



# LANCASTER DISTRICT **FOOD** **POVERTY** ALLIANCE



Our Five Year Action Plan  
FEBRUARY 2021

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# Foreword

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by Dusty Thomas | Community Commissioner  
Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission

Food poverty is not a new problem in the Lancaster District area and is closely linked to the other forms of poverty. The problem with balancing costs, in an area where we have seven wards falling into the bottom 10% of socially deprived areas in the country, two of which are in the bottom 3% (Source ONS 2015) means that we have high health inequalities in the region. This results in diet related illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, malnutrition and, eventually, lowered life expectancy. It is possible to walk up Morecambe promenade for 3 miles and find a 12-15-year age gap in life expectancy. It also causes children to have poor learning outcomes and inattention at school. The region saw a sharp rise in emergency food demand when we became one of the early pilot areas for Universal Credit and has been exacerbated even further by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not caused by people being unable to manage or budget their income but rather hard choices being made by people deciding between having the heating on or eating a good meal, buying nappies for their baby or something nutritious to eat.

When the pandemic hit and we went into the first lockdown, Lancaster City Council and Morecambe Bay Foodbank were congratulated by both the Lancashire Resilience Forum and the Trussell Trust for the speed and quality of their emergency food parcels. The second lockdown, however, brought to the forefront the disparity we have in our area, which includes city, coastal and rural areas, over food insecurity. We have witnessed increased job losses, people struggling to get by on furlough, shielding and reduced choice options to “shopping around”. Whilst the Council, foodbanks (both Morecambe Bay and The Olive Branch), Eggcup, and the network of food clubs in the area are doing their best, the food they can provide is not always conducive to a healthy, nutritious, balanced diet. They, therefore, are not a long-term answer to food poverty and in a first world country, such as we are, that is totally unacceptable. No child should be forced to root in a school bin for something to eat as has happened at a school in the area. Schools have had to step up and go over and beyond their remits to ensure children are not going hungry. Free school meal provision during the holidays have helped, but the quality of the food

provided has varied widely and because of the debate over whether they would be carried on, the October half-term was not catered for. Again this is very doubtful to be a long-term solution.

I am very pleased to see so many of our frontline organisations in the district, those providing community meals, emergency food provision, and advice, coming together to produce this Action Plan. Attacking the causes of food poverty in our district will take concerted and deliberate effort, and I hope that this report will serve as a beginning to that work. The discussions around food poverty need to include not just third sector organisations but schools, councils and health care providers, amongst others and I call for you to take part in the conversation and to take action.



Dusty Thomas  
Community Commissioner  
Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission

**MBPTC**  
MORECAMBE BAY POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION  
“Nothing about us, without us, is for us”

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[Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission](#) brings people with lived experience of poverty together with people who work for organisations that make decisions affecting people living in poverty, to listen to each others experience, create new understanding and make more informed decisions that better meet peoples needs. It aims to give a voice to those whose voices are never usually heard at decision making levels, following the strapline “Nothing about us, without us, is for us”

# Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance

The Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance (LFPFA) first met in June 2018 and brings together organisations and individuals to work towards the common aim of ensuring all residents have access to affordable, nourishing food.

Following that initial meeting, the LDFPA has grown and now encompasses a wide range of organisations drawn from key public sector authorities, third sector organisations, education settings, and faith groups.

The alliance was formed to:

- Conduct research to find out the prevalence of food insecurity in the local area
- Bring together agencies and individuals to talk collectively about the problem of food insecurity in Lancaster district
- Provide a forum for sharing resources, best practice and information at a local level and beyond
- Develop a collaborative food poverty action plan to ensure a joined up, evidence based approach to tackling food poverty in the Lancaster district

This report and action plan documents the LDFPA journey to date. The Alliance has an open door and listening ear for those wanting to join the conversation including local communities, businesses, health professionals, and third sector organisations. We encourage anyone with an interest in supporting any aspect of this plan to get involved and share their ideas and support for action. We understand that no individual organisation can tackle this issue alone. If we are going to successfully address food poverty, we need action from all levels and from communities working together.

***We will work with others to address food poverty  
and work to alleviate food poverty across Lancaster  
and the surrounding District.***

Lancaster City Council  
Ambitions Plan 2018-2022

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### Acknowledgements

This report and action plan was co-produced by the Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance ('the Alliance') and partially funded by Food Power. The design work was completed by the Good Things Collective CIC. The Alliance would like to thank all the organisations involved in the journey to produce this document and look forward to continued collaborative working to reduce food insecurity in the Lancaster District. The Alliance would like to give specific thanks to the following people: Dr John Lincoln (The Operational Research Society, Pro Bono OR scheme) for planning, researching and preparing a report on which this action plan is based; Ally Mackenzie for setting up the focus group of Food Bank users; Dan Clarkson and Leslie Mann for their access to and interpretation of foodbank data; Dr Dianna Smith (University of Southampton) for her advice and access to food poverty risk data; Tom Skinner from Greater Manchester Poverty Action for his valuable insights in action plan development; Julie Seaton and Trudi Wilkinson for their invaluable community insights.

# Food Poverty / Insecurity Definitions:

## Food Poverty:

'The inability to acquire or consume an adequate or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.' [1]

## Food poverty, or household food insecurity:

Encompasses both the affordability of food, as well as its availability within local communities [2].

## Food aid:

An umbrella term encompassing a range of large-scale and small local activities aiming to help people meet food needs, often on a short-term basis during crisis or immediate difficulty. More broadly, food aid contributes to relieving symptoms of household or individual-level food insecurity and poverty [3].

## Deprivation:

"A situation in which you do not have things or conditions that are usually considered necessary for a pleasant life" [4]

**“Feeding a person for a day is not enough. Feeding a person with love, care, acceptance and the skills and ability to feed themselves is our goal.”**

Robyn Thomas

Stanleys Community Centre and Food Club

[1] Dowler E. Food and Poverty in Britain: Rights and Responsibilities. In: Dowler E and Jones Finer C (editor). Welfare of Food: Rights and Responsibilities in a Changing World. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell; 2003. p. 140-159.

[2] <https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/whatisfoodpoverty/>

[3] Lambie-Mumford et al. Household Food Security in the UK: A Review of Food Aid; 2014. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/283071/household-food-security-uk-140219.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283071/household-food-security-uk-140219.pdf)

[4] <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deprivation>

# Food Support Definitions

## Food Pantries / Food Co-ops / Buying Groups

Food outlets that run on a not-for-profit basis to give people access to good food at affordable prices.



## Food Clubs

Intercept safe and edible food that would otherwise go to waste and redistribute to members for a small fee – usually £3-4 for around £15-£20 worth of food. Usually take place in community venues and providing opportunities for socialising.



## Foodbanks

A place where stocks of food, typical basic provisions and non-perishable items are supplied free of charge to people in need.



## Community Meals

Come in a number of guises and usually run in community venues with the idea of bringing people together to share a meal – these can be free, pay as you feel or paid for services. Include: supper clubs, lunch clubs for older people, casserole clubs, food cycle. For many, these meals provide social support by the way of company and conversation.

**Food poverty was one of the top issues identified in a survey of Morecambe residents.**

*West End Morecambe Big Local Consultation Findings, 2018*



# Health Inequalities / Food Insecurity Statistics

**Health inequalities** are unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society. Inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society – in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age [1]. These conditions influence our opportunities for good health, and how we think, feel and act, and this shapes our mental health, physical health and wellbeing [2].

Over the last five years, the sharpest rise in poverty has been in the Midlands and northern cities [3]

An estimated 14 million children in the UK were living in poverty in 2018/19 [4]

Lancaster is the 112th most deprived out of 317 districts in England [5]

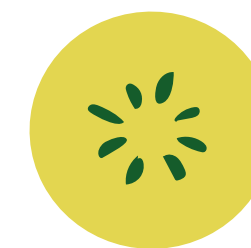
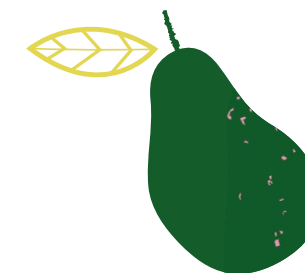
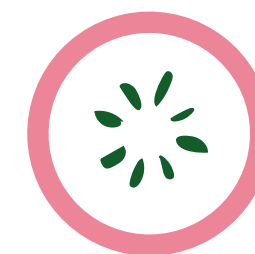
15% of LSOAs in the Lancaster District are in the most deprived Indices of Multiple Deprivation decile [5]

As of May 2020 – 10,854 (9,600 in payment) households in Lancaster District are in receipt of Universal Credit [6]

30% of children in Lancaster & Fleetwood and 31% of children in Morecambe & Lunesdale were living in poverty in 2018/19 [7]

69% of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works [8]

Based on housing energy efficiency, energy costs and household income, 13.8% of households in the Lancaster District live in fuel poverty – this is higher than the national average of 10.9%. This equates to 8,234 fuel poor homes in the Lancaster District [9].



25% of residents in the Lancaster district earn below the National Living Wage based on data derived from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings [10]

Men living in the least deprived communities in the Lancaster District can expect to live 9.4 years longer than those who live in the most deprived areas. The gap for women is 7.5 years [11].

Those living in the most deprived areas spend 14% less of their lives in good health [12]

By GCSE, there is a 28% gap between children receiving free school meals and their wealthier peers in terms of the number achieving at least five A\*-C GCSE grades [13]

Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals on average attain half a grade less than the national average attainment at Key Stage 4 (GCSE and equivalent) [14]

[1] <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf> [1]

[2] <https://www.england.nhs.uk/lphimenu/definitions-for-health-inequalities/>

[3] <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/news/2020/october/child-poverty-rise-shapest-in-midlands-and-north/>

[4] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201819>

[5] National Statistics – English Indices of Deprivation 2019

[6] DWP Universal Credit statistics - Stat x-plore

[7] <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2019/>

[8] <https://www.lancs.live/news/lancashire-news/how-many-children-lancashire-really-19149514>

[9] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2019>

[10] IHS MARKIT Ltd., Living Wage Research for KPMG 2019 Report

[11] <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/static-reports/health-profiles/2019/E07000121.html?area-name=Lancaster>

[12] Inequality in Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth by National Deciles of Area Deprivation: England <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/datasets/inequalityinhealthylifeexpectancyatbirthbynationaldecilesofareadeprivationengland>

[13] GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics: 2014. Department for Education, February 2015.

[14] Key stage 4 performance 2019. Department for Education, February 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised>

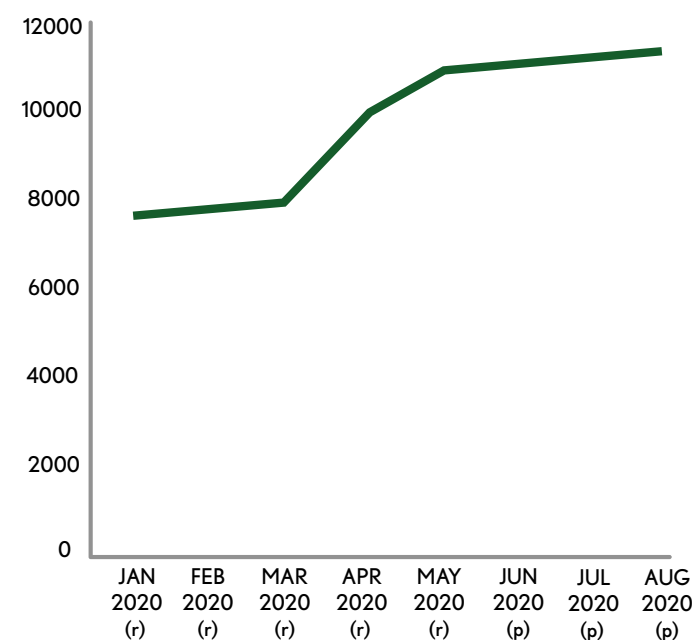
# Food Insecurity Statistics

Lancaster District currently has a low uptake of Healthy Start vouchers with only 42% of eligible families accessing them. Healthy Start is worth £3.10 per week, due to increase to £4.25 per week in April 2021. They help low income pregnant women and young children access fruit, vegetables and milk. [1]

At the start of the 2020/21 academic year, 4021 (21%) of children in Lancaster district were in receipt of Free School Meals [2]

Research conducted in Lancaster district identified 28 areas as 'food deserts'. These are areas where residents are more likely to face economic and/or physical constraints to accessing food, in particular healthy foods, from distant stores [3].

## Households on Universal Credit - Lancaster District



Dataset: Households on Universal Credit, Department for Work & Pensions  
Stat-Xplore accessed 21/12/2020  
(r) Revised figure, (p) Provisional figure

AUGUST 2020

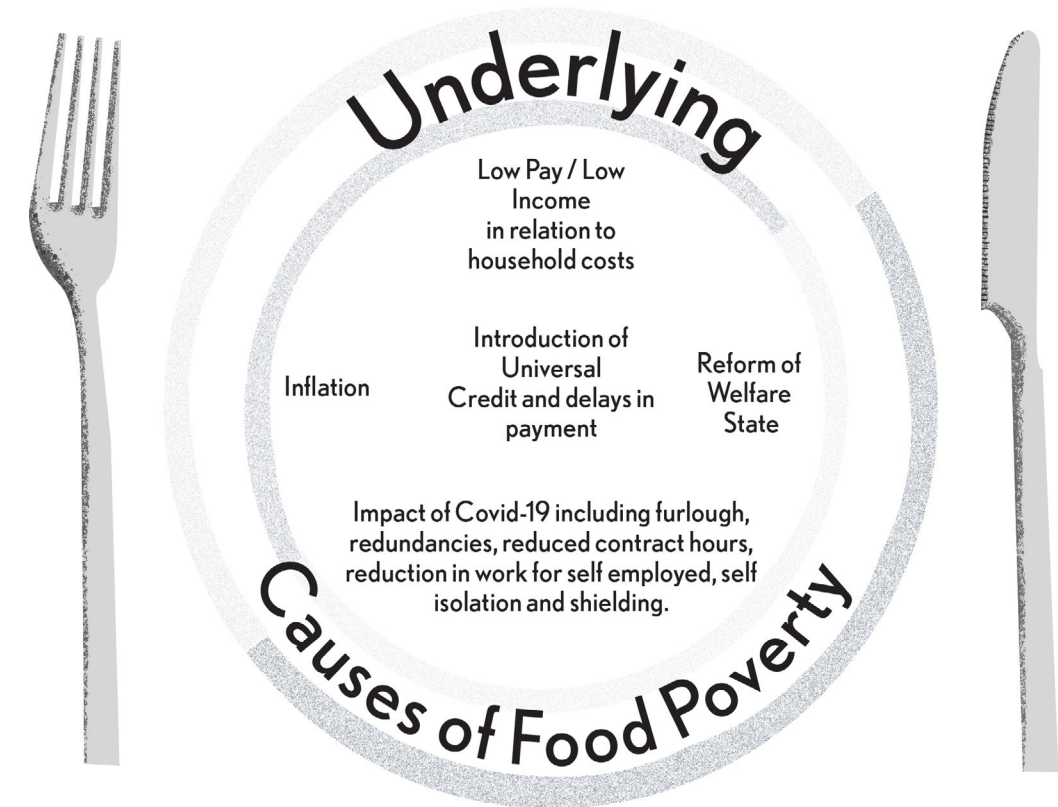
11350 households claimed universal credit



4452 (39%) of those households have dependent children



Families experience poverty for many reasons, but the fundamental cause is not having enough money to cope with the circumstances in which they are living. A family might move into poverty because of a rise in living costs, a drop in earnings through job loss or benefits changes. [1]



## Primary reasons for referral to Trussell Trust Foodbanks in 2019-20 [2]:

**39%**

Low income

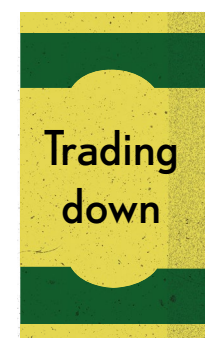
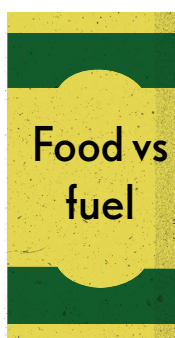
**17%**

Benefit delays

**15%**

Benefit changes

## Consequences of Food Poverty:



[1] Child poverty transitions: exploring the routes into and out of poverty 2009 to 2012. Department for Work and Pensions, 2015.

[2] <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

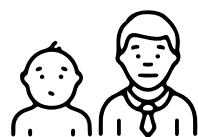
[1] <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-uptake-data/> - data correct as of 08/11/2020 - national average 51% uptake and 53% North West

[2] Free School Meals Registration Data, Lancashire County Council October 2020

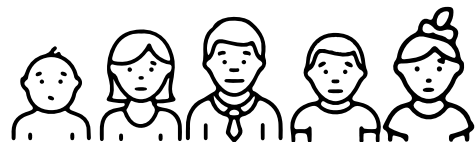
[3] Devenish K, (2019). Evaluating the existence of 'food deserts' in Lancaster District - A GIS-based analysis of food provision and accessibility. Masters Dissertation, Lancaster University.

# Food Insecurity Risk Map - 2019

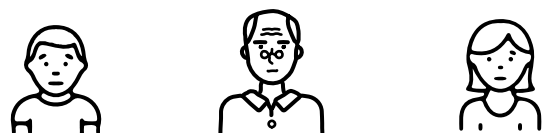
This map displays the estimated percentage of households at increased risk of experiencing food insecurity based on the demographic characteristics of people:



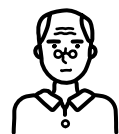
Low income lone parent households



Low income households with dependent children



People aged 16-64 who live alone on a low income



People aged over 65 years who live alone

Although food poverty risk is concentrated in the urban areas of Lancaster and Morecambe, many people living outside of these areas are also at risk of food poverty. This map shows an estimate of need as not all individuals living in areas of high risk will be experiencing food poverty and there may be individuals experiencing food poverty residing in low risk areas.

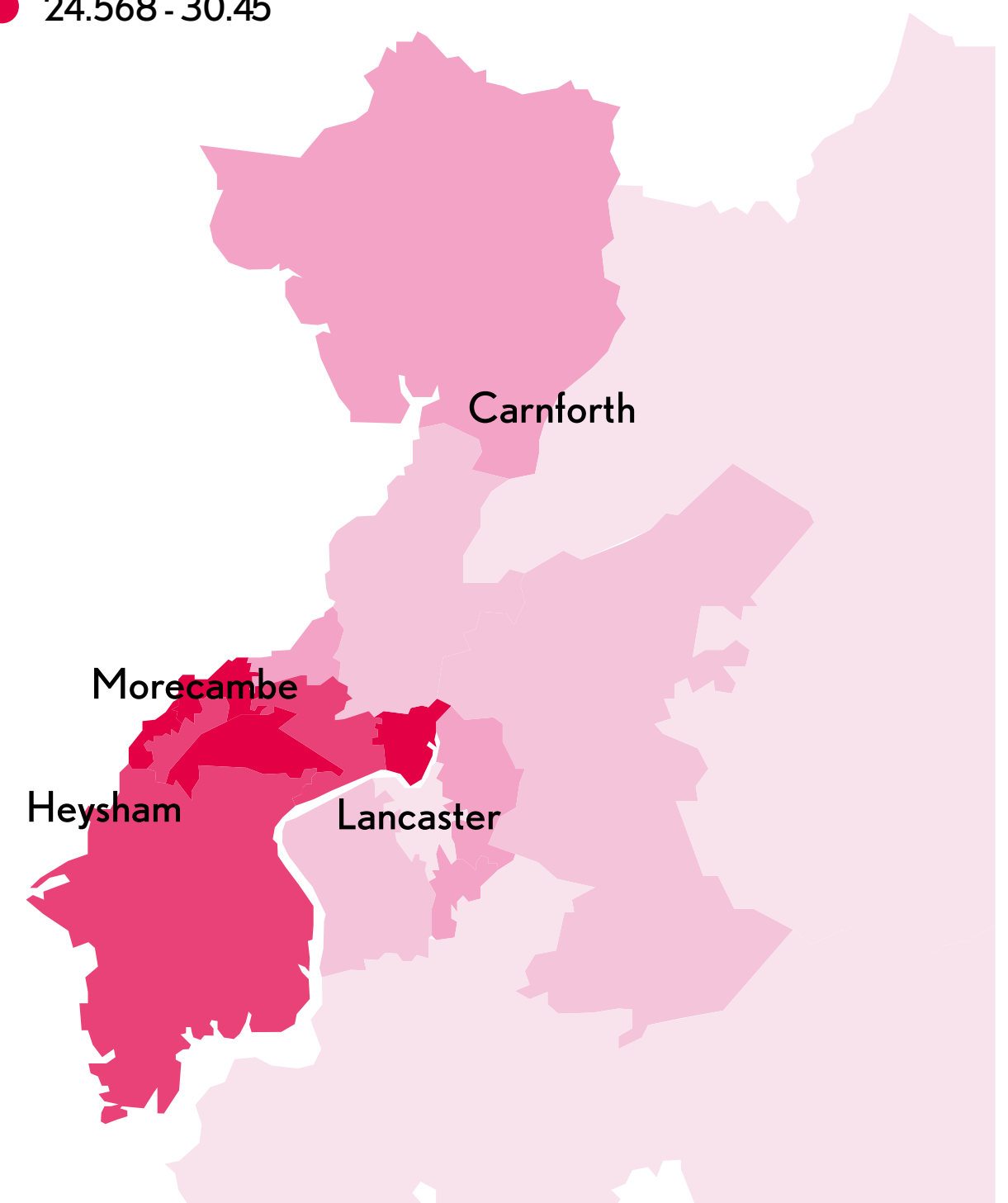
<https://www.mylocalmap.org.uk/iaahealth/>

Food Poverty Risk (Sept 2019) % of households at higher risk (all ages)

Source: Census, ONS, DWPLicence: openAbout Dataset: Updated NEW estimates of food poverty risk, dating from September 2019. Further details are available Please contact Dianna for details (d.m.smith@soton.ac.uk) About Column: % of households at higher risk (all ages): low income with dependent children or single adults on low income, single adults over age 65

Food Poverty Risk (Sept 2019) % of households at higher risks (all ages)

- 6.74 - 12.78
- 12.78 - 16.748
- 16.748 - 19.744
- 19.744 - 24.568
- 24.568 - 30.45

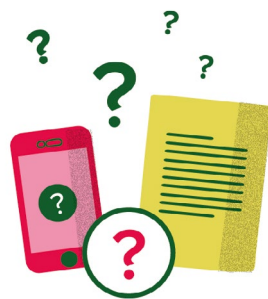




The foodbanks have witnessed an increase in demand from households who have never previously needed to use a foodbank due to furlough, redundancies and reductions in contracted hours. It is worth noting that there have been people needing this support in areas where access was more challenging.

## Barriers to accessing foodbanks [1]

Lack of information  
about foodbanks  
and how to access  
them



Difficulties in travelling to a foodbank in terms of cost, time and location



Physical, mobility or mental health issues that make it difficult to access a foodbank



Don't feel able to access foodbanks due to the stigma associated with their use



# Covid-19 Food Support Response

Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance have continued to meet regularly to share information, best practice and resources, with increased collaboration during the pandemic response.

Volunteers have been critical to the community pandemic response with many stepping up to help get food out to households via the local food banks and food clubs. This includes accepting food donations/deliveries, sorting and packing parcels and providing home deliveries.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Lancaster City Council had identified food poverty as a priority issue in their Ambitions Plan 2018-2022. In March 2020, they committed to support emergency food provision during the pandemic and by the end of the first lockdown £600,000 had been allocated.

Lancaster City Council made over 27,000 phone calls or welfare visits to vulnerable individuals during the first lockdown to check whether they had support with accessing food and medicine and delivering emergency parcels where necessary. This was possible due to the City Council having adopted the 'ensuring council' model, whereby all council services such as waste collection, leisure and council housing, are retained in-house. A huge redeployment exercise in early April saw gardeners, catering staff, gym instructors and many others taking on pandemic response roles.



Photo shows an average 3-day food bank parcel provided to individuals in crisis prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The size of parcels were increased during lockdown to provide around 5-7 days worth of food and included some fresh foods, fruits and vegetables.

**Photo credit -  
The Olive Branch**





Morecambe Bay Foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network. Under 'normal' circumstances they provide three days nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people finding themselves in crisis. This is accessed via referral agents who provide a voucher that can be exchanged for a food parcel.

Over 90% of the food is donated locally with donation points available across the district including in supermarkets. During the pandemic, Lancaster City Council and Morecambe Bay Foodbank launched a partnership, which saw the operation move to Salt Ayre Leisure Centre and more recently to The Platform.

With the support of other local charities, organisations and volunteers, they co-ordinated and delivered emergency food parcels to vulnerable people across the district. Between April and August 2020, 9,555 parcels delivered to local households.

The premises move was required to scale up operations in order to meet that demand and implement social distancing for staff and volunteers. Traditionally Morecambe Bay Foodbank covered the immediate areas around the foodbank premises. By offering home deliveries

of food parcels, food can quickly be provided to those most in need with limited contact thereby reducing risk but also allowing a greater catchment area to be reached including areas of Lancaster, Carnforth and rural villages.

However, the lack of face-to-face contact provides fewer opportunities to signpost to additional support, such as benefits checks, debt and housing support, that is often offered alongside the immediate need for food.







**The Olive Branch was founded in 2004, providing meals for homeless people and those in the community who were struggling to prepare and eat an evening meal.**

In December 2008 a drop-in support centre and referral based food bank was established. This provides a safe space to just 'be', to chat and to be signposted for advice and guidance, as well as receive an emergency food parcel if needed. The Olive Branch is there for people struggling with a wide range of issues including housing and benefit problems, addiction and mental health problems. They also support a large number of asylum seekers. As a knock on effect of the Universal Credit system, the demand for food parcels has steadily increased over recent years.

People are referred to the food bank by an agency supporting them with their problems and an assessment of need made, based on individual

circumstances. Ordinarily, food parcels are intended to be limited to five in any crisis period (one per week) to encourage self-help and help discourage dependency. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic the need has been greater than the reality of being able to self-help.

To cope with increased demand for food parcels during the pandemic and provide a safe working environment for volunteers, The Olive Branch took on additional warehouse premises and offered home delivery of parcels.

“ We have just received our food parcel and can't thank you enough for your generosity, particularly the Christmas bag, what a kind and thoughtful thing of you to do. I also want to give a mention to the lovely man who delivered our food, he is an asset to you. In a harsh world... just having some small interaction with a kind person has lifted my spirits up. ”





# Trends in Foodbank Demand

Food insecurity risk was already at high levels and demand for emergency food provision was on the rise coming into 2020.

Prior to Covid-19, food banks were facing increasing demand due to a combination of pressures, with the Trussell Trust reporting low income, benefit delays and benefit changes as the three primary reasons for food bank referral in 2019/20 [1].

Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the demand for emergency food support has increased dramatically. The figures reported here are a weekly average for the year with 2020 only covering the period from January to September.

Collectively, The Olive Branch and Morecambe Bay foodbanks have responded to over 500 food parcel requests each week over the first 6 months of the Covid-19 pandemic. This equates to around 750 adults and 320 children supported with food every week.

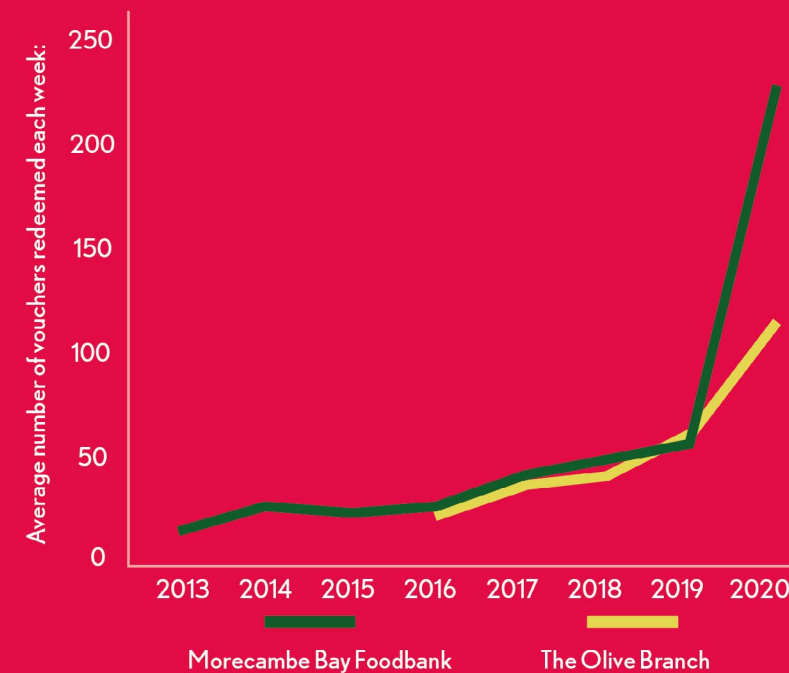
“

*Many people are experiencing food poverty for the first time during this period.*

”

[1] <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

## Increasing demand for food aid support in Lancaster District



### WEEKLY SNAPSHOT:

506  
Food Vouchers

Feeding



750 Adults

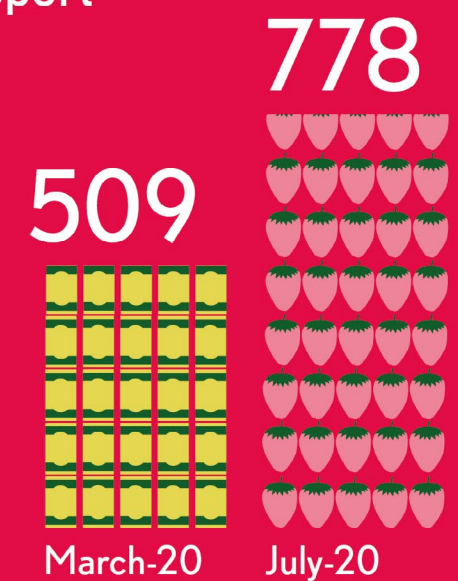


350 Children

## Households requiring food aid support Pre & Post Covid-19:



FOODBANKS



FOOD CLUBS

Graph shows an estimate of the number of households accessing food support per week. Data collected from 13 food clubs and two food banks collected via questionnaires completed in July/August 2020. [1]

[1] Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Community Food Organisations: Response to Covid-19, November 2020



## The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) reported that the groups of people most likely to seek help from a foodbank in the first lockdown were:

- Families with children whose incomes did not keep up with the costs of living and who may have struggled to access or redeem free school meals vouchers
- People living alone with fragile physical or mental health whose low income was compounded by isolation
- Working households – including both employees and the self employed – who either lost their jobs, were furloughed or had been offered fewer shifts as a result of the economic consequences of the pandemic. There is often a long wait for universal credit payments exacerbating the problem.
- People with no recourse to public funds [1]

However, the food banks are just the tip of the iceberg dealing with immediate crisis scenarios. There is a much larger population struggling long term to access a healthy diet.

Like the food banks, demand on 13 of the districts food clubs has increased over the pandemic with over 750 members supported in this way on a weekly basis. Many clubs have increased their capacity to take on new members and new clubs have been established during this time. However, the demand continues to increase and waiting lists are common. Although foodbanks may be essential in helping people through crisis, it is widely recognised that they do not provide a long term solution to food insecurity.

Within Lancashire County, 35 community food support organisations reported an overall 136% increase in demand for their services. In order for them to increase capacity, **three main areas of need were identified:**

1.

Number of  
volunteers  
available

2.

**Resources**  
– including  
the amount  
and quality of  
intercepted food

3.

**Premises –**  
making premises  
Covid-safe has  
led to reduced  
capacity

[1] Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) and Feeding Britain, October 2020. Hunger and the need for food banks between March and September 2020 <https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/6b2c2c70-7322-4f95-a83c-8b37368e9536/IFAN%20Feeding%20Britain%20briefing%20October%202020.pdf>

## Volunteers

Food Banks are busier and more food clubs and community initiatives are setting up in response to increasing numbers of people experiencing food poverty. Powering all of that are the many volunteers across Lancaster District who give their time and energy to support small staff teams and their communities to hugely increase the capacity of services. Those volunteers demonstrate the care that local people have for each other.



“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

Dr Syed Muhammad Zeeshan Hussain Almashhadi



## Food Clubs

Food Clubs intercept safe and edible food that would otherwise go to waste. Surplus food can become available for a number of reasons ranging from batch labels being incorrectly printed to food being close to a recommended sell-by date.

They supply all kinds of groceries including tins, packets, fresh and frozen. Most food clubs operate a membership scheme where members pay a small fee each week and take home around two bags of shopping.

In 'normal' times, food clubs took place in community settings such as church halls and community centres with members enjoying refreshments and socialising with other members and volunteers.

Pre-Covid there were 13 food clubs in operation, 7 in Lancaster and 6 in Morecambe, several new clubs have been established in response to Covid. Although food clubs are not the complete answer to food poverty and cannot replace food banks in the crisis support they offer, they can make a significant contribution in helping households to reduce their

food bills. Food clubs can help pre-empt the need to use a food bank and may offer a route to stability for those in crisis.

"I was made redundant at the start of the pandemic and my husband's salary was also cut. Whilst we aren't typically considered to have a low income, we are heavily financially committed. The loss of earnings left us with very little left for food after paying our bills...

Food club is amazing! It helps me manage our budget better and it's helped me to start paying back my overdraft as I'm not spending as much money on food, for which I will be forever grateful. I also really like that it's intercepting food waste and redistributing it to people who will use it. The boxes are always full of nutritious healthy food and mean I can provide a fab balanced diet for my toddler and for us as well."

Food For All – New Melbourne Club





## Stanleys Food Club Case Study

In March 2020, prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, the Alliance spoke to members of Stanleys Food Club.

Most of the members had heard about the food club through word of mouth via friends and family. Often they attended with friends feeling 'embarrassed' or 'judged' for needing food support. Many reported prior association with a foodbank but once having attended the club, felt differently about the service they offered.

The social aspect of the club meant that members would meet others in similar situations to themselves, often in full or part time work, struggling to make ends meet after making payments for rent, council tax and fuel. There was an idea that money could be saved by using the food club but the reality was more that the reduction in food costs helped with being able to make debt repayments.

The operating times of food clubs was an issue highlighted by members, as many clubs run during the day, whereas Stanleys runs in the evening. Some people travelled outside of their local area to access the club.

There is therefore a need for food clubs to run throughout the day/ evening to suit different working patterns, school runs etc. Everyone we spoke to appreciated the work of the volunteers involved and liked the options and choices available to them at the food club.







Prior to the pandemic, Eggcup were just starting out as a surplus food depot, the idea being to carry out targeted collection of surplus food from local businesses to redistribute within the Lancaster district footprint. They have adapted and refocussed their efforts on making sure that where food clubs were no longer able to run safely, members didn't miss out on that provision.

Throughout the first lockdown, Eggcup provided their members with weekly doorstep deliveries and scaled up provision to offer the service to a greater number of households in the area. This included setting up a buying co-operative to help give members some consistent staple items such as bread, milk and eggs, as surplus food provision can vary somewhat.

They have recently opened a Covid-safe hub in Lancaster City Centre to replace the doorstep delivery service. Members come to the hub once a week, see what's on offer and make their choices. The hub operates in a shop format and offers a professional service and normalised shopping experience. Everyone prefers to choose rather than receive a pre-packaged delivery. In a collaboration with Stanleys Community Centre, an outlet has opened in the West End of Morecambe. For some members, the option of a town-centre outlet seems to work better than a pop-up food club. Other members prefer

the social nature of the very local pop-ups. In future planning, it would be ideal to integrate a range of models to suit different peoples' needs.

"When the first lockdown started in March I lost my part-time job, and I started to panic. I was already having to skip a few bills here and there, and with no income at all I didn't know what I was going to do. I couldn't think of anything else I could cut down on - it already seemed like I was paying for the bare minimum. I dreaded going food shopping and spending more money I couldn't afford. When I went to the CAB for help, they gave me the phone number for Eggcup, and I couldn't believe it was real at first. The amount of food you get for just £4 is incredible - and it's all good, healthy food too, lots of things I wouldn't normally buy. I feel so much better about the food I'm eating, but I'm also saving money. I've got a plan from the CAB for how to pay off my debts a little bit at a time with the money I've saved from not having to go shopping every week. I feel better than I have done in a long time. Being a member of Eggcup has honestly changed my life."





## Community Meals

There are a number of organisations in the Lancaster district offering community meals. There are a variety of options available including social lunch clubs for older adults to help prevent loneliness, meals for families to help low incomes go that little bit further, hot meals for homeless people, and community cafes with pay as you feel schemes. Community meal providers have needed to adapt the way they operate during covid-19, many are now offering takeaway services or pre-packed meal boxes.

Prior to the pandemic, Stanleys community centre hosted two community meals per week. The first was a lunch aimed at helping those most vulnerable in the local area to become more connected with access to a filling hot meal and company. The second was a family meal, prepared by the young people attending the community centre. This allowed young people to develop transferable life skills whilst making friends, and helping families stretch their income a little further going into the weekend.

One project set up to help support those most vulnerable in the district provided frozen ready meals to people who were finding it difficult to prepare meals of themselves due to physical or mental health issues or lack of cooking facilities. Working alongside Lancaster and Morecambe College, Chefs Catering North West, Age UK Lancashire, and

Lancaster City Council, Eggcup provided substantial support to 93 clients over first lockdown providing over 9000 ready meals in the process.

Over  
9000  
ready  
meals





# Action Plan

In addition to responding to the challenges of Covid-19, the LDFPA have spent the past 12 months identifying local needs and priority areas to tackle in relation to food insecurity. The following pages outline these key priority issues. It is important to consider the action plan as a 'work in progress', adaptable to changes in need over time. The Alliance partners are committed to taking a whole systems approach and will work in collaboration to address the priorities outlined.

## OVERALL AIM: To ensure all residents have access to affordable, nourishing food.

1. Raise the profile of food poverty as an issue
2. Design a food support pathway and create an information hub for food support services
3. Maximise food available to low income individuals and families
4. Tackle child hunger
5. Increase opportunities for community food provision
6. Provision for vulnerable and/or isolated groups
7. Maximise education opportunities
8. Monitoring and evaluation

**If we are going to successfully address food poverty we need action from all levels and from communities working together.**

## 1. Raise the Profile of Food Poverty as an Issue

**This report and action plan is just the beginning, we need to continue the conversation and build upon the work done so far by:**

Providing opportunities for people with lived experience of food insecurity to explain what it is like, how it happened to them, what they need to change and what help actually makes a difference

Providing opportunities for communities to talk about the medium and long term ways in which people in food poverty can best be helped, including work to build community capacity to support local people who may be at risk of food poverty

Embedding the work of the LDFPA within our local communities, businesses, health sector, charities and third sector organisations and create opportunities for involvement in and support of the actions of the LDFPA. The Alliance has an open door and listening ear for those wanting to join the conversation

### We will:

1. Continue to build upon the strong links with FoodFutures, North Lancashire's Sustainable Food Network, and support the wider work of Sustainable Food Places including the application for silver award for Lancaster District.
2. Link in with other local areas to share learning and create Lancashire-wide action against poverty
3. Conduct research and data collection to highlight the underlying causes of poverty and share information-based campaigns on these matters (by ourselves and others)
4. Work collaboratively to create and deliver training in food poverty issues so workforces (including health professionals, welfare advisers, housing and voluntary organisations) are attuned to signals of poverty and can effectively direct those experiencing food poverty to welfare support and local hardship funds, as well as to emergency food aid at times of crisis
5. Ensure that food poverty awareness is embedded in policy and in service planning with a focus on prevention with increased links to housing, fuel poverty, public health, social services, hospital care and discharge



## 2. Design a food support pathway and create an information hub for food support services

Foodbanks provide emergency support to people in crisis. LDFPA are considering how longer term support such as food clubs can be integrated into a wider support system. This would see individuals moving from crisis services through to longer term support, building community resilience and capacity to better support local people at risk of food insecurity.

We aim to:

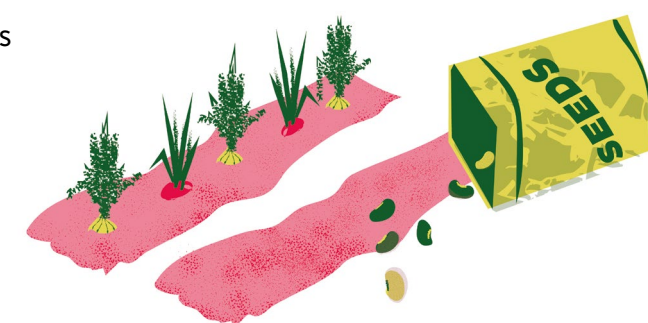
1. Create opportunities for collaborative working between organisations offering food support, referral agencies, and wider support organisations
2. Work collaboratively to develop a system for individuals to move on from foodbank emergency support to longer term support and out of crisis to stability and self-sufficiency. We will work with people who currently use foodbanks and food clubs to ensure that the system and services work according to their needs, including improving accessibility
3. Develop user friendly, printable online/ app resources to map where and how to get help with food and other crisis support that is useful to both the public and practitioners
4. When accessing food support, include signposting to a wide variety of services including financial inclusion e.g. access to credit unions, benefits checks, and strategies for coping with debt



## 3. Maximise Support Available to Low Income Individuals and Families

We aim to:

1. Treat individuals with dignity taking an 'every contact counts' approach to working with those experiencing food insecurity, recognising that there are multiple factors that lead up to a crisis point
2. Ensure those in need are aware of, and take up, benefits, education and training opportunities, by offering advice, support and signposting to relevant services
3. Develop an improved system for referrals into the Citizens Advice Bureau and other support systems through contact links with emergency food provision
4. Promote uptake of targeted food support for families including Healthy Start vouchers and Free School Meals entitlement
5. Support and promote initiatives reducing local food waste such as Eggcup and food clubs. This includes providing information on food safety to ensure edible food does not end up in landfill.
6. Promote opportunities to support people in growing their own food
7. Work to introduce measures to ensure housing has adequate food preparation and cooking facilities and look to provide appropriate equipment where needed



# 4. Tackle Child Hunger

It is well recognised that hunger is linked with child behaviour, poor mental health and lower academic attainment. We need a unified commitment to making sure that no child living in the district goes hungry, with support not limited to those receiving Free School Meals.

We will:

1.

Work with Lancashire County Council to ensure that the Holiday Activity and Food scheme is available for all age groups in a wide variety of settings to suit local needs
2.

Explore options for delivering breakfast and after school clubs
3.

Promote uptake of Free School Meals entitlement beyond the universal provision and encourage efforts to reduce associated stigma
4.

Promote uptake of Healthy Start vouchers and Healthy Start vitamins for low income families with young children and pregnant women
5.

Explore the use of school kitchen facilities and outdoor areas out of hours for adult education opportunities such as food skills courses
6.

Support schools in setting up food clubs and providing community meals where local need is identified



# 5. Increase Opportunities for Community Food Provision

Now, more than ever, we recognise the impact food provision has on community wellbeing. Community food schemes have a role to play in preventing social isolation and loneliness, improving mental health and wellbeing, and providing opportunities for care and support.

We will continue to work with partners to increase opportunities to grow, buy and share food in community settings including:

1.

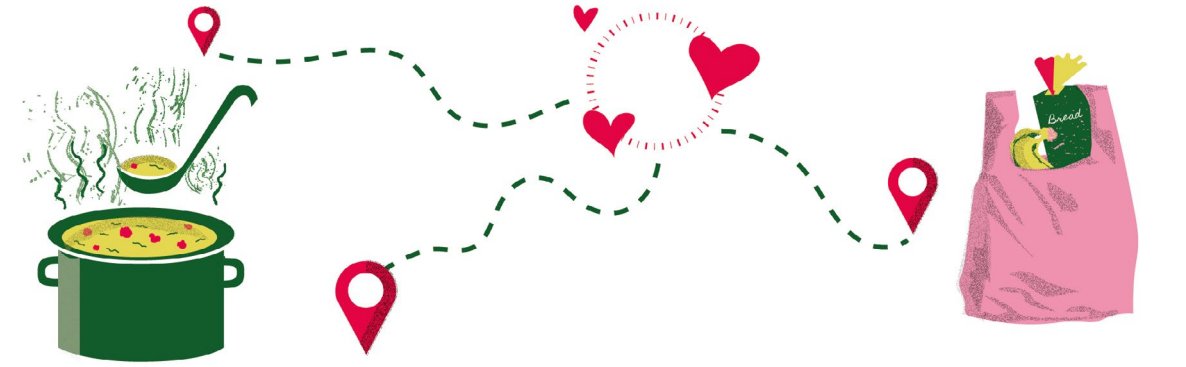
Mapping current, and supporting new, provision of community meals e.g. lunch clubs
2.

An active network of food clubs that service their local communities with affordable, healthy food across the district – ideally access to a food club in every ward
3.

A coordinating hub to support the growth of a district network of surplus food clubs and outlets, buying cooperatives and food pantries
4.

Exploring opportunities to increase and support community food growing, including linking local growing projects and allotments with community meal projects
5.

Create opportunities for local procurement of food and consideration of climate friendly practices e.g. reusable or biodegradable packaging

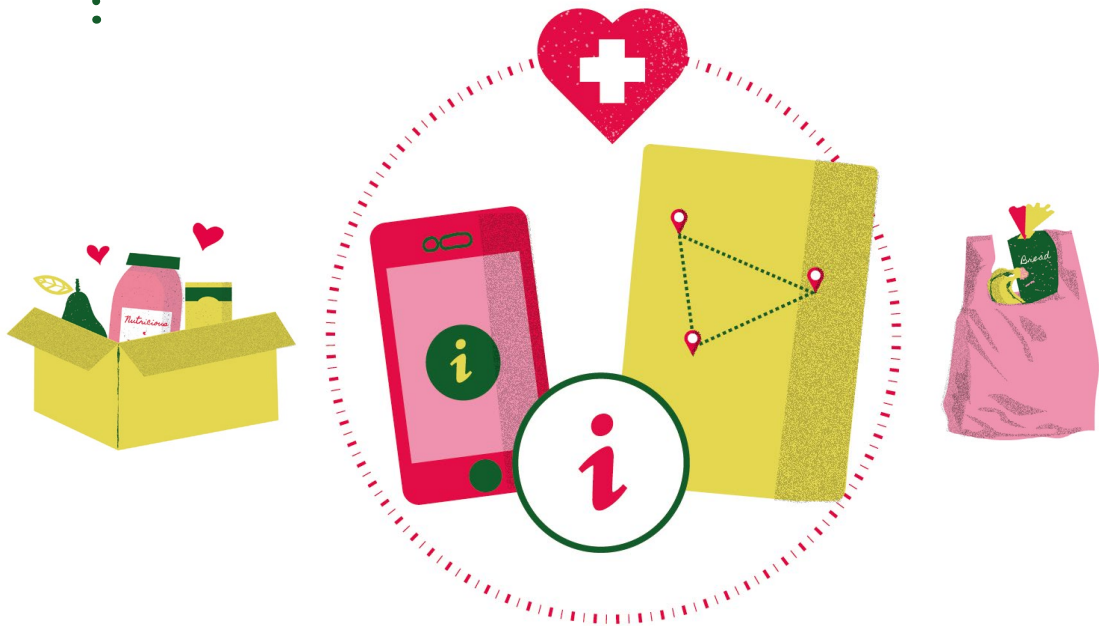


## 6. Provision for Vulnerable and/or Isolated Groups

There are number of groups within society, such as homeless people, refugees & asylum seekers, older people, patients discharged from hospital and individuals in receipt of health and social care, that are more vulnerable or at risk of food insecurity and isolation.

We will work with partners to:

1. Map out the existing food support options available for different vulnerable groups
2. Identify gaps in current provision for each group identified including referral pathways where required
3. Develop a range of food support options for vulnerable people ensuring that services are suited to the needs of those accessing the services
4. Establish working relationships between partners and develop mechanisms for identifying vulnerable individuals



## 7. Maximise Education Opportunities

We will utilise local expertise and community food skills, exploring options to:

1. Support spaces to learn growing skills including allotments, gardens, community growing spaces, windowsill growing and seed saving
2. Offer a range of food skills courses considering the needs of different groups within the community at appropriate times for a range of ages and abilities in accessible venues with a focus on:
  - Quick and easy preparation skills
  - Timesaving, energy efficient cooking e.g. utilising microwaves and slow cookers
  - Budgeting and meal planning including sourcing food and minimising waste
3. Provide opportunities for intergenerational skill sharing
4. Promote the uptake of established initiatives to promote access to healthy food including NHS Change4Life initiative, Food for Life, Recipe 4 Health Award for catering businesses
5. Develop and maintain links with key partners and education settings – including FoodFutures, primary and secondary schools, Lancaster & Morecambe College, Lancaster University, University of Cumbria, Eden Learning, Lancashire Adult Learning
6. Work collaboratively to create and deliver training on food insecurity issues so workforces are attuned to signals of poverty and can effectively direct those experiencing food poverty to appropriate support.



## 8. Monitoring and Evaluation

We will encourage and support data collection and sharing by Alliance partners operating within the Lancaster District. Linking datasets allows us to look at the bigger picture and increase the ability to amplify the LDFPA voice with collective statistics from multiple organisations.

1. There is a need to collect, collate and analyse data on food insecurity to:
  - Understand current scale of the problem at both local and national levels
  - Identify gaps in current provision locally
  - Monitor progress against the local action plan and at a national level
  - Recognise the impact of poverty and food insecurity on wider health inequalities
2. We will work to identify and monitor prevalence of indicators of poverty, food insecurity and related factors. We will ensure that monitoring and evaluation is an integrated part of initiatives undertaken by the LDFPA progress and impact can be reported against desired outcomes
3. In order to see how Lancaster compares on a national level, a set of consistently used, comparable measures are required. Until a measure is made available, we will promote use of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale across the district as opportunity arises and explore the possibility of using this measure in GP surgeries and schools, or conduct a household survey
4. Link with national organisations and provide data to researchers, campaigns and national policy makers in order to develop understanding of and challenge the underlying mechanisms driving poverty
5. The Alliance will review and report on progress against this action plan on an annual basis, celebrating successes and identifying where improvements are needed, and reviewing goals and targets
6. We hope over time to see a reduction (slower growth) in 'emergency' or crisis food poverty i.e. the number of people experiencing hunger or seeking emergency assistance.

## Join Us



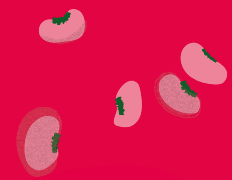
## Get in touch!

Email: [FoodPovertyAlliance@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:FoodPovertyAlliance@lancaster.gov.uk)

Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance meet on the first Tuesday of the month – for more details see:

<https://foodfutures.org.uk/our-partnership/food-poverty-alliance/>





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