenue.

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<sup>167</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/community-kitchen-is-half-a-year-old/>

<sup>168</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/hire-the-space/>

There is also no information about how the Community Kitchen sources its food. Although the BHFP website has information about where to buy organic and local food, it's not clear which of these businesses – if any – regularly supply the Community Kitchen with food.<sup>169</sup>

### **The Community Kitchen and co-operative working (strategic)**

Since BHCK was established, only a small number of strategic documents have been produced in relation to Brighton and Hove's food sector. This includes the Brighton and Hove Food Strategy Action Plan 2018-23, which was produced by BHFP in partnership with other local food stakeholders.<sup>170</sup> The Community Kitchen is not featured.

Additionally, in Brighton and Hove's 2018 SFC Gold Award application, the Community Kitchen was mentioned only once, in

<sup>169</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/category/eating-well/where-to-buy/>

<sup>170</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Final-FULL-WEB-Food-Strategy-Action-Plan.pdf>

reference to its social enterprise model.<sup>171</sup> In the 2019 update of Brighton and Hove's Food Poverty Action Plan 2015-18, the Community Kitchen was not mentioned.<sup>172</sup> Strategically, then, BHCK does not seem to have many strong links to Brighton and Hove's wider food policies.

However, the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (BHFP), who run the Community Kitchen, work very closely with a wide range of strategic partners on food policy and strategy.

For example, their Brighton and Hove Food Strategy Action Plan 2018-23 lists over 100 partners who were involved in the development and delivery of the plan. BHFP explain that the Food Strategy,

<sup>171</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BH-SFC-Gold-Award-Submission-Nov-2018.pdf>

<sup>172</sup> [https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BHFP-Case\\_StudyUpdated\\_2019\\_Food\\_pov\\_action\\_plan-1.pdf](https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BHFP-Case_StudyUpdated_2019_Food_pov_action_plan-1.pdf)

*“is a huge partnership exercise, and is our primary tool for building our partnership. The recent action plan refresh means 100 organisational partners are involved in delivery, including 26 separate council departments.”<sup>173</sup>*

Additionally, the BHFP is co-ordinating Brighton and Hove’s 2020 SFC Gold Award application. BHFP also holds seats on a number of local boards and partnerships, including the Local Strategic Partnership, City Sustainability Partnership, Healthy Weight Programme Board, Adult Learning Group, and Food & Drink Festival committee.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Page 9, <https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BH-SFC-Gold-Award-Submission-Nov-2018.pdf>

<sup>174</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Brighton%20Hove%20Food%20Partnership%20SFC%20silver%20application.pdf>

No doubt BHCK benefits from these links, and could be considered well connected and well placed within the Brighton and Hove food system as a result of being part of BHFP.

### The Community Kitchen and the SFC (Sustainable Food Cities)

The Community Kitchen was mentioned only once Brighton and Hove’s 2018 SFC Gold Award application. This reference was simply to say that the Community Kitchen had a social enterprise model; no information was given about BHCK’s aims, activities, or impact.<sup>175</sup>

As the Community Kitchen was founded in 2018, it does not feature in Brighton and Hove’s 2015 SFC Silver Award application. However, the BHFP was running community cooking events at the time, and the strength of their work in this area presumably paved the way for the Community Kitchen.

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<sup>175</sup> Page 9, <https://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BH-SFC-Gold-Award-Submission-Nov-2018.pdf>

For example, the 2015 SFC Silver Award application lists the following food/cooking groups:

- Old Spice for older men, particularly widows
- Cooking for Wellbeing, in partnership with Mind
- First Time Cook, for people with learning disabilities
- Baby Buffet, for new parents accessing Children's Centres
- Trailer Trashed Cookery course, aimed at 16-25 year olds NEET<sup>176</sup>

This activity was listed under SFC key issue 3, 'Building Community Food Knowledge, Skills, Resources and Projects'. Of the 6 SFC key issues, this is the one strategically most aligned to the Community Kitchen's activity.

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<sup>176</sup> Page 29,  
<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Brighton%20Hove%20Food%20Partnership%20SFC%20silver%20application.pdf>

More broadly, the BHFP have a long-standing and particularly close relationship with Food Matters, who deliver the Sustainable Food Cities programme alongside Sustain and the Soil Association, and are based in Brighton. They have supported the BHFP since it first began as a loose collection of interested stakeholders.<sup>177</sup>

Additionally, the Food Matters website features BHFP as an example of their work, indicating that for both parties this partnership has been a success.<sup>178</sup> Emily O'Brien, Policy & Partnerships Manager at BHFP, described BHFP and Food Matters as "sister organisations".

Emily also highlighted the two-way influence between BHFP and SFC. For example, Brighton was the first city to be awarded a Silver SFC award, and BHFP worked with SFC on what the requirements for that would be. Emily explained that BHFP are currently working

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<sup>177</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Governance%20and%20Structures%20Guide%20FinalAM.pdf>

<sup>178</sup> [https://www.foodmatters.org/case\\_studies/brighton-hove-food-partnership/](https://www.foodmatters.org/case_studies/brighton-hove-food-partnership/)

with SFC on the Gold Award framework, and are hoping – along with Bristol – to be the first city awarded a Gold.

This close relationship with SFC is not something many other places share, and presumably plays a crucial element in Brighton's leading role in the UK's sustainable food scene.

### Challenges and limitations

#### ***Accessibility***

Aside from the high overheads and running costs of a city-centre location (see Funding section for more information), it is also the case that having a fixed, physical location has its drawbacks. Prior to BHCK opening, BHFP ran cookery classes in a variety of locations all over Brighton.<sup>179</sup>

Now, with a fixed location in the centre of town, the Community Kitchen is no longer rooted to community settings like schools, community centres, and church halls. The intended audience for

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<sup>179</sup> <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/9587391.old-spice-cookery-course-in-portslade-is-a-big-success/>

BHCK's community cooking courses might find accessing the Community Kitchen a challenge, either from a financial point of view or because they have accessibility issues that make travelling difficult.

#### ***Audience engagement***

As with any project aimed at hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups, engaging appropriately with the intended audience can be a challenge. Some of the people most in need of the BHCK's courses will lead quite chaotic lives, and many will have childcare or other caring responsibilities that make it difficult for them to attend regular appointments.

It would be interesting to know now successful BHFP has been in promoting their community cooking courses to their target groups, and whether attendance on their community courses is as high as they would like.

#### ***Course structure***

BHCK is not a club. Community cooking courses run for between 5-12 weeks, after which the participants presumably move on. The

community, purpose, and security offered by these courses only lasts as long as the course: what happens at the end?

It would be interesting to know whether participants return to the course – are they allowed? Would the Community Kitchen achieve its aims more effectively if it was a long-running, drop-in club, with a weekly nominal payment scheme? Or is the vision of the Community Kitchen more outcomes driven, with a real focus on equipping people to cope without the structure and security of the course?

### ***Close working with Brighton and Hove Food Partnership***

The Brighton and Hove Food Partnership is a particularly well-established alliance, and has a strong history of delivering cookery classes in the community. Prior to establishing the Community Kitchen, BHFP had been running cookery classes for over 10 years.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/cookery-school/our-story-the-community-kitchen/>

The Community Kitchen draws on much of this expertise and experience, and owes much of its success to BHFP's strategic position within Brighton. BHCK is not self-contained, and other boroughs aiming to establish a similar project would most likely need a strong food partnership in order to ensure its success.

Interestingly, where BHFP and the Community Kitchen share staff resources and financial records, the Leeds Cookery School – also a social enterprise – is structured such that its staffing and funding is entirely separate from the charity it supports.<sup>181</sup> All of Leeds Cookery School's profits go towards Zest – Health for Life charity. It is therefore possible to establish a community cooking social enterprise project as an independent organisation, which might be a more viable option for boroughs that don't share BHFP's track record.

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<sup>181</sup> Leeds Cookery School Full Accounts 2019, available via <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/11098044/filing-history>



### ***Funding and impact***

As explored in the “Impact” section above, it can be difficult to attribute positive outcomes to the Community Kitchen’s work. As some of its work is funded by partners like NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group, this may be a challenge for securing future revenue from charitable and public sector contracts.

### ***Partnership working and staff resource***

Speaking about the BHFP more broadly, Emily O’Brien, Policy and Partnerships Manager at BHFP has this insight:

*“... this level of complex partnership working and collective action planning is never easy. It is not easy to assemble (for an inside view, see my blog which likens the process to ‘knitting spaghetti’) and once it is written, it is hard to keep a handle on progress. The yearly or so requests for updates*

*from partners is itself becoming a job, let alone the challenge of trying to prove our wider impact”<sup>182</sup>*

The breadth of work that BHFP delivers or supports means that keeping all of the plates spinning can be a challenge. Maintaining relationships, sharing information, and ensuring all partners are working harmoniously with each other is a huge task. Staff capacity is therefore an on-going concern for BHFP.

Running the Community Kitchen is likely a huge demand on time, and requires considerable staff resource. BHCK has a dedicated Co-ordinator, apparently supported by a team of volunteers.<sup>183</sup> But as BHCK does not sit separately, the pressures on BHFP’s time and resources will affect the Community Kitchen. This pressure makes it

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<sup>182</sup>

<https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/3039/Online%20article#N1>

<sup>183</sup> <https://bhfood.org.uk/behind-the-scenes-at-the-community-kitchen/>

difficult for BHCK to scale up its activities, or to invest extra time and resource into improving its offer.

## Conclusion

The Community Kitchen is unique in Brighton and Hove; indeed, possibly in the UK. It occupies a smartly designed, purpose-built space in the centre of town, hosted by an organisation that provides charities with office space. There are merits to the Community Kitchen: it ensures the BHFP has the space to run its community cooking classes, and acts as a ‘shop window’ to promote the partnership. However, course attendees may find accessing the BHCK a challenge; where they would previously had gone to a local venue, they now need to travel into the centre of town.

BHCK delivers cookery lessons and Chef Masterclasses, the profits of which go to offset the Community Cooking courses. These courses run over a number of weeks and are tailored to support specific vulnerable groups. The Community Kitchen is also a venue for hire.

The build and fitting of the Community Kitchen was funded by a combination of grant funding and crowdfunding. As a social

enterprise project, the running costs of the Community Kitchen are covered by its income-generating activities.

The Community Kitchen was founded by the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, who had established a strong track record of delivering community-based cookery classes prior to opening the Kitchen. The BHFP are the body behind Brighton and Hove’s SFC activity, including their 2015 Silver SFC Award application and their 2018 Gold Award application.

But despite these strong strategic ties, the Community Kitchen does not feature in Brighton and Hove’s 2018 SFC Award application. Additionally, the Community Kitchen does not feature in Brighton and Hove’s Food Strategy Action Plan 2018-23, also produced by BHFP. Any strategic leverage associated with the Community Kitchen therefore lies firmly with BHFP.

Indeed, BHFP is fundamental to the Community Kitchen’s success. The longstanding partnership between BHFP and Food Matters has helped Brighton and Hove’s Food Partnership develop in line with

the Sustainable Food Cities agenda. BHFP also has a strong history of providing cookery classes, which helped pave the way for the Community Kitchen.

In 2018, BHFP lost a big contract and several of its staff. The fact that the Community Kitchen is still operating suggests that it has been at least moderately successful in covering its costs. However, this is not certain. Additionally, other examples of community kitchen projects have found it difficult to remain economically viable, so it will be interesting to see whether the Community Kitchen will continue to run in its current form long-term.

#### Further questions and research

- how is the Community Kitchen managed? Who has responsibility for the courses, classes, and finances?
- Why Community Kitchen not included in B&H Food Strategy Action Plan 2018-23? Or SFC Gold application?
- Co-operative working (operational) – chefs offering time and expertise for free? Food suppliers – where do they purchase stock from?

- How are people recruited to the community cooking courses? Does demand outstrip supply? Do participants return – are they allowed? Why not run as a drop-in club?
- Outreach and impact of food cooking activities before Community Kitchen? How many people attended Old Spice, and other courses?

## Key issue 4: Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy



## Bristol Pound

### What is the Bristol Pound?

The Bristol Pound, styled as £B, is a local currency. It was established in 2009, and launched publicly in 2012.

The £B can be accessed as printed cash or digitally, via an app or by logging in through the website. It is accepted in many local shops and businesses in and around Bristol.

Among other things, Bristol residents can pay their council tax and electricity bill in Bristol Pounds.<sup>184</sup> The elected Mayor, George Ferguson, even accepted his salary in £B.<sup>185</sup>

### What does the Bristol Pound aim to achieve?

The Bristol Pound aims to localise supply chains and keep money circulating within Bristol, in order “to create a greener, fairer and stronger local economy”.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/how/>

<sup>185</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/4fe13c82-31e8-11e5-91ac-a5e17d9b4cff>

Bristol Pounds “stick to Bristol”.<sup>187</sup> By encouraging people to support smaller local businesses, rather than large multinational corporations, the Bristol Pound aims to help create jobs in the area and foster the local economy.

### How does it work?

The £B is available in printed (cash) and electronic forms.

#### ***Printed £B***

- Can be exchanged for Pound Sterling at dedicated ‘cashpoints’ across the city centre<sup>188</sup>
- Can be ordered online. Delivery time is 3-5 working days, and there is a £5.00 fee to cover postage and admin charges<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/why-the-bristol-pound-has-to-change/>

<sup>187</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/getting-to-know-the-bristol-pound/>

<sup>188</sup> ‘Cashpoints’ include Bristol Tourist Information Centre and Bristol Meads train station. See map for full details  
<https://bristolpound.org/cashpoints/>

- Cannot be exchanged back into Pound Sterling, except by businesses
- Is available in denominations of £B1, £B5, £B10 and £B20
- Feature colourful artwork by local artists
- Bristol Pound membership account not needed – anyone can access printed £B
- Has an expiry date (see below)

### **Digital £B**

- Administered by the Bristol Credit Union (BCU)
- Requires a Bristol Pound membership account, which is set up via BCU<sup>190</sup>
- Can be spent in participating shops and businesses via the Bristol Pound website, the Bristol Pound app or via text<sup>191</sup>
- Can be exchanged for printed £B at any £B Cashpoint

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<sup>189</sup>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20191017185110/https://bristolpound.org/shop>

<sup>190</sup> For full details on how to set up a Bristol Pound account, visit <https://bristolpound.org/how-individual/>

<sup>191</sup> Ibid

Until 2017, £B members could pay businesses via text or via the Bristol Pound website (by logging in to their account).

In 2017, Bristol Pound launched an online app, which allows people to sign up as members, manage their £B account, and make online payments.<sup>192</sup>

Members can still access their account online, via the Bristol Pound website. Payment by text is also still possible, though the £B team recommend using the app.<sup>193</sup>

In March 2020, the £B secured funding from an undisclosed source. They plan to develop an online platform that would host £B but also, potentially, other forms of non-monetary payments such as tokens. This new IT platform is currently being developed, so the exact form of £B going forward is not yet clear.

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<sup>192</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/bristol-pound-app-bypasses-the-banks-to-boost-local-economy/>

<sup>193</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/how-individual/>



### How is it set up?

Bristol Pound is run by a non-profit community interest company (Bristol Pound CIC) in partnership with the Bristol Credit Union.

Bristol Pound CIC is responsible for printed £B, and for maintaining the online directory of businesses that accept £B.

BCU is responsible for Bristol Pound bank accounts and for processing all electronic payments.<sup>194</sup> Through the Bristol Credit Union (BCU), each £B is backed up by a pound Sterling.

The Bristol Pound website notes that:

*“only the Bank of England are permitted to print legal tender, meaning the paper Bristol Pounds are technically vouchers*

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<sup>194</sup> [https://bristolpound.org/wp-content/uploads/Bristol\\_Pound\\_Business\\_User\\_Guide.pdf](https://bristolpound.org/wp-content/uploads/Bristol_Pound_Business_User_Guide.pdf)

*and therefore are legally required to expire after a certain date”.*<sup>195</sup>

At the end of each cycle, the Bristol Pound team launch a new round of £B notes, with new artwork and an updated expiration date. If notes have not been spent by the expiration date, people are able to swap their outgoing £B notes for the new ones.<sup>196</sup>

### **Key Bristol Pound contacts**

Diana Finch, Managing Director ([diana.finch@bristolpound.org](mailto:diana.finch@bristolpound.org))

Ben Heald, Chair ([ben.heald@bristolpound.org](mailto:ben.heald@bristolpound.org))

Ian Madle, Membership ([info@bristolpound.org](mailto:info@bristolpound.org))

### How is the project funded?

The £B is largely reliant on grant funding<sup>197</sup>. The company that runs the scheme, Bristol Pound CIC, has received grants from the New Economics Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable

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<sup>195</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/how/>

<sup>196</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/meet-the-new-bristol-pounds/>

<sup>197</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/why-the-bristol-pound-has-to-change/>



Foundation.<sup>198</sup> In 2014 Bristol City Council granted £B 3 years of funding, worth £30,000 a year. In addition to this, Bristol Pound CIC received £20,000 from the Bristol Mayor's office in 2014, and £20,000 from Bristol Futures Group in 2015.<sup>199</sup>

In 2014, Bristol Pound CIC also received £100,000 to fund a research project called “the Town Pound: A Network of Local High Street E-currencies”.

To cover its running costs, Bristol Pound CIC also charges its business users a small fee for each electronic transaction.

This is currently:

- 1% fee for online payments capped at £B1
- 1% fee for app payments capped at £B1

<sup>198</sup> <https://capx.co/the-demise-of-the-bristol-pound-shows-the-folly-of-local-currencies/>

<sup>199</sup> <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/1377085/RS26+Ease+financial+support+for+the+Bristol+Pound/db05407a-461c-45aa-8a2c-a3c33658c5b6>

- 2% fee for Text to Pay payments<sup>200</sup>

The Bristol Pound also has “Funding Champions” – people or local businesses who support the scheme philanthropically. It is not clear how much money this has raised, or how many Funding Champions there are.

### Impact

Across the city, over 800 independent businesses accept the Bristol Pound<sup>201</sup>. Bristol's SFC Silver 2016 application said that 265 of these businesses sold food and drink<sup>202</sup>; a manual trawl of the £B online directory identified 145 food and drinks businesses<sup>203</sup>.

Since its launch, over £5m Bristol Pounds have been spent in the city, including paper and electronic payments. Over 80,000

<sup>200</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/faq/>

<sup>201</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/join-business/>

<sup>202</sup> Page 39, <http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Bristol-SFC-2016-Silver1.pdf>

<sup>203</sup> Directory of businesses accepting £B  
<https://bristolpound.org/where/>

transactions have been made by text, mobile app and online banking – an average of 300 payments a week.

Online presence:

- Google search generated 48,900 results
- Twitter account (@BristolPound) has 18.5k followers, and 23.6k tweets
- Facebook page (@BristolPound) has over 4,500 ‘likes’ and over 5,000 followers
- Instagram account (bristolpound) has over 1,500 followers

Bristol Pound and co-operative working (strategic)

### ***Bristol City Council***

The £B received strong support from Bristol City Council (BCC). As a result, local residents can pay their council tax and business

rates in Bristol Pounds<sup>204</sup>. Workers at the BCC can also opt to take all or part of their wages home in £B.<sup>205</sup>

### ***Bristol Credit Union***

The Bristol Credit Union, which provides the digital Bristol Pound bank accounts, works in partnership with a wide range of local groups and organisations, including the BCC.

### ***European Green Capital 2015***

Bristol was awarded European Green Capital for 2015. As part of this, Bristol shared their ‘Bristol Model’, which outlined the sustainability-focused partnerships and networks that exist in the city.<sup>206</sup>

Under its “Key players” section, the Bristol Method document highlighted three main partnership structures:

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<sup>204</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/we-are-6-today/>

<sup>205</sup> Page 5

[https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33892/The+Bristol+Contract\\_0.pdf/cd8a338d-6921-44e6-a40d-385a6b5e5fa9](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33892/The+Bristol+Contract_0.pdf/cd8a338d-6921-44e6-a40d-385a6b5e5fa9)

<sup>206</sup> [https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/17\\_bristol\\_method\\_how\\_to\\_become\\_a\\_more\\_sustainable\\_food\\_city.pdf](https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/17_bristol_method_how_to_become_a_more_sustainable_food_city.pdf)

- Bristol Food Network CIC
- Bristol Food Policy Council
- Bristol Green Capital Partnership (BGCP)

The introduction to the Bristol Method document notes that:

*“short supply chains and localised food production have the potential to generate local jobs... and engage city residents in making better food choices”*

Despite this, the Bristol Pound is only briefly mentioned in the 18-page document, as a short case study. Their website is not included in the “Further reading” section at the end of the document.

### ***Bristol Food Network CIC***

The Bristol Food Network “supports, informs and connects individuals, community projects, organisations and businesses who share a vision to transform Bristol into a sustainable food city”.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> <https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/about/>

The ‘Bristol Method’ document explains that Bristol Food Network’s work mainly relates to delivering specific projects in line with the Bristol Good Food Plan 2015-18. The Bristol Pound is mentioned several times in the Bristol Good Food Plan, particularly in a section called “Meet the people making the change”.<sup>208</sup>

The Bristol Food Network blog features also some stories about the £B, most of which also appear on Bristol Pound’s own website.

### ***Bristol Food Policy Council***

Members of the Bristol Food Policy Council have been drawn from across the Bristol food sector. They include senior representatives from local schemes such as Incredible Edible Bristol, Bristol Food Network, and FareShare Southwest. Bristol Pound has no representative on the Council.

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<sup>208</sup> [http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bristol-Good-Food-Plan\\_lowres.pdf](http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bristol-Good-Food-Plan_lowres.pdf)

The Bristol Food Policy Council publish the Council's "Good Food Action Plan 2015-2018", which featured Bristol Pound (see above for more details).<sup>209</sup>

### ***Bristol Good Food Alliance***

Established by the Bristol Food Policy Council, Bristol Food Network and Bristol Green Capital Partnership, the Bristol Good Food Alliance "welcomes any organisation, project, or individual working to improve the food system for the city."<sup>210</sup>

The Bristol Pound is not a member of the Bristol Good Food Alliance.

### **Bristol Pound and co-operative working (operational)**

#### ***FarmLink***

In 2013, Bristol Pound launched the FarmLink initiative, which aims to support local growers and producers by encouraging catering and retail managers in the city to purchase from them – using £B, of

course.<sup>211</sup> In turn, the local growers and producers would be exempt from paying a small transaction fee to exchange their Bristol Pounds back unto Pound Sterling.

However, this small transaction fee seems to no longer be in place for any businesses. Indeed, a blog entry on the £B website notes that the Bank of England prevented Bristol Pound from using the exchange rate as a leverage tool.<sup>212</sup> Several areas of the £B website clearly state that business owners are able to change their £B back into Pound Sterling at no extra cost, although they are encouraged to try and spend their £B with other local businesses.<sup>213</sup>

FarmLink was included as a delivery example in Bristol's 2016 SFC Silver application.<sup>214</sup> It is also mentioned in the Good Food Action Plan 2015-2018.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> [http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bristol-Good-Food-Plan\\_lowres.pdf](http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bristol-Good-Food-Plan_lowres.pdf)

<sup>210</sup> <https://www.bristolgoodfoodalliance.org>

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<sup>211</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/the-bristol-pound-farmlink-evolution/>

<sup>212</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/the-bristol-pound-farmlink-evolution/>

<sup>213</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/faq/>

<sup>214</sup> Page 48, <http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Bristol-SFC-2016-Silver1.pdf>

However, the FarmLink initiative webpages are no longer live. The most recent references to the FarmLink initiative are from 2014-15. It's safe to assume the scheme is no longer active, although it's not clear why or exactly when this happened.

### ***Real Economy Co-operative***

Bristol Pound launched the “Real Economy Co-operative” in 2013, with the aim of establishing a new food network in the city.<sup>216</sup> The most recent reference to the network was in 2017, on the Bristol Pound website.<sup>217</sup> However, the webpages are defunct and the Real Economy Co-Operative was not included in Bristol's 2016 SFC Silver application.

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<sup>215</sup> [http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bristol-Good-Food-Plan\\_lowres.pdf](http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bristol-Good-Food-Plan_lowres.pdf)

<sup>216</sup> <https://www.bristol247.com/lifestyle/shops/fresh-affordable-food-available-to-everyone/#>

<sup>217</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/7-ways-to-change-the-world-right-now-like-this-minute-if-you-live-in-bristol/>

### ***The Bristol Pound network***

The £B in some ways operates as its own network. When businesses members agree to take the £B, they “join a trusted network of businesses that share [their] values”.<sup>218</sup> The £B blog is very actively updated, there are frequent networking events for businesses, and one of the ‘soft’ benefits of using the Bristol Pound is that it facilitates connection and conversation between its users.<sup>219</sup>

### **Bristol Pound and the SFC (Sustainable Food Cities)**

The project aligns most closely with SFC priority 4: promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy.

Under this section of Bristol's 2016 Silver Award Application, the £B is described as supporting “local independent retailers by making them more visible, it strengthens the local economy by keeping more money circulating locally and it helps link local producers with local retailers.”<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/join-business/>

<sup>219</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/join-individual/>

<sup>220</sup> Page 39, <http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Bristol-SFC-2016-Silver1.pdf>

Similarly, the Bristol Pound is listed on the SFC website's list of City Initiatives that promote a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy.

### Challenges and limitations

#### **Funding**

As recently as January 2020, the Bristol Pound drew attention to their need for further grant funding in a blog post on their website, writing:

*"... we are still a couple of years off being self-sufficient financially, and we need funding to cover this gap. We have been largely reliant on grants up to this point, but over the last three years, we have found it increasingly difficult to raise grant funding for our work. As a result, we now find ourselves facing difficult decisions. Unless we are able to secure significant funding for the existing digital currency*

*operation by the end of February, we will have to start the process of winding it down in early March."*<sup>221</sup>

However, in early March 2020 an unnamed partner was found, which secured the continuation of the £B.<sup>222</sup>

#### **Infrastructure**

Using the Bristol Pound is, frankly, quite complicated.

Businesses who wish to accept £B need to open a bank account with Bristol Credit Union. With the £B they receive, they can then choose to buy from other local businesses who accept £B, or transfer the Bristol Pounds back into Pound Sterling via the app. Businesses are able to deposit cash Bristol Pounds into their BCU bank account via any 'Cash Point Plus'.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/why-the-bristol-pound-has-to-change/>

<sup>222</sup> <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-pounds-digital-currency-saved-3908046>

<sup>223</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/faq/>

Customers who wish to pay with £B need to transfer Pound Sterling into Bristol Pounds on the £B app, or get £B cash from a dedicated cashpoint. Digital Bristol Pounds can easily be transferred back into Pound Sterling easily, but cash £B cannot be exchanged for ordinary cash.<sup>224</sup>

Additionally, processing payments made with Bristol Pounds is an administrative challenge, especially for local businesses with small teams. Diana Finch explained that from a bookkeeping perspective, asking businesses to change their procurement practices was “unrealistic and unreasonable”. She acknowledged that the Bristol Pound failed to consider the pragmatic aspects of its operation, and therefore found it difficult to engage the small independent businesses it was trying to support.

Since the £B was launched in 2012, contactless and smartphone payments have become the norm, and fewer people are handling cash. The Bristol Pound app does not support contactless payments; digital payments work via a text system that can take a few minutes

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<sup>224</sup> *ibid*

to process.<sup>225</sup> Bristol Pound needs to keep up with the pace of change to ensure its longevity.

To support this mission, Bristol Pound are currently developing a new online platform. This new venture is one reason they needed to secure additional funding (see above)<sup>226</sup>.

### ***Public opinion***

Since £B announced the need for additional funding in January 2020, several published articles have questioned public appetite for the scheme. Right-wing journalist Christopher Snowden criticised the £B in his article “The demise of the Bristol Pound shows the folly of local currencies”, in which he argues that the scheme’s economic logic is flawed, and that its high running costs make it unfeasible.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/local-currencies-dead>

<sup>226</sup> <https://bristolpound.org/why-the-bristol-pound-has-to-change/>

<sup>227</sup> <https://capx.co/the-demise-of-the-bristol-pound-shows-the-folly-of-local-currencies/>



In March 2020 the Bristol Post ran an article called “What ever happened to the Bristol Pound?”, which argued that local businesses and individuals were no longer trading in Bristol Pounds with any regularity. In the same month, left-leaning online news outlet Wired published an article that questioned whether the £B had been successful in protecting the local high street, and suggested that the future of local currencies might be rooted more in LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) or redeemable behaviour rewards.<sup>228</sup>

Taken together, these articles suggest that aspects of the Bristol Pound scheme may be losing favour with members of the general public. The Bristol Pound has potentially become a niche project, supported by a few passionate people but without the mainstream support it needs to be successful.

Diana Finch confirmed this, and identified Bristol Pound’s approach to audience engagement as something of a lost opportunity. Diana explained that at its inception, £B sought to engage those “who already thought like us”. The first wave of members were fairly

easily recruited, and largely conformed to a middle-class, well educated, left wing demographic. By “setting the bar too high”, £B didn’t appeal to “ordinary, everyday people”. By taking an explicitly anti-big business stance, £B placed themselves in opposition to those who shop at the big supermarkets. “We lost out on those who shop at Tesco regularly. And what about those who work there? We didn’t appeal to those groups at all,” Diana reflected.

### Conclusion

When it was launched in 2012, the Bristol Pound was widely hailed as a local success story. It received substantial support and publicity from Bristol City Council, and enjoyed a strong working relationship with the Bristol Credit Union.

Over 800 businesses have signed up to accept the currency, but this is only part of the story. The Bristol Post found that many businesses who had once signed up to the £B have now quietly stopped accepting it; or else fewer customers are using it to pay for goods and services.

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<sup>228</sup> <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/local-currencies-dead>

Bristol Pound CIC does not appear to be well integrated into policy networks within Bristol. Although £B is often included in plans and strategies as a local best practice example, the Bristol Pound CIC does not sit on any strategic boards or directly input into any top-level policy conversations.

Indeed, it seems that Bristol Pound CIC have positioned themselves, or are trying to establish themselves, as a separate umbrella organisation. Their Real Economy Co-Operative and FarmLink activities have ceased, but similar work is now being done by other food groups and networks in the city. This suggests that Bristol Pound CIC, while being on the same wavelength as other organisations in the city, chose to establish something outside of the established food networks that already existed.

Meanwhile, the Bristol Pound app and infrastructure does not support contactless payments, and making digital payments via the app is fiddly. Fewer people are using cash in general. These are both major barriers to the success of the project.

### Further questions and research

“The Town Pound: A Network of Local High Street E-currencies” research project – what was the outcome of this? Evidence of Bristol leading the way

Bristol Pound launched the “Real Economy Co-operative” in 2014, with the aim of establishing a new food network in the city. Website no longer works, no recent evidence for it online. Why is it no longer operating? What role did the Bristol Pound play in the network?

More info on how Bristol Pound features in official BCC policy – e.g. Bristol Good Food Plan 2015-18.

Bristol FarmLink scheme – why did it end?

## Key issue 5: Transforming catering and food procurement



## Growing Middlesbrough

### What is Growing Middlesbrough?

Growing Middlesbrough is the brand through which Middlesbrough Food Partnership originally promoted their work.<sup>229</sup> It was created in 2015 by Middlesbrough Environment City, the independent charity that co-ordinates Middlesbrough Food Partnership.<sup>230</sup> However, the Growing Middlesbrough brand has since been superseded by the ‘Middlesbrough Food Partnership’ brand, although Growing Middlesbrough is still widely used and recognised.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20SFC%20Bronze%20Award%20application%20design%20ed.pdf>

<sup>230</sup>

[http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends31/0001070131\\_AC\\_20160331\\_E\\_C.PDF](http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends31/0001070131_AC_20160331_E_C.PDF)

<sup>231</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20SFC%20Silver%20Application%202019.pdf>

As a project, Growing Middlesbrough encourages local businesses to purchase goods and ingredients that have been grown or produced within 50 miles of Middlesbrough.<sup>232</sup>

Businesses can sign up to become a part of Growing Middlesbrough, and customers can choose to shop or eat at businesses displaying the Growing Middlesbrough logo. It acts as a network of local food growers, producers, and retailers, and provides information for the public.<sup>233</sup>

Growing Middlesbrough run a number of events, such as Local Food Weekends, and maintains a directory of local businesses that have signed up to the network.

### What does Growing Middlesbrough aim to achieve?

Growing Middlesbrough aims “to promote local sustainable food and the ambitions of the Food Action Plan”.<sup>234</sup> More specifically,

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<sup>232</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/>

<sup>233</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/growing-middlesbrough/>

<sup>234</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Mid>



the Growing Middlesbrough initiative “works to address issues related to the supply of and demand for local food.”<sup>235</sup>

By encouraging businesses to procure locally grown and produced goods and products, Growing Middlesbrough aims to support the local economy, reduce the carbon footprint of the supply chain, and supply fresher, better quality food to businesses and customers.<sup>236</sup>

Through public-facing campaigns and events such as Local Food Weekends, Growing Middlesbrough also aims to “raise the profile of local food”.<sup>237</sup>

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dlesbrough%20SFC%20Bronze%20Award%20application%20design ed.pdf

<sup>235</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/One-Planet-Living-annual-review-2018.pdf>

<sup>236</sup> <https://vimeo.com/groups/501550/videos/241546134>

<sup>237</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20Food%20Partnership%20June%202013%20SFCconf.pdf>

## How does it work?

Growers, producers, wholesalers, retailers, caterers and veg box schemes can sign up to Growing Middlesbrough for free, but they have to meet certain criteria. For example, caterers must use at least two basic ingredients from within 50 miles of Middlesbrough and have a 3\* hygiene rating, while food retailers must sell at least 4 products from within 50 miles of Middlesbrough.<sup>238</sup>

Being a part of the project allows businesses to use the Growing Middlesbrough logo, attend free events and workshops, and be listed on the Growing Middlesbrough website and directory.<sup>239</sup>

## How is Growing Middlesbrough set up?

Middlesbrough Environment City Trust (MEC), an independent charity, established Growing Middlesbrough as part of its wider ‘One Planet Middlesbrough: Creating Sustainable Communities’ project. The One Planet Middlesbrough project ran from 2013-2017,

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<sup>238</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/Growing%20Middlesbrough%20-%20Criteria%20A4.pdf>

<sup>239</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/about-us/>

and the financial records suggest that Growing Middlesbrough was created around 2015/16.<sup>240</sup>

Middlesbrough still use the One Planet framework to deliver its sustainability and environmental work, but it seems that the ‘Creating Sustainable Communities’ project is no longer active.<sup>241</sup> However, Growing Middlesbrough continues to run, and is still delivered and managed through MEC.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup>

[http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends31/0001070131\\_AC\\_20160331\\_E\\_C.PDF](http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends31/0001070131_AC_20160331_E_C.PDF)

<sup>241</sup>  
<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/One%20Planet%20Middlesbrough%20Action%20Plan%202017%20-%202025.pdf>

<sup>242</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/GrowingMiddlesbrough/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/GrowingMiddlesbrough/about/?ref=page_internal)

MEC now chair the Middlesbrough Food Partnership, and developed Middlesbrough’s Food Action Plan; Growing Middlesbrough feeds into this activity.<sup>243</sup>

As a result, Growing Middlesbrough does not have a dedicated team or an independent structure. It is part of MEC’s wider work, and forms a strategic brand under which they can cluster their local food business activity.

Growing Middlesbrough has a food procurement sub-group, which includes members of the Middlesbrough Council procurement team.<sup>244</sup>

### ***Key contacts***

- **Joe Dunne**, Food Partnership Manager, Middleborough  
Environment City: [joe.dunne@menvcity.org.uk](mailto:joe.dunne@menvcity.org.uk)

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<sup>243</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/about-us/>

<sup>244</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20SFC%20Silver%20Application%202019.pdf>

- **Val Lambert**, Health Projects Manager, Middlesbrough Environment City: [Val.Lambert@menvcity.org.uk](mailto:Val.Lambert@menvcity.org.uk)

### How is Growing Middlesbrough funded?

Middlesbrough Environment City received a £1m grant from the Communities Living Sustainably Lottery fund in 2012 in order to establish and run its One Planet Middlesbrough: Creating Sustainable Communities initiative.<sup>245</sup> They also received additional smaller pots of funding from industry partners in order to support specific projects in their remit.<sup>246</sup>

More recently, Incredible Edible received £9,600 from the Lottery to strengthen and develop their network.<sup>247</sup> This project is called Roots

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<sup>245</sup>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/grants/0030111578>

<sup>246</sup>

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/One%20Planet%20Living%20Annual%20Review%202017.pdf>

<sup>247</sup>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/grants/0031051627>

and Branches, and is structured around regional co-ordinators to support local groups. Joe Dunne (see contacts) is the Roots and Branches North East Co-ordinator.<sup>248</sup> Through this project, it looks like Incredible Edible is supporting Growing Middlesbrough as part of their partnership with MEC.

MEC also receives funding from Middlesbrough Council's public health budget for its role in chairing the Middlesbrough Food Partnership.<sup>249</sup> This partnership has developed Middlesbrough's Food Action Plan, of which Growing Middlesbrough is a key component.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> <https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/organisation-information/>

<sup>249</sup> <https://www.foodmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Governance-and-Structures-Guide-Final.pdf>

<sup>250</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20Food%20Action%20Plan%202017%20-%202019.pdf>



## Impact

The Growing Middlesbrough directory currently lists 105 local businesses.<sup>251</sup> Manufacturers/producers and farmers make up around half this list, and there are 36 cafes/restaurants. However, other sources claim that there are 120 businesses on the database; perhaps some businesses have not renewed their membership, or failed to meet some of the requirements?

Growing Middlesbrough used to hold regular ‘Local Food Weekends’ events a few times each year; the most recent was in 2017. Between roughly 12-20 cafes, bars and restaurants took part in each event.<sup>252</sup> Considering Growing Middlesbrough’s large directory of businesses, it’s a shame more businesses didn’t elect to take part; it doesn’t look like the businesses needed to do anything particular in order to participate. It would be interesting to know how this event was co-ordinated, and what incentives were offered

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<sup>251</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/food-businesses/>

<sup>252</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/events/>

to businesses and to customers to take part. How did MEC track how many members of the public took advantage of the Local Food Weekends?

When talking to us about the project, Joe Dunne highlighted the strong relationships Growing Middlesbrough had built with local anchor institutions, including Teesside University, Middlesbrough College, and the local council. Getting buy-in from influential and highly visible local organisations was just as important as working with small local businesses. In general, “getting the right level of buy-in from the right people” was crucial for Growing Middlesbrough’s success. The project benefited from having the right people in the right place at the right time, and by building rapport with key senior people from those organisations.

Joe summarised their approach to networking as “name and fame”. In other words, publicise and promote the people supporting Growing Middlesbrough, and encourage others to join the project.

### ***Online presence***

- **GOOGLE SEARCH FOR “GROWING MIDDLEBOROUGH” GENERATED 1,020 RESULTS**
- **TWITTER ACCOUNT (@GrowingMbro) HAS 388 FOLLOWERS, AND 329 TWEETS**
- **FACEBOOK PAGE (@GROWINGMIDDLESBROUGH) HAS 873 ‘LIKES’ AND 905 FOLLOWERS**
- **NO INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT, BUT THERE ARE 56 POSTS WITH THE #GROWINGMIDDLESBROUGH TAG**

### **Growing Middlesbrough and co-operative working (operational)**

Through MEC, Growing Middlesbrough works in partnership with staff from Middlesbrough College, Middlesbrough Council, and Teesside University.<sup>253</sup> For example, Teesside University sources

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<sup>253</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/One-Planet-Living-annual-review-2018.pdf>

food from local suppliers as part of Growing Middlesbrough, as highlighted in their 2017/18 Environmental Report.<sup>254</sup>

Growing Middlesbrough holds several events, such as Local Food Weekends, with producers and interested businesses in its network.<sup>255</sup> However, activity on this seems to have diminished; the last Local Food Weekend was in 2017.<sup>256</sup> The SFC 2019 Silver Award claims that Growing Middlesbrough ran “two additional Local Food Markets” in 2018/19, but I could find no further information about these events. However, the Growing Middlesbrough website does have a directory of local food markets.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup>

<https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Environment/AnnualEnvironmentalReport2018.pdf>

<sup>255</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20SFC%20Silver%20Application%202019.pdf>

<sup>256</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/events/>

<sup>257</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/gm/markets/>

Middlesbrough Council’s procurement team have also been working with the Middlesbrough Food Partnership on ways to promote local food procurement in its next policy refresh.<sup>258</sup> However, it’s not clear when this will be published; their most recent procurement strategy dates from 2009.<sup>259</sup>

However, Middlesbrough Council’s commissioning and procurement website pages include a section called “Buy Boro”. Here, the local council outlines its commitment to “spend as much [of its procurement budget] as possible with Middlesbrough and Tees Valley based businesses”.<sup>260</sup> This is very much in line with the aims of Growing Middlesbrough, but the Buy Boro pages make no reference to food procurement or to the Growing Middlesbrough initiative.

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<sup>258</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20SFC%20Silver%20Application%202019.pdf>

<sup>259</sup> [https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Procure-Corporate\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Procure-Corporate_Strategy.pdf)

<sup>260</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/business/commissioning-and-procurement/buy-boro>

## Growing Middlesbrough and co-operative working (strategic)

### ***Spatial Impact***

Plate 3 (overleaf) shows the distribution of sites through the Growing Middlesbrough scheme. Unlike other similar schemes, such as Growing Manchester, Growing Birmingham and others, sites are more spatially distributed and away from the urban. This enables impact in the peri-urban and rural landscapes, unlike other schemes that are more city focused in nature. The IMD analysis shows that Middlesbrough is still ranked poorly in terms of deprivation; a review of earlier data shows minimal impact in terms of this larger metric.

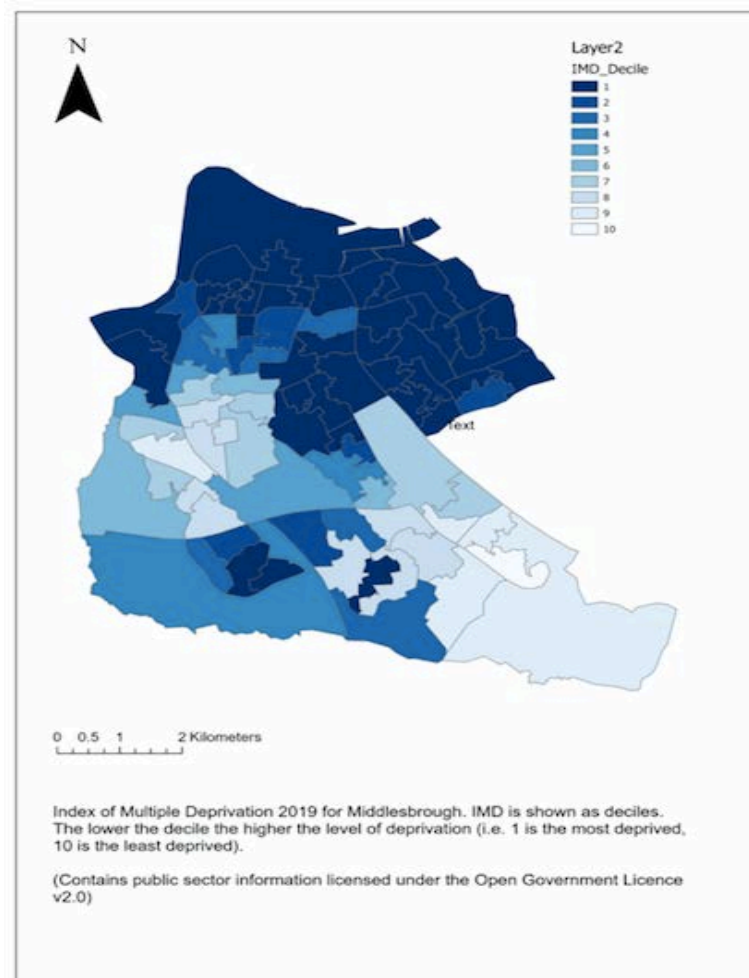
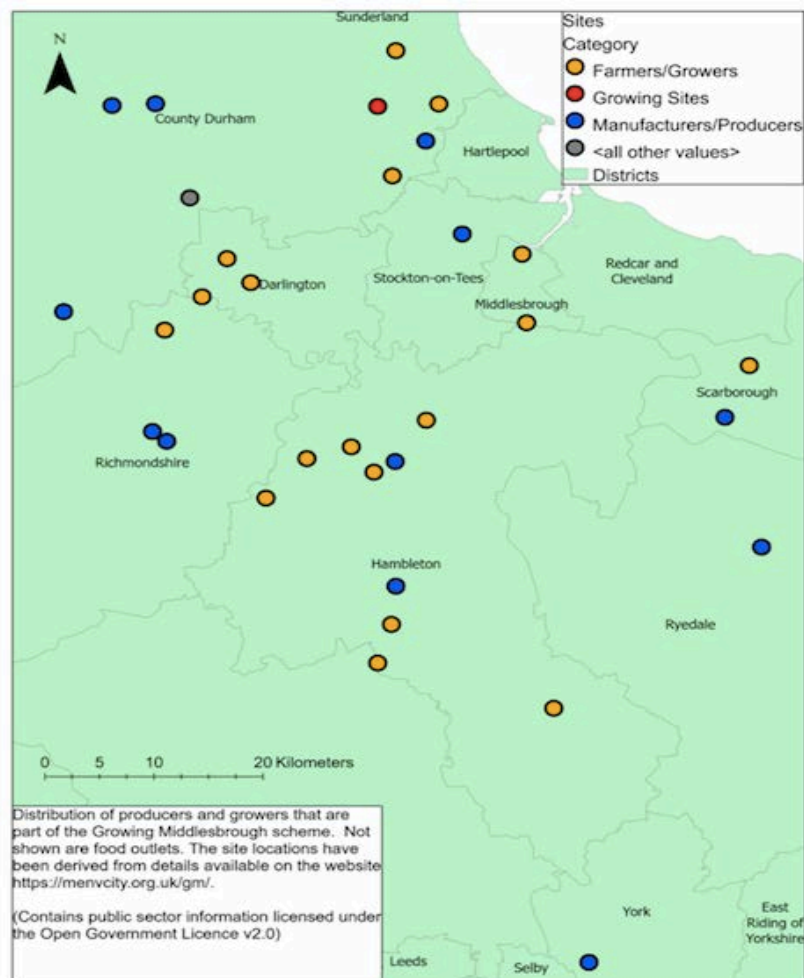


Plate 3: Growing Middlesbrough sites (left) and IMD analysis (right)

### ***Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC)***

Growing Middlesbrough does not feature by name in MEC's Annual Report 2018/19.<sup>261</sup> This document doesn't mention anything about procurement or the local food economy. However, it does refer to the MEC's work with Incredible Edible and refers to a project that focuses on "increasing the use of locally produced food".<sup>262</sup> It seems odd that MEC would not want to champion the Growing Middlesbrough brand, especially as Middlesbrough's 2019 SFC application highlighted Growing Middlesbrough as a strong and widely recognised brand.

### ***Middlesbrough Food Action Plan***

Growing Middlesbrough forms part of Middlesbrough's Food Action Plan 2017/19, which is published by MEC on behalf of the Middlesbrough Food Partnership.<sup>263</sup> The project was clearly in its early stages when the Action Plan was written, as one of the targets

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<sup>261</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MEC-Annual-Report-18-19.pdf>

<sup>262</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MEC-Annual-Report-18-19.pdf>

<sup>263</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/gm/about-us/>

in place for Growing Middlesbrough was to get 10 businesses signed up to the directory by the end of the year.<sup>264</sup>

Growing Middlesbrough is not mentioned in Middlesbrough's Food Action Plan 2015/16. Though we know that the Growing Middlesbrough brand was established after this document was published, the 2015/16 Food Action Plan interestingly doesn't refer to establishing the Growing Middlesbrough brand. The nearest we get is a commitment to "Develop ways of promoting local suppliers and their produce to increase the availability of sustainable food."<sup>265</sup> This action is "under consideration", according to the Plan.

This begs the question of how closely Growing Middlesbrough aligns with the other activities and wider goals associated with MEC and the Middlesbrough Food Partnership. It clearly was not a strategic priority for the Partnership, and the fact that Growing

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<sup>264</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MFP-Food-Action-Plan-2017.pdf>

<sup>265</sup> Page 8,  
<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/charters/MEC-Food-Action-Plan-for-PDF.pdf>

Middlesbrough was established so late in the One Planet Middlesbrough: Creating Sustainable Communities project implies that this was something of an afterthought there, too.

### ***One Planet Middlesbrough***

Growing Middlesbrough was originally established as part of the One Planet Middlesbrough project, which ran from 2013-2017. There is a reference in the One Planet Middlesbrough Action Plan 2016-2025 to “Develop Growing Middlesbrough brand through the One Planet Middlesbrough project by September 2016”.<sup>266</sup> However, Growing Middlesbrough is not mentioned at all in the One Planet Middlesbrough Action Plan 2017-25.<sup>267</sup> It seems strange that the project would be removed when updating the Action Plan. Even though the One Planet Middlesbrough project has come to an end, Middlesbrough is still a ‘One Planet Living City’, and seems to

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<sup>266</sup>

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/OPM%20Action%20Plan%202016%20-%202025.pdf>

<sup>267</sup>

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/One%20Planet%20Middlesbrough%20Action%20Plan%202017%20-%202025.pdf>

be using the 2017-25 Action Plan to guide its work around environmental sustainability.<sup>268</sup>

### ***Middlesbrough Council***

Growing Middlesbrough is not mentioned specifically in Middlesbrough Council’s Corporate Procurement Strategy; indeed, food is not mentioned at all. However, sustainability is listed as one of the core values, and under this section we are told that all council procurement decisions will “support the One Planet Living agenda”; One Planet Middlesbrough being, of course, Growing Middlesbrough’s parent project.<sup>269</sup>

### ***Growing Middlesbrough and the SFC (Sustainable Food Cities)***

Middlesbrough joined the SFC network in 2014, and in 2017 was awarded a Bronze award. In 2019, Middlesbrough successfully bid

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<sup>268</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/environment-and-public-protection/one-planet-living>

<sup>269</sup>

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Middlesbrough-Council-corporate-procurement-strategy-2017-20.pdf>

for a Silver SFC award, and is one of only 4 places in the UK to be awarded Silver.<sup>270</sup>

The Growing Middlesbrough project is mentioned 48 times in Middlesbrough's 2019 SFC Silver Award application, under key issues 1 (health), 4 (food economy), and 5 (procurement).<sup>271</sup>

In the healthy foods section, Growing Middlesbrough is introduced as a public campaign and an umbrella brand to promote the work associated with Middlesbrough's SFC application. With regards to the local food economy, the SFC application advocates Growing Middlesbrough's work in creating a directory of local food producers and suppliers, in addition to Growing Middlesbrough's markets and local food events. In terms of procurement, Growing Middlesbrough's efforts in connecting small local producers with large-scale buyers such as the local council are highlighted.

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<sup>270</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/sustainable-food-cities-silver-award/>  
<sup>271</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Middlesbrough%20SFC%20Silver%20Application%202019.pdf>

On the SFC website, there is a section of good practice examples for each of the key areas. Under “Promote healthy, sustainable and independent food businesses to consumers”, Growing Middlesbrough is listed as an example.<sup>272</sup>

## Challenges and limitations

### ***Strategic placement and branding***

Growing Middlesbrough is described in some places as an umbrella brand and a public campaign, and in others as an operational project with defined aims and activities. It has been difficult to get a definite handle on how Growing Middlesbrough interacts with other projects in the area.

Meanwhile, Growing Middlesbrough seems to have been stripped of its umbrella brand status, and has been superseded by the

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<sup>272</sup>

[https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/resources/sustainable\\_food\\_economy/id528/](https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/resources/sustainable_food_economy/id528/)



‘Middlesbrough Food Partnership’ brand for SFC-related activities. This means that the project as a whole is potentially less integrated with other food-related work in the area surrounding Middlesbrough.

Joe Dunne explained that the name ‘Growing Middlesbrough’ has limitations, as some producers from outside Middlesbrough objected to being associated so closely with the town. After all, a 50-mile radius of Middlesbrough includes places with their own identities, such as Newcastle, Durham, Whitby, and Scarborough.

### ***Changing structure***

Growing Middlesbrough was established towards the end of the One Planet Middlesbrough project, which was Lottery funded. When the One Planet Middlesbrough project ended, Growing Middlesbrough continued as part of MEC, the organisation that had managed the One Planet Middlesbrough project. Growing Middlesbrough is now a stand-alone project, delivered, alongside about 30 other activities, by MEC.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/projects/>

As a result of these shifts and changes, it’s difficult to track Growing Middlesbrough’s progress. Growing Middlesbrough’s prominence in annual reports and action plans varies between organisations, which probably reflects the project’s varying significance over time and between different organisations.

### ***Maintaining and building on momentum***

This challenge was identified by Joe Dunne, who has been a consistent point of contact for the Growing Middlesbrough project (see Contacts section). In 2017, MEC ran a conference event called ‘Beyond the Parmo’, which brought together food actors and businesses from across Middlesbrough.<sup>274</sup> Joe Dunne ran a workshop focusing on Growing Middlesbrough, and highlighted several key challenges, including “maintaining and building on momentum”.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> <https://menvcity.org.uk/gm/beyond-the-parmo/>

<sup>275</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/opm/wp-content/uploads/documents/Workshop%201%20-%20Beyond%20the%20Parmo%20-%20Joe%20Dunne.pdf>

This links with the previous issue of Growing Middlesbrough's changing structure and position. It's difficult to grow and develop a project if the staff involved are unsure of what the future holds, or new managers must be quickly brought up to speed on an existing project's quirks and needs. Changing lines of command, reporting needs, and team structures have probably hindered the ability of Growing Middlesbrough to achieve its maximum impact.

### **Funding**

The need for Growing Middlesbrough to become self-financing was also highlighted in Joe Dunne's 'Beyond the Parmo' workshop.<sup>276</sup>

A scrutiny report on MEC dating from 2013 states that all but 2.5 of MEC's staff positions are paid for by grant funding (the remaining 2.5 positions are paid for by the council). Although much may have

changed for MEC since 2013, it's likely that a large majority of MEC's staff are still financed through charitable grants.<sup>277</sup>

MEC's financial records do not provide information for Growing Middlesbrough specifically, but in 2018/19 MEC received £32,362 from the Big Lottery Fund for the One Planet Middlesbrough project.<sup>278</sup> A difficulty for Growing Middlesbrough is that it doesn't have a specific pot of funding to support its work. Instead, the staff who work on the project – from the looks of it, only Joe Dunne – is paid for by a grant fund for a wider, larger project, and Growing Middlesbrough sits under Mr Dunne's remit as an 'extra' project.

In speaking with Joe Dunne, he said that ideally Growing Middlesbrough would become financially sustainable, and be able to pay for itself. There are a few different options as to what this could

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<sup>276</sup> <http://menvcity.org.uk/opm/wp-content/uploads/documents/Workshop%201%20-%20Beyond%20the%20Parmo%20-%20Joe%20Dunne.pdf>

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<sup>277</sup> Report available here  
<http://democracy.middlesbrough.gov.uk/aksmiddlesbrough/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=ESP&meet=1023&arc=71>

<sup>278</sup> 2019 Annual Report and Financial Statements, available here  
<https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/03386853/filing-history>

look like. While these are not actively being explored at the moment, hopefully in time Growing Middlesbrough will find a way of monetising its activity in order to cover the costs of staffing and running the project.

### Conclusion

Growing Middlesbrough has a clear aim, and a simple function. It registers food growers, producers, and retailers who meet its requirements on a directory. In turn, the businesses that form the network are committed to purchasing goods and services from within the local area. As such, the project raises demand for local food within and around Middlesbrough, and acts as a network for all the businesses involved. Additionally, it provides the public with information on where they can buy locally produced food for themselves.

Growing Middlesbrough was established as part of a wider project called One Planet Middlesbrough, which was managed by Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) and funded with a £1m grant from the Big Lottery. One Planet Middlesbrough came to an

end in 2017, and Growing Middlesbrough is now managed by MEC directly.

As part of MEC, Growing Middlesbrough has no dedicated team or staff member who works on the project full-time. Instead, remit for the Growing Middlesbrough project sits with Joe Dunne as part of his role as Food Partnership Manager.

Growing Middlesbrough also does not have dedicated financial support or resources to support its work, and relies on MEC covering its costs from other funding. This makes it difficult to assess whether the project is financially viable. However, as Growing Middlesbrough does not charge businesses to become members of its network and does not generate income its activities or events, it's difficult to see how Growing Middlesbrough would become financially sustainable.

Meanwhile, the 'Growing Middlesbrough' brand was superseded by the 'Middlesbrough Food Partnership' brand as the umbrella under which Middlesbrough's SFC work was co-ordinated. The Growing

Middlesbrough brand is still recognised and active, but its precise role in terms of a public-facing marketing tool is less defined.

These three factors have limited Growing Middlesbrough's ability to achieve its maximum potential. It has around 100 businesses registered as participants in the scheme on its directory, but this figure alone does not give much insight into how active or invested these businesses are in Growing Middlesbrough's work.

For example, in 2017 Growing Middlesbrough ran several 'Local Food Weekends' events, with around 12-20 businesses participating. This is a small proportion of their network, especially considering the businesses didn't have to do anything extra in order to take part.

Growing Middlesbrough has not hosted any public events since 2017, and its last post on Facebook is from September 2019.<sup>279</sup> However, the project was featured heavily in Middlesbrough's 2019 SFC Silver Award application. MEC have clearly made the decision to maintain the Growing Middlesbrough project, presumably

because it meets certain strategic criteria, but are not interested or in a position to invest the required time and resources to grow the project beyond its current state.

#### **Further questions and research**

- When businesses sign up to Growing Middlesbrough, how long does their accreditation last? Are checks done at regular intervals to ensure Growing Middlesbrough's criteria are being met?
- For Growing Middlesbrough's food events, what incentives were there (if any) for businesses and for the public to participate? E.g, discounts on meals at participating restaurants, promotion or recognition for businesses?
- How successful were the food events? How many members of the public took part? How was this measured?
- How is MEC staff time allocated? Would Growing Middlesbrough benefit from more resources? Is there appetite/demand at MEC to develop the project further?

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<sup>279</sup> <https://en-gb.facebook.com/GrowingMiddlesbrough/>

- Why is Growing Middlesbrough not included or highlighted by name in MEC's strategic plans?
- Middlesbrough Council have "buy Boro" section on procurement pages – but no link to Growing Middlesbrough?
- How is the project funded now? Does it still rely on grant funding, or are the running costs low enough to recoup the expense elsewhere without additional funding?

## Key issue 6: Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system





## Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show

### What is the Stockport Food and Drink Trade show?

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show was an event for traders and producers operating within a 60-mile radius of Stockport.<sup>280</sup> The event took place in June 2018 at The Market Place, and included 59 exhibitors and a full programme of speakers.<sup>281</sup>

The event was organised by FoodSync, as part of a contract with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC).<sup>282</sup>

### What does the Stockport Food and Drink Trade show aim to achieve?

The event was aimed at food and drink industry professionals, from retailers and producers to managers of hotels and restaurants. The aim was to offer “the opportunity for chefs, operators and

restaurateurs to see and try new products, and broker supply partnerships”.<sup>283</sup>

By building links and connections between local food and drinks producers and local buyers, the event encouraged businesses in an around Stockport to do more trade with one another. By doing so, businesses could help reduce the carbon footprint of their supply chain and support more environmentally sustainable ways of doing business.

In line with this vision of creating a food community in Stockport, Jemma Hynes (see contacts) explained that the event’s banners and marketing read: “Come together and share ideas”. There was desire to build a food community with shared values around aspirations and food. The trade show was designed to enable that.

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<sup>280</sup> <https://marketingstockport.co.uk/news/16084/>

<sup>281</sup> <https://fdmbnorth.co.uk/only-1-week-to-go-until-the-stockport-food-drink-trade-show>

<sup>282</sup> <http://www.foodsync.co.uk/fdts/>

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<sup>283</sup> <http://www.foodsync.co.uk/projects/stockport-food-drink-trade-show/>



More generally, the event was also a chance to “showcase [Stockport’s] great food & drink offering, celebrating the best in local provenance” and strengthening the restaurant and food trade scene in the area.<sup>284</sup>

### How did it work?

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show consisted of three elements:

- exhibitor stalls, 10:00-16:00, Stockport Market Place
- programme of speakers, 10:30-14:30, St Mary’s Church (opposite the Market Place)
- informal Award ceremony, 17:00-19:00, Robinsons Brewery (5 minutes walk away)

The cost to exhibitors for a stall was £100. This is much lower than many food festivals and trade shows; for example, Cup North coffee festival charges upwards of £250 per stall.<sup>285</sup> The low cost of a stall

made the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show accessible to smaller, independent food and drinks businesses that would typically not exhibit at industry events.

Exhibitors were not permitted to sell their goods. Instead, the Trade Show was an opportunity for them to provide free samples, to talk in-depth about their business and their products, and to build relationships with other industry professionals. The focus of the event was on sustainability and provenance, so exhibitors were expected to be able to field questions and provide information about where their products came from, and how these goods had been processed.

The event was free to attend, but attendees had to verify that they were connected to the food and drinks industry and register online beforehand.

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<sup>284</sup> <https://marketingstockport.co.uk/news/16084/>

<sup>285</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a7460f579fb39c71d05ca>

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[2/t/5e52716b2bf5dc55cc14c23d/1582461351356/MCF20+EXHIBITOR.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a7460f579fb39c71d05ca/2/t/5e52716b2bf5dc55cc14c23d/1582461351356/MCF20+EXHIBITOR.pdf)

### How did the event come about?

FoodSync has a longstanding working relationship with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), and was delivering programmes of support and development for food and drinks businesses as early as 2016.<sup>286</sup> FoodSync’s initial role in Stockport was to work with individual food and drinks businesses in the area, to help them create more resilient business structures and to support their strategic development.

As part of a 2017 evaluation of Stockport’s Food and Drink sector FoodSync identified:

*“[the] need to find longer term mechanisms of engagement, improve communication between the sector and the Council, and seek to fill in the gaps in knowledge and skills”.*<sup>287</sup>

In turn, SMBC acknowledged “the potential and the need for specialist support to foster this sector”.<sup>288</sup>

Following a competitive tender process, FoodSync was awarded a 12-month contract to support food and drinks businesses, which included delivery of a Food and Drink Trade Show.<sup>289</sup>

### **Key contacts**

- Jemma Hynes, CEO FoodSync: [jemma@foodsinc.co.uk](mailto:jemma@foodsinc.co.uk)

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<sup>286</sup>

<http://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=1312>  
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<sup>287</sup>

<http://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=1312>  
54

<sup>288</sup>

<http://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=1312>  
53

<sup>289</sup> *ibid*

- Laura Frost, Marketing Manager at Clarke Nicklin:  
laurafrost@clarkenicklin.co.uk

- Dedicated Twitter account @FDTrdeSK (no longer active):

### How is the Stockport Food and Drink Trade show funded?

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show was part of a contract from SMBC. The initial bid covered staff time of 12 days, although organising the event took much longer than this. Following the success of the event, FoodSync provided SMBC with the projected costs of running the event again; around £30,000 in total.

In addition to the main contract, the Trade Show received sponsorship from Stephensons, a local catering supply company, and from Clarke Nicklin, a Stockport-based firm offering chartered accountancy and business advice services.<sup>290</sup>

### Engagement

#### ***Online presence***

- Google search generated 182 results

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<sup>290</sup> <http://www.clarkenicklin.co.uk/news/12-news/202-june-2018-shortlist-announced-for-first-food-drink-awards>

Month	#Tweets	#Profile visits	New followers	Mentions	Impressions
June	110	2788	153	385	95,000
May	113	992	128	145	41,800
April	49	457	55	48	20,300
March	42	509	56	16	13,300
Feb	18	251	13	2	2,565

### ***Key stats from the event:***

- 59 exhibitors (60 contracted)
- over 500 people registered to attend
- 175 people attended
- 12 speakers
- 60 guests at the Awards ceremony

### ***Media coverage***

The Trade Show was featured in the following publications and websites:

- Marketing Stockport<sup>291</sup>
- Bar Magazine<sup>292</sup>
- Taste of Manchester<sup>293</sup>
- Food and Drink Means Business North<sup>294</sup>
- 86 Magazine

### **Impact**

In terms of fostering relationships between local businesses, the Stockport Food and Drink Trade show was successful. Every exhibitor came away from the event with at least one new customer,

<sup>291</sup> <https://marketingstockport.co.uk/news/16084/>

<sup>292</sup> <https://barmagazine.co.uk/stockport-to-host-new-food-and-drink-trade-show-for-north-west/>

<sup>293</sup> <http://tasteofmanchester.com/news/new-food-and-drink-trade-show-cements-stockports-foodie-mecca-status/>

<sup>294</sup> <https://fdmbnorth.co.uk/only-1-week-to-go-until-the-stockport-food-drink-trade-show>

and several secured more than one new customer. Exhibitors included Manchester Veg People, who are part of Kindling Trust, Blackjack Brewery, Seven Brothers Brewery, and Manchester Gin.<sup>295</sup>

After the Trade Show, lots of stockists and suppliers continued to work with one another, as a result of connections made at the event. By pulling together independent and locally rooted businesses under one roof and around one common goal, the Trade Show succeeded in creating a business community that continued to develop beyond the event itself.

The visitors who attended the Trade Show were industry professionals, interested in meeting and talking with real producers and retailers. Although the number of visitors was lower than the target, all those who attended were well-connected decision makers in their sectors.

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<sup>295</sup> <https://fdmbnorth.co.uk/stockport-food-drink-trade-show-in-pictures>

Additionally, the exceptionally high quality of speakers at the event demonstrated the professional legitimacy of the Trade Show. The 12 speakers included:

- **Sam Buckley, Where The Light Gets In**

Winner of “Best Newcomer 2017” and “Best Out of Town Restaurant 2018” at the Manchester Food and Drinks Awards.<sup>296</sup>

- **Matt Nutter, Allotment**

Winner of “Best Chef 2017” and “Best Vegetarian Restaurant 2017” at Manchester Food and Drinks Awards<sup>297</sup>. Also won “Best Restaurant 2018” at the CityLife awards.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> <https://confidentials.com/manchester/winners-manchester-food-drink-awards-2018>

<sup>297</sup> <https://marketingstockport.co.uk/news/stockport-restaurants-winners-food-drink-awards/>

<sup>298</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/citylife-awards-2018-manchester-winners-14216598>

- **Paul Jones, Cloudwater Brewery**

Rated 2<sup>nd</sup> best brewery in the world 2018 by RateBeer – the only UK brewery ever to make the top 10 list.<sup>299</sup> Winner of “Best Brewery 2017” at the Manchester Food and Drinks Award.<sup>300</sup>

- **Simon Martin, Mana**

Awarded Manchester’s first Michelin star in 40 years for his Ancoats-based restaurant Mana.<sup>301</sup> Also won “Restaurant of the Year” and a further 3 awards at the 2019 Manchester Food and Drinks awards.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/cloudwater-manchester-rate-beer-awards-14221847>

<sup>300</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/manchester-food-drink-awards-2017-13737737>

<sup>301</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2019/oct/11/simon-martin-mana-chef-manchester-first-michelin-star-40-years>

<sup>302</sup> <http://www.manchestersfinest.com/articles/mana-cleans-manchester-food-drink-festival-awards/>

Having these successful local voices supporting the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show created a draw and a reason for visitors to attend.

### The Stockport Food and Drink Trade show and co-operative working

Clarke Nicklin chartered accountants worked with FoodSync to organise and deliver the Trade Show. They are also the main sponsors and organisers of the Stockport Business Awards, so having them on board for the Trade Show drew on this experience and expertise.<sup>303</sup> Additionally, each award was sponsored by an individual or company.<sup>304</sup>

FoodSync also worked closely with all of the businesses exhibiting at the show. Some of them had not exhibited before, and needed support in things like creating business cards, setting up their stalls, and completing the necessary paperwork. Dealing closely with these businesses allowed FoodSync to create some real added value for

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<sup>303</sup> <http://www.clarckenicklin.co.uk/news/12-news/202-june-2018-shortlist-announced-for-first-food-drink-awards>

<sup>304</sup> <http://www.foodsync.co.uk/projects/food-drink-awards-2018/>

those exhibitors for whom this was a new experience. This strengthened FoodSync's reputation and its links with local food and drinks businesses.

FoodSync also benefited from strong support from local politicians. For example, Councillor Brian Bagnall is also a Non-Executive Director at Hydes Brewery, and was able to provide advice and support to FoodSync in putting the event together. He also supported the Trade Show and encouraged other members of SMBC to attend and lend their support.

The Trade Show received sponsorship from Stephensons, an independent catering supply company based in Stockport. Julian Lewis-Booth, a Director at Stephensons, was also a Councillor on Stockport Council at the time of the Trade Show.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup>

<http://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgDeclarationSubmission.aspx?UID=3597&HID=886&FID=0&HPID=0>

## The Stockport Food and Drink Trade show and the SFP (Sustainable Food Places)

Stockport is a member of the Sustainable Food Places network. Through Feeding Stockport, which is managed by the Kindling Trust, Stockport received funding from SFC to deliver its sustainable food projects.<sup>306</sup> FoodSync was established as a successor to Feeding Stockport; FoodSync CEO Jemma Hynes previously worked on Feeding Stockport.<sup>307</sup>

A result of these working relationships was evident at the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show. One of the exhibitors was Manchester Veg People, a project run by the Kindling Trust. They showcased fresh produce from a growing site at Woodbank Community Food Hub, which was originally set up by Jemma Hynes as part of her work on Feeding Stockport.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> <https://kindling.org.uk/FeedingStockport>

<sup>307</sup>

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/events/sfcconference2016/>

<sup>308</sup> [https://kindling.org.uk/Woodbank\\_Nursery](https://kindling.org.uk/Woodbank_Nursery)



Stockport does not have an SFC/SFP award, and although there are Stockport-based examples of good practice on the SFP website, the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show is not one of them.

### Challenges and limitations

#### ***Venue***

The event was held at Stockport Market Place, on a day that the regular market was not happening. The scale and shape of the space was difficult to adapt to exhibitors' needs. Setup had to be carefully co-ordinated so that each exhibitor could load and unload the things they needed from their vehicles, as the roads around the Market Place are very narrow.

The Food and Drink Trade Show also made use of the outside Market space, with some exhibitors pitching marquees outside. However, the weather was very bad and the marquees could not withstand the high winds. These exhibitors had to be moved inside; luckily, there was capacity for additional stalls inside.

Stockport does not have many venues that could accommodate the scale of an event like the Food and Drink Trade Show. Finding a more flexible or suitable venue is therefore a challenge. Stockport Town Hall was unsuitable, as it did not have any outside space for the hot food stalls to operate. Additionally, the Town Hall could not provide enough power for exhibitors' stalls, although hiring a generator would have addressed this issue. It was also felt that holding the event in a Council building would affiliate the Trade Show too closely with the Council, whereas an artisan/independent/grassroots feel was more in keeping with the aims of the event.

Jemma confirmed that the lack of a viable space capable of holding an event of this scale while also representing or giving the feel of "positive disruption" was one key reason that the Trade Show hasn't been run again.

#### ***Commercial potential***

Manchester is home to several food and drinks events and festivals. For example, Cup North, with a focus on coffee, sees footfall of

around 3,000 people.<sup>309</sup> The Northern Restaurant and Bar (NR&B) Trade Show gets over 8,000 visitors.<sup>310</sup> The list of NRB exhibitors includes Carlsberg, Coca Cola, Fever Tree, and Kettle Chips.<sup>311</sup>

Compared to these events, the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show had a very local focus, limiting exhibitors to producers and retailers from within 60 miles of Stockport. This meant that some larger brands and national companies did not fall within the remit of this event. Others who could have attended were felt by FoodSync to not reflect or share the ethos of the Trade Show, which was focused on provenance and sustainability. For example, Costco approached

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<sup>309</sup>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a7460f579fb39c71d05ca2/t/5e52716b2bf5dc55cc14c23d/1582461351356/MCF20+EXHIBITOR.pdf>

<sup>310</sup> <https://www.northernrestaurantandbar.co.uk/exhibiting#/>

<sup>311</sup> [https://www.northernrestaurantandbar.co.uk/exhibitor-list?&azletterfield=sort-company-number&filters.status=Standard%2CStandard%20-%20Space%2CCraft%20Beer%2CMarket%20Kitchen%2CSpirit%20Room%2CExhibiting%20Partner%2CShare%2CExhibiting%20Sponsor%2C&sortby=customfield\\_3897%20asc&searchgroup=78023244-exhibitors](https://www.northernrestaurantandbar.co.uk/exhibitor-list?&azletterfield=sort-company-number&filters.status=Standard%2CStandard%20-%20Space%2CCraft%20Beer%2CMarket%20Kitchen%2CSpirit%20Room%2CExhibiting%20Partner%2CShare%2CExhibiting%20Sponsor%2C&sortby=customfield_3897%20asc&searchgroup=78023244-exhibitors)

FoodSync to become an exhibitor but were refused. Some larger brands and companies who could have attended the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show had already committed their events budget for the year, while others were already booked for other shows at around the same time.

As a result, the Stockport Trade Show did not benefit from the sizable budget that those bigger brands have for trade and industry events. For example, the largest stalls at NRB cost upwards of £1,200 for exhibitors.<sup>312</sup> Some unverified sources have quoted as much as £30,000 for a large stall at NRB. The Stockport Trade Show did not engage those bigger national brands or draw in the level of income that those brands are able to provide.

Of course, choosing to embrace the bigger brands and opening up the event to larger national companies would not be a perfect

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<sup>312</sup>

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a7460f579fb39c71d05ca2/t/5e52716b2bf5dc55cc14c23d/1582461351356/MCF20+EXHIBITOR.pdf>

solution. The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show benefited in many ways from remaining deeply rooted in the local food scene and pursuing a more artisanal approach, focusing on sustainability and provenance over profits.

### ***Audience***

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show was deliberately niche. The event was not aimed at the general public, and although the event was marketed publicly, attendees had to verify that they were linked to the food and drinks industry.

This limited the number of potential attendees, especially considering that many of the people who would attend would also likely be planning to attend NRB, and may not want to attend both events.

Opening the event up to the public and charging for tickets would generate more revenue for the event, but it would cease to function as a trade show. Catering exclusively to industry professionals ensures that Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show maintains its USP, and helps to foster a professional, trustworthy reputation

among exhibitors that this event would be beneficial for their business.

### ***Funding***

Organising and running this event was very time intensive for the staff involved. Other costs, such as marketing and branding materials, were also considerable. The cost of running the event again was estimated at £30,000.

Events such as the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show can only be successful if they happen at scale. Very few visitors are going to attend to see only a handful of stalls, and it's highly unlikely that an exhibitor will pay for a stall at an event with no footfall and little industry presence.

Running an event at any scale will be a demand on time and resources, and it's important that there is the budget to cover this, even in the early years when an event is establishing itself.

## Conclusion

The Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show was successful in achieving its aims of bringing together local food businesses, suppliers, and retailers. By forging these links and encouraging businesses to trade with each other, the Trade Show has helped shorten the supply chain for many of these businesses. The Trade show ensured that issues of sustainability and provenance were firmly on the agenda for exhibitors and visitors, and those businesses not considered to be aligned with these values were not permitted to exhibit.

The success of the show was due to a number of factors, including the strong roster of speakers and the amount of time and energy dedicated to organising the event by FoodSync staff. The calibre and quality of speakers – award-winning chefs and brewers, and many up-and-coming businesses – helped to establish the Trade Show as part of the food and drink scene in Stockport. Additionally, the staff at FoodSync worked beyond the time allocated by their bid in order to deliver the project at the scale and quality to ensure its success.

However, the Trade Show was limited by the Market Place venue, as the space is not very flexible and the roads that surround it are narrow, making deliveries and other operational activities more difficult. Stockport does not have many other venues that could accommodate an event like the Trade show, which makes this challenge difficult to overcome.

Additionally, as a local Trade Show the Stockport event was not in a position to attract larger national brands and companies – and nor did it want to. As a trade-only show, the event also limited the number of people who would attend, and by not charging for entry there was no revenue raised from ticket sales. These combined factors make the Stockport Food and Drink Trade Show economically unviable without significant support from the local council or other large sponsors.

## Further questions and research

- How closely did FoodSync work with other Stockport economic/food ventures such as Foodie Fridays, Totally Stockport (BID)?

- Does Stockport have any plans to develop its SFC/SFP work, or bid for an award? Is Kindling Trust still working in the area?
- How has the Stockport food scene evolved since this event, and are businesses still trading with each other? Has the success of the Trade Show been lasting?

## 5. International Reflections

As part of the research, we engaged with international stakeholders to ascertain cooperative approaches to sustainable food at a wider level, with a particular focus on a Global South example (Africa) and Global North example (North America). Through adopting this approach, we aimed to provide a glimpse into cooperative models in other parts of the world, which may inform efforts here in the UK. As part of this, the following experts were interviewed to gain a flavour of practice in these two contexts, they included:

- Lovemore Chipungu, South African academic and sustainable food expert
- Hangwelani Magidimisha, Chair of the Inclusive Cities Africa programme
  - June Komisar, Professor of Architecture in Toronto, Canada
  - Joe Nasr, member of the Tonto Food Policy Council, Canada

### North American Models

**‘The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) connects diverse people from the food, farming and community sector to develop innovative policies and projects that support a health-focused food system.’**

**(City of Toronto, 2020)**

Toronto is an exemplar with regards to policy on sustainable food, with the city council commissioning several projects to evaluate options for producing crops at scale to reducing food waste and more<sup>313</sup>. At the core of Toronto’s efforts are its pioneering food policies, such as a 1999 policy directing the creation of a minimum of 10 food-producing rooftops in the city centre that year<sup>314</sup>. Joe Nasr, a founding

<sup>313</sup> <https://tfpc.to/>

<sup>314</sup> [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/erc/pages/46/attachments/original/1447203397/Commercial\\_Food\\_Production\\_Plan\\_for\\_the\\_City\\_of\\_Toronto.pdf?1447203397](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/erc/pages/46/attachments/original/1447203397/Commercial_Food_Production_Plan_for_the_City_of_Toronto.pdf?1447203397)

member of the Toronto Food Policy Council, argues that the organisation acts as a tool for bringing together a wide variety of members from across the city, enabling partnership work, joint funding bids and real impact on policy. He views the Toronto charter as the most powerful product of the council, pioneering a cooperative approach and bringing together an array of stakeholders around the food agenda.

Across North America, food policy councils, such as the Toronto model, are commonplace. June explains that exemplars for cooperative approaches to sustainable food exist in the likes of Portland, Oregon to Washington D.C. and beyond. With the former, cooperative approaches to urban agriculture are famed in the city, with community members, businesses, the local authority and other organisations fostering the idea of growing food in the heart of an expanding city<sup>315</sup>.

## African Models

**‘[South African] policy towards sustainable food production is driven by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform + Rural Development which has various policies on food production.’**

**(Lovemore Chipungu)**

Lovemore and Hangwelani explain that the cooperative model for sustainable food is thriving on the African continent, with policy tools, charters and food coops on the rise: ‘examples of cooperatives include Harvest of Hope in Cape Town and the Sihlanzimvelo Stream Cleaning Project of Umlazi, which has over 30 cooperatives’ (Hangwelani). Harvest of Hope, for example, aims to create a thriving local food economy through connecting farmers directly with consumers, enabling more support for production in the city region.

Lovemore explains that a main barrier to the cooperative model in Africa surrounds finance. He explains that organisations are often competing for limited resources and thus collaboration is not high on the agenda. A wider barrier to the sustainable food

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<sup>315</sup> [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-017-7453-6\\_27](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-017-7453-6_27)



movement in Cape Town is around access to water and other resources besides money, with local food projects often suffering and crop failing. Nevertheless, he argues that charters and other tools have paved the way for overcoming this obstacle and provide a path for collaboration. In this sense, projects, the local government and others are able to come together and overcome such obstacles; allowing for resources to be shared and local food schemes to thrive.



Figure 2: informal growing in South Africa<sup>316</sup>

Africa is a unique case in that driving the sustainable food movement is informal activity: from Lagos to Durban, township residents often grow their own food for survival<sup>317</sup>. This can present health hazards to the residents, with contaminated soil in the informal settlements affecting the crops. Lovemore explains how through cooperation, stakeholders are coming together to address these issues, such as ‘Operation Sukuma’ in Kwazulu-Natal, which aims to generate a partnership between the government and community to address such challenges<sup>318</sup>.

## Reflecting on International Models

<sup>316</sup> Picture courtesy of Lovemore Chipungu

<sup>317</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2017.08.015>

<sup>318</sup> [http://www.kznonline.gov.za/images/stories/downloads/Sukuma\\_Sakhe\\_Zulu.pdf](http://www.kznonline.gov.za/images/stories/downloads/Sukuma_Sakhe_Zulu.pdf)

Both the North American and African models provide a glimpse into the cooperative movement on a global scale. It is evident that the sustainable food agenda is just as high across local and national government as here in the UK; with policies and other formal tools pushing the movement. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation argues that ‘agricultural and food cooperatives and other forms of collective action, including farmers associations and producer organizations, are critical to achieving food security, ending hunger and reducing poverty<sup>319</sup>’. At a global level, they argue that cooperative approaches are vital in the fight for food security.

An opportunity space exists here for the CCIN to partake in knowledge exchange activities on a global level around cooperative approaches to sustainable food. Through connecting the United Nations Cooperative and Partnership Office, funding could be obtained through the British Council, Newton Fund or other competitions for exchange programmes, allowing for visits to international case studies. At a European level, the COST Action programme offers a similar avenue; with large cooperative movements in the likes of France, Germany, The Netherlands and other European countries, this could provide funding for further knowledge exchange across the continent.

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<sup>319</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/2014/coopsegm/McInerney.pdf>

## 6. Existing CCIN Practices

Whilst the case studies and international examples provide an array of projects for replication, it must be noted that the CCIN already exhibits good practice around cooperative approaches to sustainable food. Amongst its 32 members, there are countless examples of innovative models of enabling local food systems, tackling food poverty and supporting the local food economy; indeed, a number of the exemplar case studies already highlighted are already CCIN members.



Figure 3: Current SFP awardees

To gain a flavour of other activities, we selected a sample of CCIN members, who have SPF awards and who we have previously not covered in the in-depth case study analysis. Of the 32 CCIN members, only 5 have SPF awards: Bristol, Cardiff, Oldham, Newcastle and Plymouth. Only Bristol has a silver award, which recognises excellence in embracing a sustainable food system. Within this section, we highlight 4 bronze awardees and the efforts underpinning their success.

## **Newcastle**

Newcastle City Council has achieved the Bronze Award from the SFP. This award recognises efforts by the local authority to further the sustainable food agenda, such as their policies on enhancing allotment provision or work around enabling newer forms of urban food growing. Edible Elswick<sup>320</sup> and Little Diggers<sup>321</sup> are examples of these newer forms of community food growing; teaching families about growing locally and cooking fresh produce.

Linked to this, the authority is aiming to adopt innovative practices to tackling food waste; adopting cooperative approaches to working with the community and key actors. For instance, the programme Eat Smart<sup>322</sup> educates children about food waste in schools. The programme encourages an approach which sees pupils taking ownership and playing an active role in managing waste at their schools. This resulted in a reduction of food waste by 38% over six weeks. Newcastle City Council's own Food Newcastle is run by the social inclusion unit and so taking on a whole systems approach to tackling food poverty, a local authority employee explained that:

‘with our social inclusion unit leading on it... we’re tying in support then around welfare rights, housing, advice and all of those things... job opportunities... and the job centre has linked in.’

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<sup>320</sup> <https://www.edibleelswick.co.uk/>

<sup>321</sup> <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/new-initiative-aims-improve-wellbeing-14299589>

<sup>322</sup> <https://www.projectbind.com/new-page-1>

This highlights the importance of tackling food poverty on a multiscale approach with a strong network of organisations. The local authority also operates a model to encourage a ‘bottom-up’ approach to sustainable food. An example of this can be seen with the Community Food Grant Scheme, which provides around £10,000 annually to organisations and schools to develop grassroots community food projects<sup>323</sup>. In terms of the wider population, Newcastle works with Food Power, which aims to build community capacity and work collectively to learn from best practice<sup>324</sup>. Food Power’s explains that ‘there are plans to measure food insecurity in our city; a collaborative effort involving several partners’, again demonstrating the cooperative principles in action within city.

## Oldham

Oldham Council achieved its SFP Bronze Award in 2018. Oldham’s borough-wide partnership ‘Growing Oldham: Feeding Ambition’ (GOFA) has a holistic outlook on the delivery of ‘Fair Access to food for All’. Within GOFA lay a variety of projects: ‘Get Oldham Growing’<sup>325</sup> works in partnership with local people, community groups and local organisations to improve the health of people, improve skills and enhance the environment through growing, cooking and eating nutritious local food. This project, whilst following a cooperative model, has led to an increased number of local food enterprises and community garden sites.

A radical new project around sustainable food in Oldham is Northern Roots<sup>326</sup>, deemed to be the largest urban farm and eco-park in the UK. Northern Roots was developed through the local community, with organisations and residents’ views designing the masterplan. The masterplan features upscaled urban agriculture alongside a strong focus on food businesses. The scheme also aims to work with the local health sector, through activities such as social prescribing. An interviewee from the local authority explained that Oldham undertakes a ‘system-wide approach’ and

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<sup>323</sup> <http://www.foodnewcastle.org/>

<sup>324</sup> [https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/Newcastle\\_ExE6mo\\_Snapshot.pdf](https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/Newcastle_ExE6mo_Snapshot.pdf)

<sup>325</sup> [https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5300/get\\_oldham\\_growing\\_annual\\_report\\_2018](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5300/get_oldham_growing_annual_report_2018)

<sup>326</sup> <https://northern-roots.uk/>

aim to work with local organisations to reduce reliance on council funding and to innovative; the Northern Roots site fits with this vision, pushing the boundaries for a sustainable food project whilst embracing a range of key actors across Oldham.

## Plymouth

Plymouth received the SFP Bronze Award in 2015. The Plymouth Food Charter demonstrates a cooperative approach to achieving a sustainable food system<sup>327</sup>. 80 businesses have signed up, pledging their commitment to the charter, which is now being updated to meet the standards of the Silver award for SFP. Research has shown that such food charters are powerful tool for collaboration and have been used across the globe to bring together residents, businesses, government department and other stakeholders, with the aim of championing sustainable food<sup>328</sup>.

In 2018, the University of Plymouth was awarded the top rating by the Sustainable Restaurant Association<sup>329</sup>. They are committed to buying all their supplies locally and reducing food miles, serving largely seasonal food and donation left-over food to avoid food wastage. Additionally, the University has an Allotment Society that encourages local growing and aims to have a positive impact on mental health, both of the students and local community. The University has a key focus on working collaboratively across the city to further the sustainable food movement.

## Cardiff

In 2015, Cardiff gained the Bronze SFP award. Food Cardiff<sup>330</sup> drives the food sector through a food charter. Alongside this the local authority has several policies driving the sustainable food agenda, such as The Local Plan of Cardiff, which aims to encourage a healthy lifestyle for its population, enhance green space, drive forward physical activity and food growing<sup>331</sup>. The main goal is to deliver healthy and

<sup>327</sup> [https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Future\\_of\\_Food.pdf](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Future_of_Food.pdf)

<sup>328</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837714000507>

<sup>329</sup> <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/students-and-family/sustainability/sustainable-food>

<sup>330</sup> <https://foodcardiff.com/>

<sup>331</sup> <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Planning/Local-Development-Plan/Pages/default.aspx>

affordable produce to all through a focus on vulnerable groups, local business and increasing the resilience of the local supply chain.

Food Cardiff prides itself on its bilingual public branding, which uses a weekly newsletter and social media to connect with the wider community. Cardiff's SPF application. It adopts a cooperative approach to decision-making and management and aims to ensure 'maximum engagement with its many partner organisations whilst ensuring that meetings are productive'<sup>332</sup>. Since 2013, the umbrella organisation has made significant impacts in Cardiff, driving forward policy change, creating a community around food and, more recently, heading a response to COVID around food access.

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<sup>332</sup><https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/Portals/4/Documents/Food%20Cardiff%20SFC%20bronze%20application.pdf>



## 7. Recommendations and Concluding Thoughts

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This report has highlighted cooperative approaches to sustainable food, using SFP's principles as a guiding framework to highlight good practice case studies. We have made a conscious effort to use a critical lens in each case, using a series of tools to explore the sustainability of projects, their impacts and other crucial information. With the use of secondary and primary data, we have been able to provide depth on the potential for replication, such as project costs, staffing and structures. We have also highlighted the broader policy landscape and CCIN practices, particularly in relation to SPF awards. In this sense, highlighting how only 16% of CCIN members have SPF awards, with Bristol holding the only silver.

Through undertaking this project, we would provide the following recommendations to CCIN members:

- Replicating practice: the case studies offer an opportunity to pioneer projects in the CCIN membership. We would recommend paying close attention to the analysis on the funding and sustainability of projects; moving away from grant funding and replicating those with innovative models.
- Championing tools: food charters, policy councils and other tools are vital in enabling a cooperative movement. Charters in particular offer an opportunity to bring together local government, residents, organisations and businesses around sustainable food.
- SFP awards: given the good practice within the CCIN membership, we would recommend applying for the bronze award from SFP. Such an award could be used as a tool in funding application and raise awareness about work around sustainable food.

- Engagement with the UN Cooperative office: at a global level, the CCIN network could connect with other likeminded organisations through the UN's cooperative and partnership office. This could enable further knowledge exchange and funding, through schemes such as the Newton Fund, to allow further exploration on the topic of cooperative models in relation to sustainable food.

Our broad recommendations here are drawn from the data generated and secondary materials. In adopting these recommendations, CCIN members will be able to advance the cooperative moment around sustainable food whilst raising attention to ongoing efforts. With COVID-19 impacting on society, the sustainable food agenda is now more important than ever. A cooperative approach to sustainable food offers the best opportunity for creating a co-produced system for the future.



## Report on the Community Fed: Oldham & Oldham Food Security Challenge Prize Projects by Stir to Action and Shared Assets



Report on the Community Fed: Oldham & Oldham Food Security Challenge Prize Projects  
by Stir to Action and Shared Assets

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# Background to the CFO

Stir to Action and Shared Assets were commissioned to work with Oldham Council, on a one-year programme to support the development, establishment and support of low cost, healthy and accessible community food initiatives.

This was triggered by a desire from the public health team to address the food insecurity crisis in Oldham which saw a huge surge in the use of foodbanks by residents following the pandemic. The *Oldham Food Security* programme was particularly active over the pandemic and focussed lots of its activity on coordinating and supporting a small network of food distribution hubs in the Oldham and Rochdale area. These hubs were impacting directly with their users and have a focus on their current work and model. But as distribution pressures started to ease a little, there was now capacity and scope to help those hubs explore alternative approaches to addressing food security needs.

## Building a food system that serves local people

The Oldham Food Partnership Board required external expertise and capacity to support the development of a range of community food initiatives / enterprises to enable individuals and families to purchase affordable and healthy food. The initiatives needed to be flexible to meet the cultural needs of the community or specific vulnerable groups.

Oldham has a strong history of collaborative working which enabled a rapid and effective response to the increased demand for emergency food aid arising from the Covid 19 crisis which continues to effectively deliver emergency food aid. Stir to Action and Shared Assets were expected to inform, inspire, develop new opportunities, and help build a pipeline of initiatives with our anchor organisations, VCFSE sector and business.

In early June we hosted two half-day co-production sessions facilitated by [Learn to Lead](#). Registered attendees (see Appendix I) show the diverse, broad sector invite across sectors, our awareness of groups working in this space, and how they can work together. We were also aware that transforming Oldham's food system is not the sole responsibility of community food growing groups, but additional organisations who are embedded within communities such as public health workers, housing organisations, and social enterprises. This approach instilled a collective action ethos developing a more local, affordable, healthy and sustainable food system that should be designed with the input of those who will use it.

Considering the above, it was apt to name this project, Community Fed: Oldham (CFO).



# Co-production themes

In June 2022 several research meetings took place with those active within the food system in Oldham to help understand their needs, challenges, connections and skills A summary of those findings are here

Education in a range of food provision-relevant skills	Being aware of what other Oldham people/groups are working on in relation to food provision.	Employment creation more so than only volunteering opportunities in local food provision	Creation of local food hubs
Culturally appropriate food provision	Not duplicating work delivered to be more efficient with what we do	Co-operative – local economy model	Working with partners to upskill and opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills
Nature-friendly food provision	Healthy food access for all and food dignity		
Accredited training	Partnerships with local communities e.g. religious organisations, community centres		
Framework or model for co-operative buying/selling			

## How the themes translated to goals we worked towards

Technical Skills	Collaboration/Cooperation	Enterprise	Specialist Skills
Co-operative economic models  Democratic economic governance  Commercial food provision (that is culturally appropriate sustainable)  Culinary skills using food grown	Developing networks with others in the local food system.	How to set up one focused on food provision that is socially and economically viable	Learning from existing relevant local food systems e.g. Open Kitchen MCR, Pennine Cropshare, Wolves Lane

## Outcomes

From the Co-Production events, three clear outcomes emerged with interventions needed to meet them:

1. Models should support employment through new businesses such as worker-managed cooperatives and reduce the over reliance on volunteering
2. Models should work with and support existing practice and current activity to make a bigger impact
3. Models should deal with systemic issues of food insecurity

Co-production attendees were then invited to join the CFO Steering Group (see Appendix II for details). Monthly steering meetings created a de facto food network, especially since the Food Solutions Network was not active at the time. The Group is a strong representation of those interested in food poverty/security from the Council and VCFSE sector.



# Original Budget

Our original budget estimated the following spending

Item/Phase	Days / Quantity	Fee	Expenditure Items	Total
Project Management and Steering Group Coordination	27.5	£11,725	Travel and Accommodation – £750	<b>£12,475</b>
Understanding Needs	8	£3,200		<b>£3,200</b>
Co-production	20	£8,500	Travel and Accommodation – £1,050	<b>£9,550</b>
(Illustrative) Capacity Building Package includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 4 study visits</li> <li>– 3 online webinars</li> <li>– 6 Facilitated action learning sets</li> <li>– 6 days of retained coach/mentor support</li> <li>– Bookclub hosting</li> <li>– Production of 3 guides/toolkits</li> </ul>	29	£12,650	Travel and Accommodation – £1,050 Study Visit Host Fees – £1,600 Venue Hire – £2000  <b>(subtotal – £4650)</b>  [NB – This budget could be reorganised to include different items such as: – Secondment Honorarium – Participation budget Final expenditure items will be agreed following co-production stage]	<b>£17,300</b>
Grant Administration	17	£7,050		<b>£7,050</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>101.5</b>			<b>£49,575</b>

## Final Spend

The final spend was different, which was expected, but not significantly. It was however complicated and improved with the introduction of the Food Security Challenge. We were able to transfer resources between the two projects to enable a better use of time and money. The table here breaks down spending by project area, and offers explanations for significant changes of budget use.

Item / Phase	Original Estimate	Final Spend	Breakdown of final spend	Explanations
Project Management and Steering Group Coordination	£12,475	£17,550	Stir time – £11,250 Shared Assets time – £6,000 Other Partners – n/a Other Expenditure – £300	Project Management was increased for extra work involved in Food Security Challenge (approx £5k). We also put more time to M&E, relationship building and dissemination of learning.
Understanding Needs	£3,200	£4,800	Stir time – £3,000 Shared Assets time – £1,800 Partners – n/a Other Expenditure – £300	More time here spent understanding needs, meant we could reduce some time-heavy co-production activities and still get the same result.  This also accounts for additional diagnosis of needs for FSC participants
Co-production	£9,550	£3,833	Stir time – £1,800 Shared Assets time – £1,350 Other Partners – £400 Other Expenditure – £283	Lower levels of time at co-production meant more time was offered to hosting in-person and online networking spaces
Capacity Building Package	£17,300	£19,426	Stir time – £7,150 Shared Assets time – £8,150 Other Partners – £1,020 Other Expenditure – £3,056	This was the largest unknown element of work as the final delivery package was developed as part of the programme of work.  Significant changes included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– added web development time (4 days)</li> <li>– transferring retaining coaching time to mentoring for FSC applicants</li> <li>– changing the toolkit production in to the learning library</li> <li>– hosting of additional ‘lunch and learn’ sessions</li> <li>– study visit costs remained mostly the same</li> <li>– additional specialist support was bought in from partners of Stir and Shared Assets</li> </ul>
Grant	£4,750	£69,650	Stir time –	This is the largest shift due to the introduction of the Food Security Challenge

Administration			£9,725 Shared Assets time – £5,625 Other Partners – n/a Other Expenditure – £54,300	Significant changes included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- added development of website (4 days)</li> <li>- development of a more collaborative selection process that took in to account local knowledge</li> <li>- adding coaching and mentoring resource which was transferred from CFO of approx 14 days of time</li> <li>- arranging and hosting of FSC event including venue hire</li> <li>- £52,000 of grant monies distributed by Stir to applicants</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£49,575</b>	<b>£115,109</b>		

# CFO Main Programme

## Approach

From the Co-production events it was clear that different stakeholders have a range of different experiences in alternative food systems:

- some have never explored or are unaware of different models
- some have started learning but do not know where to go next
- some have a sophisticated understanding of food systems and need to in new skills to improve what they are already doing

Our interventions appealed to as many of these perspectives as possible, to use the following approach:

<b>Inspire</b>	Initiate interest in a topic or subject area eg informal events/inspirational talks
<b>Explore</b>	Develop understanding of the challenges of different models related to the provision of food eg study visits
<b>Create</b>	Support individuals and groups to establish ventures eg workshops on business planning, transitioning from voluntary to viable commercial production in a supportive environment
<b>Thrive</b>	Support existing and growing enterprises to last in the long term eg facilitate peer networks

## CFO Summer taster sessions

As part of the main CFO programme, Stir to Action hosted two online webinars in mid-June to introduce examples of new approaches to existing affordable food provision. The first was How to set up a neighbourhood food cooperative - an interactive workshop with Shaunna Rushton, Cooperation Town, a network of food cooperatives sourcing free/selling affordable appropriate food, run by/for local people. This was to introduce Oldham-based VCFSE groups to this new network of community food co-ops, organising on streets and estates across the country, with content including:

- what are food co-operatives, what is Cooperation Town and does it differ to other food co- operatives
- how does Cooperation Town work in practice
- how to get started with your own food co-operative

- founding and running your co-operative
- maintaining momentum in your co-operative

- what support can Cooperation Town provide you with

Those registered to attend this webinar came from those registered on the Co-Production events spread across the Council, housing and VCFSE sectors. Cooperation Town offered ongoing support to attendees to establish their own buyers cooperative.

The second webinar was Building local partnerships to develop a community food resource (with Yvonne Field, Director of Ubele/Rootz into Food Growing) This was an information event about a project using Council-owned land to develop skills and training opportunities enabling marginalised people to grow food commercially. Yvonne was asked to speak about:

- what Wolves Lane is and does
- building a community and developing local governance in relation to a local food enterprise

- experience of working with the local authority and effective strategies

During the summer of 2022 Stir to Action and Shared Assets organised the rest of the main CFO programme as detailed below.

## CFO Programme details



### Workshop: Business planning for food enterprises

**8 Nov | 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm**

Create or expand your idea for a food enterprise or project

[More Info](#)



### Study visit: Community food & growing spaces

**11 Nov | 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm**

How to establish a flourishing community food and growing space

**Yvonne Field, Ubele & Wolves Lane Growing Hub**

[More Info](#)



### Study visit to Long Causeway Farm, near Todmorden

**15 Nov | 10:00 am - 11:30 am**

Do you want to set up a small market garden from scratch, and earn a living from it?

**Will Johnson-Dublon**

[More Info](#)



### Workshop: Cracking Good Food

**21 Nov | 12:00 pm - 3:30 pm**

Do you want to fully utilise community kitchens to help more people to cook/source affordable meals?

**Amanda Aitken MSc ANutr, Cracking Good Food**

[More Info](#)



### Workshop: Democratic models

**10 Oct | 9:30 am - 1:00 pm**

An introduction to alternative governance models for local food enterprises

**Mark Simmonds, Co-op Culture**

[More Info](#)



### Webinar: Food resilience in Oldham

**11 Oct | 10:00 am - 12:30 pm**

What do we need to build community food resilience in Oldham?

**Beth Bell, Food Ethics Council**

[More Info](#)



### Webinar: Pennine Cropshare

**24 Oct | 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**

How to set up a successful, local, and affordable vegetable bag scheme

**Jenny Slaughter, Pennine Cropshare**

[More Info](#)



### Study visit: Open Kitchen MCR

**25 Oct | 10:00 am - 1:00 pm**

A visit to Open Kitchen MCR & their community cafe, a thriving social and community food enterprise

**Corin Bell, Open Kitchen MCR**

[More Info](#)

## Programme event details

Event type	Aim	Details
Lunch and Learn	To <b>inspire</b> more people about new models of food provision	<p><u>Ubele/Wolves Lane</u> (as detailed above).  Registered to attend: 7  Attended: 4</p>
		<p>Jenny Slaughter, co-founder of <u>Pennine Cropshare</u> – an affordable veg bag enterprise supporting ethical businesses to sell sustainably grown fresh fruit and veg, spoke about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• starting up a local veg scheme including the funds they needed and how they got them</li> <li>• the barriers faced when setting up/running a veg bag scheme, and how they overcame them</li> <li>• Pennine Cropshare's social aims via its initiatives with local communities.</li> <li>• how to establish a small-scale veg bag scheme that benefits local communities</li> </ul> <p>Registered to attend: 6  Attended: 4</p>
Study Visits	To help people to <b>explore</b> more about the models that interest them most	<p><b>Food hubs:</b>  Yvonne Field (Director, Ubele Initiative), Wolves Lane site, visit to Northern Roots. The visit included walks and talks about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to diversify income in a food hub</li> <li>• how to decide what aspects/proportions of commercial and community food/wellbeing and nature initiatives to focus on in a hub</li> <li>• how to navigate relationships with the Council if they own the site you work on</li> <li>• planning with retailers what to grow</li> </ul>



		<p>Registered to attend: 7 Attended: 6</p> <hr/> <p><b>Commercial and Community Food Provision (in-person)</b> Corin Bell Executive Director, visit to <u>Open Kitchen MCR</u>, a workers' co-operative cafe/community hub/CIC to hear about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how OKM became a viable social enterprise e.g. obtaining finance for it, balancing profit/loss margins, becoming less reliant on grant funding</li> <li>• what made organisations approach OKM to deliver its services e.g. Southway Housing's Minehead cafe, the offer to use Southway's kitchen for its catering business, OKM's café at the People's History Museum</li> <li>• having distinctions between the aims and processes of the different parts of Open Kitchen MCR</li> </ul> <p>Registered to attend: 4 Attended: 1</p> <hr/> <p><b>Sustainable Commercial Market Gardening</b> The visit to Will Johnson-Dublon's <u>Long Causeway market garden</u> near Todmorden provided an example of a thriving small-scale commercial, eco-friendly farm that has existed for about 5 years. Will spoke about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to set up a market garden from scratch, not far from Oldham, in West Yorkshire</li> <li>• how to grow 25-30 crops</li> <li>• how to be a veg grower as a full time job</li> <li>• how to grow on a half acre farm without machinery</li> </ul> <p>Registered to attend: 6 Attended: 4</p> <hr/> <p><b>Community-based Training for Food Provision</b> Visit by <u>Cracking Good Food</u> to Oldham for a half day of participation-based skills and learning to help break down the barriers to accessing and cooking affordable, healthy and sustainable food, including:</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to develop a safe and inclusive community kitchen cooking club</li> <li>• ideas to fully utilise your community kitchen space to benefit people experiencing food insecurity and/or isolation.</li> <li>• practical skills to share with others about cooking low-cost healthy meals, including how to use donated food.</li> </ul> <p>Registered to attend: 7 Attended: 3</p>
<b>Workshops/ Webinars in-person and online</b>	To help people gain the skills and understanding to <b>explore</b> and <b>create</b>	<p><b>How to set up a neighbourhood food cooperative - Cooperation Town</b> (as detailed above)</p> <p>Registered to attend: 14 Attended: 4</p>
		<p><b>An introduction to alternative governance models for local food enterprises</b>, <u>Mark Simmonds</u> Co-op Culture, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an overview of the many and varied different governance models available to community food enterprises</li> <li>• an overview of the different business models and how they can affect the choice of governance</li> <li>• advice about how to develop a viable and democratically controlled food enterprise</li> <li>• space for reflections on ways attendees could apply the above to their own projects or business ideas.</li> </ul> <p>Leaving attendees with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an understanding of various democratically-run enterprise models</li> <li>• approaches for overcoming challenges they may face when establishing your own business using the ideas you engage with</li> <li>• an action plan to begin to develop their own food business</li> <li>• knowledge of what further support they need to develop your own democratically run food business and where to find it.</li> </ul>

		<p>Registered to attend: 9 Attended:9</p> <hr/> <p><b>Food resilience in Oldham (online)</b> - <u>Beth Bell, Food Citizenship Coordinator</u>, Food Ethics Council Beth shared the findings from the Food Ethics Council's own research into the best approaches to build community food resilience. Attendees engaged with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pioneering organisations leading the way in using local food as a way to connect people and build resilient local economies.</li> <li>• breakout group discussions and opportunities to share and learn from each other too.</li> <li>• by the end of the workshop attendees left with one thing they feel empowered to try in relation to building community food resilience</li> </ul> <p>Registered: 6 Attended: 4</p> <hr/> <p><b>Business planning for food enterprises</b> - <u>Tom Carman, Shared Assets</u>, with content including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a brief of alternative food enterprise models exist, where they are found in the food chain, and what their key business features are, including veg box schemes, farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture</li> <li>• We'll explore and use some simple tools that can get your business planning started</li> <li>• How/Why/What: a tool for purpose-driven businesses.</li> <li>• The Business Model Canvas: a tool to help understand your 'value proposition' and the resources you may need to create it.</li> </ul> <p>With attendees gaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an improved understanding of different models of food provision.</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a better understanding of how alternative models of food provision connect and work together.</li> <li>• the beginnings of a business plan for their food enterprise idea.</li> </ul> <p>Registered to attend: 6 Attended: 3</p>
<b>Action Learning Set x 1 (includes 5 x 2-3 hr sessions with a selected cohort of participants)</b>	Aim to help current practitioners problem solve together, build connections and understandings of different challenges and their solutions within a local food system	<p><u>Action Learning Sets</u> with <u>Mark Walton</u> (Shared Assets) included VCFSE members and Council workers and booked far in advance to ensure attendance.</p> <p>Note an Action Learning Set can address a particular topic e.g. how to establish the logistics for a sustainable and affordable food business.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Problem solving</li> <li>2. Developing a group of peers to work together in the medium to long-term</li> </ol> <p>Registered to attend: 6 Attended: between 2-5 (during different sessions)</p>
<b>Creation of learning library</b>	Resources to <b>inspire, explore and create local food</b> initiatives, while also	<p><b>Finance &amp; Governance</b> e.g. Cooperatives UK 'Simply' series': <u>Simply Governance</u>; <u>Simply Legal</u>; <u>Simply Finance</u>; <u>Simply Performance</u>; <u>Simply Buyout</u></p> <p><b>Business planning and guides for food enterprises e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unicorn workers' cooperative's <u>'Grow a Grocery'</u></li> <li>• Sustain's <u>Food-Co-op Kit</u></li> <li>• <u>'Power Up the Flavour'</u>: a guide to low cost and healthy cooking using less energy from The Greater Manchester's Cracking Good Food</li> <li>• <u>Building Community Food Resilience</u> by the Food Ethics Council</li> </ul>

## Captures of Study Visits

Open Kitchen MCR catering at Southway Housing, with Corin Bell (Executive Director), and catering staff



Yvonne Field (CEO, The Ubele Initiative, first from the right), at Northern Roots





Attendees braving a very cold, wet and windy visit to Long Causeway market with Will Johnson-Dublon (2nd left)



Cooking up a warming, affordable and healthy meal with Cracking Good Food



# Feedback from the programme

## Learnings gained by attendees:

- The importance of collaboration, especially networks and how we can creatively create a more community-based system
- Interest in the way that several groups can co-operate and co-exist on the same site/project
- Different forms of governance and examples to evidence this
- Various projects that are doing good work
- Examples and various ways of owning land and farm ownership
- Signposting to further support
- How to develop mobile programs
- Having flexibility to decide on statutory and governance frameworks: "...you can take an idea and see how it evolves rather than rush to make decisions that may not be correct too early".
- "I came away feeling very enthused. It was great to see that setting up a small market garden is doable both financially and on a small plot of land."
- "As the attendance at the workshop was small we received almost a bespoke course in Business Planning which was extremely useful and the "Why, How, What" model shaped very quickly our plans [for our project]. The course delivery by Tom was excellent. Using the Business Model Canvas will enable us to have a better picture of how to plan the business idea."

## Further support and skills needed

- Networking with other Oldham-based food provision groups
- Access to finance
- Business planning
- Bespoke advice/One-to-one support for projects e.g. a follow-up session about community organisation governance models



# Oldham Food Security Challenge Prize



In late summer 2022 our Oldham Council lead secured this prize for Stir to Action and Shared Assets to organise an awards programme that offered startup and scaleup grants and mentoring for new or scaling food enterprises that are developing the most effective responses to local food insecurity. Such organisations also needed to focus on long-term change, social impact, and increasing employment in the local food sector. At the planning stage our approach to attracting grant applications centred on addressing:

What if inspiring food enterprises could be supported with the resources to test new alternatives in the local food system?

How might communities make a start on building a food system that better serves local people?

We invited Oldham residents to apply for the Challenge Prize to access funding for a new enterprise or service that works towards reducing food poverty in the borough as part of efforts to transition from food aid to food security.

## Oldham Food Security Challenge Prize Process

Applicants submitted initial project ideas which Stir to Action/Shared Assets reviewed to identify those that did and did not meet the prize's eligibility criteria of a proposal being:

- a new or development enterprise idea that responds directly to relieving food poverty
- a new or development enterprise idea can be a viable business
- a new or development enterprise idea aims to create employment in the food sector
- a new or development enterprise idea that is 'community-led' either through legal membership (e.g. as a co-operative or community business), or through close partnerships with local charities and community associations

Of 12 applications received, Stir to Action/Shared Assets forwarded 7 to be further reviewed by the judging panel that consisted of a selection of CFO Steering Group members. After lengthy discussions, the panel made up of Council and VCFSE representatives selected 6 projects to take forward. These consisted of 2 startup projects and 4 scaleups. It was

originally envisaged that 3 projects from each category would proceed, but the quality of scaleup applications compared to startup rendered one more of the former was deemed eligible for guaranteed funding.

Shortlisted organisations created video pitches after receiving training and mentoring from Shared Assets, Stir to Action, and Power to Change. Five of the 6 shortlisted organisations were able to attend a face-to-face funding pitch training event in Oldham, while all six attended bespoke one-to-one online training sessions.

£52,000 was awarded across six grants in the two categories (startup and scaleup), decided by public voting at a live, in-person participatory funding event in Oldham in February 2023 attended by just under 60 people.

After consultation with the CFO Steering Group it was decided that for the startup grants, each voter had one vote, so the organisation with the most votes received the higher amount and the other organisation the lower amount allotted to this category. For scaleup, each voter had two votes and had to give them to two different organisations out of the four in this category. The organisation that received the lowest votes received the lowest amount of funding in this category; the third-placed organisation received the second lowest amount; the second-placed received the second highest amount, and the organisation with the most votes received the largest amount.

## The event's proceedings

Hack Oldham



Rachel Walker, Paddock Food





Lina Shaw and Dave Hanlon (right, centre), Wildbrook Food and Growing Hub, Nicola Scott, CFO/FSC Project Manager, left)



Moinul Islam, Cafe LGA



Natalie Twomey, Oldham Grocers (Jigsaw Homes)



Karen Flowers and Alan Price, Lees Eco Hub



Victoria Holden and Rose Ssali, GROWE





Audience voting begins

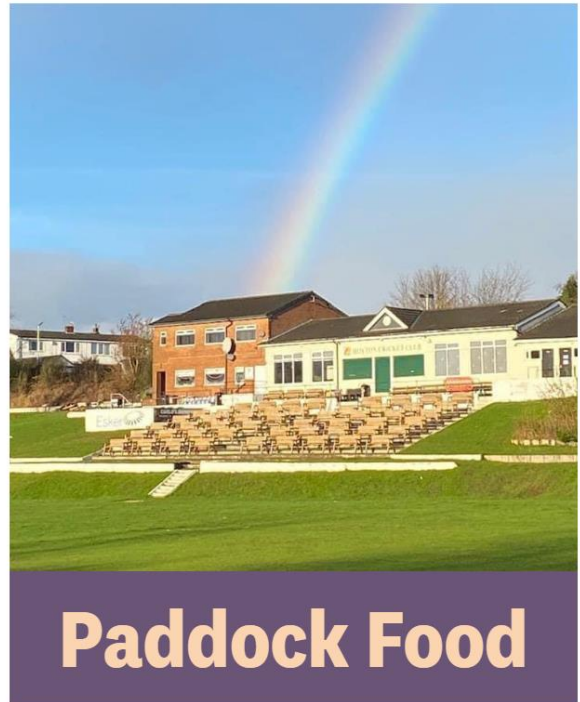


## Voting results

### Startup



£5k [Wildbrook Food Hub/Composting Business](#) (32 votes)



£2.5k [Paddock Pantry](#) (22 votes)

### Scaleup



£7.5k [Cafe LGA](#) (19 votes)



£10k [Oldham Grocers](#) (20 votes)





£15k [GROWE](#) - Grassroots Oldham Women Enterprise (SAWN/Northern Lily) (42 votes)



£12k [Lee's Eco Hub](#) (25 votes)

# Impact

## Outcomes

- Increased confidence in enterprising approaches
- Improved relationships between those within the grassroots Oldham food network
- Ongoing conversations about collaborative working between those already in the Oldham food network and those new to it through the CFO and FSCP

## Outputs

- 2 lunch & learn webinars
- 4 workshops (online and in-person)
- 4 study visits
- 5 Action Learning Set sessions
- 12 coaching/mentoring sessions for Food Security Challenge candidates
- 2 co-production workshops
- an engaging public voting grant-awarding event for 6 Oldham food provision groups, attended by just under 60 people that also showcased a recently established local, grassroots-orientated caterer

## Key Learnings

### What we (Stir to Action and Shared Assets) learned

- As there was low attendance at some CFO events despite good registration levels for them, there are actions that could have been taken to mitigate non-attendance. For example, providing potential attendees information about the bespoke benefits to them of their attendance once they had signed up to it, communicating further about the time and effort those delivering events are donating, and including a programme such as the FSC to one similar to the CFO from the start of project planning.
- Having a tangible use for the capacity building work through the FSC so soon after the CFO finished meant that there was a greater impetus to attend remaining CFO events training events. Likewise, attendance at FSC training events was good.
- There was a clear link between engagement in capacity building measures (ie the CFO workshops) and quality of pitches and business plan, which reflected the grant received.
- Oldham Council's tendering of the opportunity to deliver the CFO via Co-operative Council's Innovation Network was really important in helping Stir and Shared Assets get access to the opportunity to deliver specialist work. This can provide a useful strategy to pursue by local Councils in the future.

- The timeline of a food provision-related project that can award horticulture-focused organisations must consider the horticultural calendar in order for recipients to make best use of any grant received e.g. such grants should be received by late February in time for the core growing season that runs from then until October/November
- The way the project was packaged, structured and delivered has felt really positive, and we built strong working relationships with several key contacts at Oldham Council, particularly in the Public Health teams where the contract was commissioned from.

## What participants learned

- There was a clear link between engagement in capacity building measures (the workshops) and the quality of pitches and business plans, and therefore the grants received.
- Having a tangible use for the capacity building work so soon after it finished meant that learning could be applied and embedded by participants.
- An engagement with the capacity building programme meant participants heard a wider set of needs and integrated solutions to these within their enterprise models. In the medium- to long-term this can help them to move towards, for example, a hybrid funding approach of grants and their own income generation practices, as well as a more localised food economy in the move away from emergency food provision.
- What has been particularly encouraging to see has been the growth in confidence of those taking part in capacity building events across several areas.
- Participants have improved their business skills and their business outlooks from the business and Food Security Challenge training workshops.
- Those who pitched for the OFSCP have become more confident in articulating what they are doing, in part due to coaching and mentoring on how to pitch their work associated with the grants they received.
- From a short survey of prize recipients, participants have grown more cultural and social capital, demonstrated through a strong desire to continue networking and working with their food sector peers in the long term.

## Further feedback from Food Security Challenge Prize participants

“The whole process from start to finish has been a valuable resource beyond any expectations, from looking at all the opportunities, networking, & supporting us to understand our own needs in developing the project.”

*Karen Flowers and Alan Price, Lees Park Eco Hub, Community Fed Oldham and Food Security Challenge participants*

“We are keen to be part of an informal alliance of Challenge Fund Winners and also mentor groups or people who may be new to this work. Thanks also to Nicola and Tom and other

members of Stir to Action and Shared Assets teams for their valuable support during the Challenge Fund process.”

*David Hanlon and; Lina Valencia-Shaw, Wildbrook Community Food and Grow Hub, Community Fed Oldham and Food Security Challenge participants*

# Appendices

## Appendix I - Co-Production registrations

### Strategic partners

Name	Organisation	Email Address	Briefly describe	Would you like a	Where are based
Sadia akram	Civil society cons	Sadia@civilsocie	I work with gras	checked	
Beverley Bertenshaw	First Choice Homes	bev.bertenshaw@fch	I am one of the managers of FCH		Oldham
Dave Brereton	First Choice Homes	dave.brereton@fch	I manage First Choice Homes' aff		First Place, Union
mike bridges	Oldham Council	mike.bridges@oldham.gov.uk	Public Health Specialist leading on		Civic Centre
Martin Burroughs	Oldham Council	martin.burroughs@oldham.gov.uk	I'm analysing a lot of the data for		Civic Centre
*Anna da Silva	Northern Roots	anna.dasilva@northernroots.co.uk	Developing a new urban farm.		Oldham
Rachel Dyson	Oldham Council	rachel.dyson@oldham.gov.uk	Strategic role in relation to our pa		Civic Centre
Lisa Fowles	ForHousing	lisa.fowles@forhousing.co.uk	provide space for	checked	
Liz Fryman	Oldham Council	elizabeth.fryman@oldham.gov.uk	District co-ordin	checked	Trinity Methodist
Emma Gemmell	Housing 21	emma.gemmell@housing21.co.uk	Referrals to food	checked	Oldham
Annie Harrison	University of Manchester	annie.harrison@man.ac.uk	Process evaluation	checked	N/A
Zaiem Khan	Oldham Council	zaiem.khan@oldham.gov.uk	Understanding the local demand for food		
Katie Merrick	GM Health and Social Care	Katie.Merrick1@gmpoverty.co.uk	Supporting local	Checked	
*Amanda Richards	Oldham Council	amanda.richards@oldham.gov.uk	Supporting VCFSE groups		Oldham
Zubair Seedat	Oldham Council	zubair.seedat@oldham.gov.uk			Oldham/Civic Centre
Craig Stone	great places housing	craig.stone@greatplaceshousing.co.uk	Partnership co-ordin	checked	oldham
Cath Taylor	DWP	catherine.taylor1@dwp.gov.uk	refer our customers to local food		Oldham Jobcentre
*Hannah Williams	Oldham Council	Hannah.Williams@oldham.gov.uk			Alex Park, various
Jon Sands	GM Poverty Action	jons@gmpoverty.co.uk	I am working with the council and voluntary organis		
Can no longer attend					
Elaine Morgan	GMCA	Elaine.Morgan@greatermanchester.gov.uk		checked	

## VCFSE sector

Name	Organisation	Email Address	Briefly describe	Would you like to	Where are based	Where are you based	VCFSE
Asmina Choudhury	Jigsaw Homes	asmina.choudhury@jigsawhomes.co.uk	I currently manage	Checked		Oldham	Checked
Julie Durrant	Action Together	julie.durrant@actiontogether.org.uk	I support food projects	checked		Rochdale Action	checked
Karen Flowers	REEL CIC	charlene@reelcic.co.uk	programme coordinator for local growing hub and eco park in Lee's				
Gemma Foxcroft	Cracking Good Food	gemma@crackinggoodfood.org	Cracking Good Food	checked		Greater Manchester	
David Hanlon	Local veg box scheme	David.Hanlon@oldham.gov.uk				Oldham Environmental	
Victoria Holden	Northern Lily	Northernlilyuk@gmail.com	Myself and Support and Action for Womens Network			Oldham	checked
Nayan Joshi	Action Together	nayan.joshi@actiontogether.org.uk	I don't directly handle	checked		Oldham	
Amjid Mahmood	Ghazali Trust	amjid@ghazalitrust.org.uk	Oldham			Glodwick, Oldham	
Hilary Newsome	East Oldham Methodist Church	hilary@gmx.ph	Leader of Fare Share fortnightly food bank at East Oldham Methodist Church				
Jane Partington	The Bread and Butter	jane@breadandbutterthing.org	we run mobile pantries at 5 hubs across Oldham (and another 55 across the				
Alan Price	REEL CIC	alan.price@live.co.uk	Manager of Lee's eco park. Producing local grown vegetable with wildlife in				
Sharon Robinson	Family Action	sharon.robinson@familyaction.org.uk	Family Action open	checked		Oldham	checked
Karen Saville	Support and Action	karen@sawn.org	Support and Action	checked		Unit 1 Stockfield	checked
Rose Ssali	Support and Action	sawn.org@gmail.com	Support and Action	checked		Unit 1 Stockfield	checked
Kim Van Belois	Fresh Beleaf	kimvanbelois@gmail.com	Collaborative network	checked		Oldham	checked
*David Wilkinson	Neon Hub	dave.neon@virginia.gov.uk	As a Community	checked		Holt St, Oldham	
Linda Convery	Speaking of Food	luckygut@btinternet.com	Member of Food Solutions Network Rochdale				
Jon Sands	GM Poverty Action	jons@gmpoverty.org.uk	I am working with the council and voluntary organisations			Across GM	
<b>Can no longer attend</b>							
James Clarke	YP Potential CIC	jc@theapprentice.co.uk	A community cafe based in Hollins which is focused on			Hollins, Oldham	

## Appendix II CFO Steering Group members

Contacts	Email	Phone	Notes			
Mike Bridges	mike.bridges@oldham.gov.uk	07305950146				
Tom Carman	tom@sharedassets.org.uk	tom.carman@stirtoaction.com				
Dave Catherall	Dave.Catherall@oldham.gov.uk		Principal Officer, External Funding			
Leanne Cliffe	Leanne.Cliffe@actiontogether.org.uk		Social Change Network Coordinator			
Robin Durkan	Robin.Durkan@oldham.gov.uk		Landscape Architect			
Gemma Foxcroft	gemma@crackinggoodfood.org		Co-Director, Cracking Good Food are primarily focussed on food			
Jonny Gordon-F	jonny@stirtoaction.com					
Leanne Keane	leanne.keane@greatplaces.org.uk		Great Places Housing Group, Community and Partnerships Manager			
Rev Dr Paul Morris			Anglican Churches of St Barnabas' Clarksfield, and Holy Trinity			
Jane Partington	jane@breadandbutterthing.org		Until autumn 2022			
Alan Price	leesecohub@gmail.com		Manager of Lee's eco park/ part of Reel CIC. Producing local			
Faizal Rahim	oldham_interfaith@msn.com	0161 624 6733	Project Coordinator, Oldham Interfaith Forum, Oldham			
Amanda Richardson	Amanda.Richardson@oldham.gov.uk		Corporate Policy Manager (Council)			
Georgia Sijpe	GeorgiaForsyth@northern-roots.uk		Northern Roots - Urban Farm & Landscape Manager			
Hannah Williams	Hannah.Williams@oldham.gov.uk		Northern Roots - Co-ord Community Food Growing Hub and			
Charlotte Wheat	Charlotte.Wheatley@oldham.gov.uk		Oldham Council, CFO contact replacement for Sarah Whittle			

# Cooperative Approaches to Sustainable Food

## Alignment to Co-operative Values and Principles

**Social Partnership** – We will strengthen the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises and Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit.

The report emphasises the need to embrace the cooperative principles in relation to enabling a sustainable food system and highlights a series of pioneering case studies in the UK which bring communities and the public sector together to develop sustainable local food systems.

**Co-production** – We will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.

The report demonstrates that adopting a cooperative approach to sustainable food can lead to a more 'just' system, maximising social value and the sustainability of local projects.

**Innovation** – We will embrace innovation in how we work with local communities to drive positive change.

The case studies provide examples of schemes which maximise social value, demonstrate new ways of engaging local stakeholders, display novelty in relation to co-production, showcase economic creativity and other forms of innovation.

**Learning** – We will capture and 'expand' the experience and learning from individual projects and approaches in order to encourage broader application of co-operative principles within individual member Councils and across the Network.

This project critically explored innovative practice around cooperative approaches to sustainable food. Through using the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework, and the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) principles, we have devised a series of case studies to enable members to learn from good practice.