



Food Talks People's Assembly

Plymouth Food and Poverty Alliance, May 2021

Building local food resilience in Plymouth

We wanted to create new meeting spaces, forums and groups which can support individuals and communities in Plymouth to improve their local food system. While more people than ever have been talking about both personal experiences of food and wider food issues online and in the media, Covid has also focused activity and emergency food responses within local contexts and it has not always been possible for people to connect with other groups and experiences.

A survey helped us form a picture of changes to income, wellbeing and mental health, caring responsibilities and local access to food over the past 12 to 14 months.

A prize draw provided an incentive to complete the survey and two small focus groups, face to face at a local food bank and online with Food Buddies South West Facebook group led up to a Virtual People's Assembly event attended by 21 people from across Plymouth.

Challenges and learning

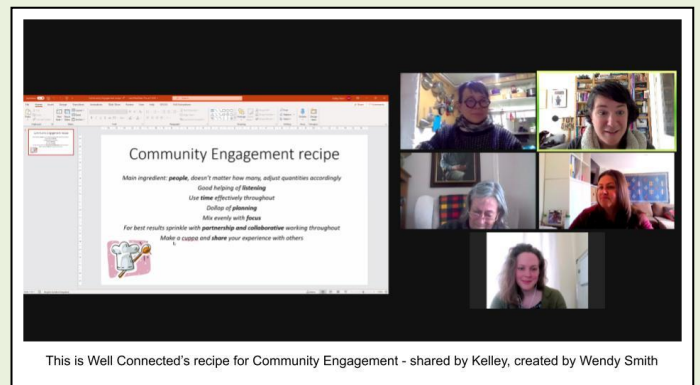
At the Virtual Assembly we gathered a diverse group with varying interests, technical skills and digital resources many of whom needed support to participate. The breakout rooms (topic rooms) were hosted by experts in growing, cooking, experts by experience and creative facilitators. Though intended to be very informal spaces for discussion, on reflection they could have benefited from more structured facilitation across the board. Rather than recording the conversations through audio, which required consent from everyone we tested a 'live zine' method using a google slide document. This creative approach is one which we look forward to developing further.

Next steps

Individuals and organisations from different settings in Plymouth took part in the Assembly process and have indicated they would attend future events of this kind and like to be more involved in our Alliance. We will inform this group of events, news and opportunities through a mailing list.

This process has also galvanised one local food hub to meet regularly for future planning, building local food resilience in their area. Following our focus group with Food Buddies Southwest Facebook group, they will meet online monthly to share skills and experiences around food.

Rather than scale up we plan to run smaller events on specific areas of interest, both online and face to face as part of the Summer *Fit and Fed* scheme in Plymouth parks. Our survey has gathered data which can feed into the FoodSEquel UKRI 5-year research project and may support recruitment of community researchers for this work helping develop the wider good food movement in the city.



Outcomes

- 64 individuals took our survey
- Two focus groups were hosted
- 21 people attended a large People's Assembly event on Zoom
- One live zine was created and shared via the [Food Plymouth website](http://www.foodplymouth.org.uk)