



Building the confidence of professionals and community leaders

Oxford Food Access Alliance: Final report June 2019

Training and skill-sharing for frontline service providers

We know that frontline service providers are time-poor, and never was that more apparent than in our delivery of food poverty training over the last year, which coincided with Oxford's roll-out of Universal Credit.

We had already created a Level 1 training which was designed to build the knowledge, confidence and skills of professionals and community leaders. This half-day session aims to

- draw on the knowledge and perceptions of food poverty already in the room,
- teach the FIES international definition of food poverty,
- use personal experience and cases studies to build empathy and an understanding of how food poverty may present,
- offer teaching points around sometimes misunderstood schemes (such as Healthy Start Vouchers),
- gather top tips and advice from the expertise in the room.

Importantly, ground rules make it safe for those with lived experience of food poverty to bring their expertise into the session, and a smattering of jokes and fun activities help to bring levity to a tough subject. We also try to make sure that food is offered at the end of the session.

“A modular approach to training enables us to respond to whatever request we have, in whatever time slot we have available. So we have cut up our training into 20 minute, one hour and half day options”

Hannah Fenton, Good Food Oxford

The Food Power funding enabled us to develop a Level 2 short day version of the training, including a simple lunch. The content is crowdsourced from participants – they are asked in advance to share challenging situations around raising and/or addressing food poverty within their organisational context. The session establishes rapport and trust within the group through a series of one-to-one meetings, and commitment to the context through personal stories.



We then examine the key questions brought by participants, and offer acted scenarios for participants to analyse and contribute best practice suggestions. Next is a “World Café” exercise to collaboratively address the key questions brought up. Finally, three key action points for each of four main issues are fed back to the group in a summary document.

Both session formats were extremely well-received, with all participants rating them as four or five out of five, and all participants moving their ability to deal with food poverty up at least one notch out of five.

This activity was assisted by financial support and other advice from Food Power.
www.foodpower.org.uk

“What was most useful about the session? Meeting other people doing frontline work and finding creative ways of tackling food poverty”

“What do I want next? More follow-up sessions”

Participants at Level 1 food poverty training session

Our challenges and learning

The most challenging aspect of this work was “selling” the offer to frontline organisations, even when the training is free! They are so pushed for time, especially with the roll-out of Universal Credit, and managers were often keen to protect the time of their workers and volunteers. Sign-ups for the longer sessions were sufficient to enable them all to run. But we weren’t able to work as closely with Oxford’s advice organisations as we had originally intended – the offer of a free half-day training course wasn’t taken up.



Instead, we split the training into a 1 hour and a 20 minute module, which enables two additional types of delivery. The 20 minutes session is a quick-fire information-sharing presentation with handouts and a call to sign up to the half-day session. The hour-long training session enables participants to cascade information to their teams.

Having a modular approach allows us to adapt and respond to whatever opportunity or request comes up, and provide something of use in whatever timeslot is available.

Our next steps

We will be using these training formats in our ongoing work with professionals, volunteers and community leaders. We hope to receive the support of our local authorities to continue to deliver sessions, and to roll them out across the county. Ultimately, we want everyone who is in contact with people experiencing food poverty to have the confidence, knowledge and skills to make a positive difference to them.

Our key achievements and impact

- Through our Level 1 and Level 2 food poverty training sessions, using our modular approach of a half day, 1 hour or 20 minutes, we have built the confidence, knowledge and skills of frontline service providers to address food poverty in their community.
- 103 service providers took part in the training sessions over the course of the year – 34 at Level 1, 19 at Level 2, 35 in a 1 hour session and 15 in a 20 minute session. Some of these work with more than 300 individuals (e.g. the headteacher of a primary school), but if each person works with just 30 individuals then more than 3,000 people at risk of or experiencing food poverty will have had better access to information and support, and a more informed and supportive approach than they would have had previously.
- Our hope is that this more empathic and empowering approach will shape food poverty and food access work for the long term.