



## Building our alliance

York Food Poverty Alliance, final report, May 2019

### Overview of alliance activities, research findings and plans going forward

Between April 2018 and May 2019 the York Food Poverty Alliance (YFPA) has successfully established a diverse, cross-sector network around food poverty; raised awareness about the extent and realities of food poverty in York; and shifted existing and developing food aid onto a more inclusive footing, with universal provision as standard and user involvement in governance and day-to-day activities.

#### Food Poverty in York

York may appear to be a rich city with a booming tourist industry, but poverty is real – and growing. According to recent figures from the End Child Poverty Commission, 6,254 children live in poverty in York. Referrals to Trussell Trust foodbanks in York increased by more than a quarter (25%) between 2017 and 2018, with a significant proportion of referrals relating to benefit changes, delays or sanctions. We conducted our own survey of 612 parents between November 2018 and February 2019. 24% of parents reported food poverty but only 8% said that they had used a food bank. Of those who had used a food bank, the majority (70%) had used the food bank only once.

*“I would encourage more people to get involved with their local food alliance as it is about so much more than food poverty: this has been a year of building community, food and fun, talking, playing, being shocked at people's stories and getting this all out in to the public realm through lots of media work too.”*

Rosie Baker, York Food Poverty Alliance



In focus groups across York, people told us about attentive and time-consuming shopping strategies designed to find the lowest prices and best value products. But they also told us about the inherent disadvantages to such management strategies. ‘Shopping around’ was time-consuming and challenging with young children, while there was a fundamental indignity to being priced-out of healthy, good quality food. Discussion of the welfare system was entirely negative. Universal Credit was described as ‘not working’. Faults in the system penalised claimants, reducing or stopping income entirely and pushing them into food poverty.

#### Community Reporter Film Project

We firmly believe that people with personal experience of food poverty should be at the heart of efforts to tackle it. The Community Reporter Project raised awareness of the opinions and experiences of people living with food poverty and involved them in the development of a food poverty strategy in York. Six parents with young children collectively and individually documented their experiences of food and affordability. Children from a local junior school were linked into the project through a TV interview about their new Community Fridge. Check out the film [here on YFPA's YouTube channel](#).

This activity was assisted by financial support and other advice from Food Power.  
[www.foodpower.org.uk](http://www.foodpower.org.uk)

## "Have Your Say on a Plate!"

Our community art project spread awareness about food poverty. It confronted stereotypes and encouraged people to explain what food means to them in a word, image or doodle on a plate. There was only one rule: enjoy it! All the plates will be displayed in July at SPARK: York. This project was inspired and ran by Sydnie Corley in association with YFPA, York Community Reporters, Chill In the Community CIC and SPARK: York CIC.

## Our challenges and learning

Working with experts by experience is fundamental to the integrity and sustainability of any food poverty network or project. However, we found that it takes time, commitment and money (staff costs) to develop firm and genuine relationships with experts and to embed them in the governance and strategy of the network. The level of commitment required for this crucial work should not be underestimated.

There is considerable local media interest in food poverty and in community groups and networks tackling it. YFPA has received extensive media coverage (including interviews and features) on BBC Look North, BBC Radio York, YorkMix, That's York TV and the York Press. But we have found that caution is required in ensuring that this coverage does not focus on the 'Big Society' element of local food aid (a key interest of local media) at the expense of the structural causes of food poverty.

*"Being actively involved in York Food Poverty Alliance has helped me not feel alone and vulnerable or isolated, but empowered and encouraged that others are there to talk to and share their own experiences. This has been an encouraging journey, one which should be allowed to grow, develop to a wide-reaching audience and to help others like myself and my two children."*

Sydnie Corley, Expert by Experience and 'Have Your Say on a Plate' coordinator

## Our next steps

In March and April 2019 we held collaborative workshops involving experts by experience, community groups, food aid providers and the City of York Council to decide upon our shape and priorities going forward. We decided to remain as an independent network facilitating quarterly meetings. Individual members will take forward research and campaign projects.

In July 2019, we launched our report, [Seeking Justice, which can be found on our website](#). Experts by experience will be central to the future shape and development of the network. The network will encourage and enable people with lived experience to develop solutions to poverty. It will make sure decision makers listen to experts by experience by including decision makers, political representatives and experts by experience on the steering committee. It will encourage member projects to take forward advocacy and campaigning, holding elected officials to account on food poverty. Participants in the collaborative workshop decided on the following issues as priorities for YFPA and its members going forwards:

1. A commitment to make sure welfare reform does not leave people hungry, including a commitment to highlight cases of food poverty that result from welfare reform and to engage with national campaigns for policy change.
2. A commitment that our society should be taking progressive steps towards the eradication of hunger, and towards the development of fair and balanced food system that works for food producers and consumers. Our government could take a lead on making this happen, for everyone's benefit, by upholding our Right to Food. YFPA is committed to campaigning on the Right to Food at a local and national level, raising awareness about this Right within food aid.
3. A commitment to ensuring that there is effective and sufficient financial assistance in times of crisis.

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