



Improving access to good food for everyone in Sandwell

Sandwell's Food Power Alliance, final report, June 2019

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Where to begin? Food poverty felt like an overwhelmingly large issue to tackle, so we started with our strengths. Sandwell has a rich history of excellent public health research and policy. Building on this work, we saw the need for a multi-agency food network. We launched our [Jubilee Food Network](#) in February 2017, inviting everyone we knew who was working to improve access to good food to join us.

Key partners emerged: Public Health, Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations, Ideal for All (a user-led charity for adults with disabilities) and Sandwell Churches' Link (an anti-poverty charity).

Joining the Food Power programme in January 2018 really galvanised our commitment into action. Each alliance partner invited their contacts to join the network. We now have 66 members from a wide range of statutory, voluntary and faith organisations. Work includes three horticulture gardens, a community orchard, holiday lunch clubs, food banks, shopping and cooking classes, and community meals.

In March 2019 we published our [Food Power plan](#) and received over 60 action pledges from partner organisations at our launch event. This co-ordinated, transparent and collaborative action plan WILL improve access to good food for everyone in Sandwell.

"I can help to educate people I come into contact with on how to cook a healthy meal within their budget"

Mandy, volunteer at Friends & Neighbours.



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

Our challenges and learning

We learnt most this year about the challenges and opportunities of working with experts by experience. We really wanted to co-produce our action plan with local people with lived experience of food poverty and planned a series of town-based public conversations. However, we struggled to deliver them as it was too artificial to bring together unconnected people to talk about what may be some of the most difficult and painful experiences of their life. Learning from others around the UK who are working so well with experts by experience helped us to identify that we do already have natural relationships with existing groups. This understanding led to the development of some workshops with Ideal for All, a user-led charity for adults with disabilities, looking specifically at the lived experiences of people with disabilities and food poverty.

We also learnt so much from our visits to other Food Power alliances. Emily O'Brien at Brighton Food Partnership and Gill Beeley at Together Lancashire were very generous with their time and guidance and offered invaluable assistance which helped us to shape our Food Power action plan.

“No single organisation can tackle food poverty alone, but together, we have hope.”

Angela Blair, Food and Nutrition, Sandwell MBC Public Health

Our next steps

Our Food Power Action plan sets out 15 key goals under three main aims:

- Eating well is a priority in Sandwell
- Everyone has what they need to eat well
- No-one in Sandwell has to go hungry.

We will monitor our progress against these goals by continuing to meet as a Food Power alliance, identifying and reporting an accountable Cabinet Member and Board and continuing to develop the strength and assets of our network.

Our key achievements and impact

- Establishing a Food Power network, where 66 active members of the Jubilee Food Network work together to improve access to good food for everyone in Sandwell.
- Publishing our Food Power action plan in March 2019 and receiving over 60 action pledges from partners in response.
- Developing a Food Power movement in Sandwell, where access to good food is a bigger priority than it has been in the past.