



Community groups working together to build a resilient food system

Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Alliance, May 2021

Building local food resilience in Brighton & Hove

The Food Poverty Alliance in Brighton & Hove brings together over 40 grassroots community food providers, meal projects, food banks and affordable food projects (where people pay a small membership fee each week) to collaborate via the Emergency Food Network (EFN). The Alliance provides links to other organisations such as the Council, surplus food organisations and local advice agencies. Between March and May 2021, we worked together using this funding to reflect, evaluate and plan our next steps. We want to ensure that we are best meeting the needs of local people, working together in the most effective way, providing good quality food and addressing long-term poverty and food access issues across the city and not just firefighting.

Challenges and learning

Whilst Covid-19 restrictions limited face to face sessions, we were able to host a successful online consultation event with EFN members.

Evaluation of the Affordable Food Projects (AFPs) via surveys of users is showing positive results with 60% of people saying they eat more veg and 74% feeling more connected to other people. The AFPs are reaching new people too, with 75% having not previously used a food bank.

The network is very concerned about ongoing need. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis 420 households a week were being supported by a food bank, now it is 1825 households. Currently there are 21,000 people in the city on furlough and with the Universal Credit uplift potentially ending, September may be a crunch point for the city.

Our evaluation shows that by working collaboratively community food projects can achieve positive outcomes around both climate and social justice and improve the quality and range of food provided.

Next steps

The research and evaluation has helped set the direction of the alliance for the coming years. We have already shared learning from this work with Brighton & Hove City Council and with the city's employers via an event organised by the Chamber of Commerce on the Real Living Wage. There will be 2-3 new affordable food projects established in the city in summer 2021. The network meetings and training will also continue based on the priorities identified by this work and we will continue work with the Food Factory, a local social enterprise to link local producers and community food projects.

“ The quality of the food is fantastic. I am trying things I've never tried before. The bread is the nicest bread I have ever had. I would never be able to afford to buy it and the eggs from local farms are such a treat.”

**Member Affordable Food Project,
Brighton & Hove**

Outcomes

- Undertook research with 66 people experiencing household food insecurity. This was conducted via phone, online and face to face interviews.
- Hosted and facilitated an event on the priorities for the Emergency Food Network (our Food Power Alliance) attended by 23 people from food banks, meal projects and affordable food projects.
- Used learning from these sessions to influence Brighton & Hove City Councils plans (including funding). BHCC has already committed to a vouchers first approach