



Co-producing the Food Poverty Action Plan for Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance: Final report, March 2019

Food Poverty Action Plan

We launched the Food Poverty Alliance in May 2018 with over 100 people in attendance, many of whom have lived experience of food poverty. The launch event featured workshops in which we started to shape the Food Poverty Action Plan, so all attendees were involved in co-producing the Plan from the beginning.

We then broke into six themed sub-groups that met through the rest of the year and wrote sections of the Food Poverty Action Plan:

1. Place-based access to food
2. Children experiencing food poverty
3. Causes of food poverty
4. Food banks and beyond
5. Measuring and monitoring food poverty
6. Skills and training
7. Plus three other sub-groups that supported the process

With the six sections written, we realised the Plan had all the right things in it, but was not written according to who/what agencies we believed should take responsibility for putting it into practise.

We therefore pulled the Plan apart and put it back together again, this time not based on the themes but according to who we wanted to take responsibility for implementing the actions. This sets us up well to go to

public services and other large institutions to ask what they will do to make the plan a reality. In fact, Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester has pledged to do so on our behalf. We then launched the Food Poverty Action Plan in March 2019, with other 150 people in attendance, and more than 30 people and organisations making “pledges” - commitments towards putting the plan into action.

“Having a joined-up response to tackling food poverty across education, health and care, supplier and provider networks; supported by further actions to tackle the roots causes of food poverty will make a huge difference in our efforts to tackle poverty and disadvantage, as well as build a thriving and productive Greater Manchester.”

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester



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www.foodpower.org.uk

Our challenges and learning

The world of food is so complex! Understanding different food support models and how they relate to the welfare system, Healthy Start vouchers, where food poverty fits into public health programs, how to define and measure food poverty, and more – it's been really valuable learning from other alliances. It's also essential to understand the experience of food poverty, which can only come from those who have experienced it, so their participation is vital.

The size of Greater Manchester, and the number and range of people and organisations involved was also a challenge. It required us to break down into several sub-groups in order to have manageable discussions. The themed sub-groups were a good model for engaging people, however those themes were not a good framework for the final version of the action plan, which we felt had to be broken down according to who should deliver the actions - it was a lot of work, skewed towards the end of the year, to re-write the plan, in a way that was faithful to the outputs of the sub-group, in this new format. I'm not sure I'd do it differently if doing it again, but it was a challenge.

It was hard to involve decision-makers and people in positions of power at the beginning, perhaps the idea of an action plan was too abstract until we had actually drafted it. Having drafted it we were able to engage decision-makers, but again, this involved late re-drafts based on their feedback.

“Being involved in the Alliance, has enabled us to become a stronger and more recognisable united force. Our collective response has enabled the network to grow and be more visible, thus gaining a greater voice. This in turn has further strengthened the perception of what we achieve within the community, which is to address food poverty by teaching cooking skills and the confidence that is needed.”

Adele Jordan, Cracking Good Food

Our next steps

We are now asking people and organisations to pledge to take action in line with the Food Poverty Action Plan, to address food poverty. We have over 30 pledges already and have many meetings with housing providers, councils, businesses, health bodies and charities lined up to ask them what they can do to put the Action Plan into practice. We hope to keep working together as an Alliance, and are currently raising funds, primarily from within Greater Manchester, to employ a full-time coordinator. Their job will be to challenge and support leaders to take action on food poverty, and to keep the Alliance meeting up and working together in a coordinated response to food poverty.

Our key achievements and impact

- Involving over 100 people and organisations, from every sector and all boroughs of Greater Manchester, including people who have lived experience of food poverty.
- Putting together an action plan to address food poverty that was faithful to the input from all participants, while also being addressed to powerful decision-makers who we hope will increasingly take a lead on addressing food poverty in Greater Manchester.
- Putting food poverty on the agenda for public services, making sure it is prioritised and that services across Greater Manchester are committed to addressing the underlying causes, ultimately helping people out of poverty.