

Access to Food Partnership - Year 1 Review Report

Review of Activities March 2020 – March 2021

1. Background

Food insecurity, the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food, has been a reality for people of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole long before we faced the Covid-19 pandemic. At Dorset Hidden Hunger event in September 2019 it was revealed that an estimated that 46% of the BCP population (85,000 households) were not spending enough money on food per week to eat a healthy diet according to the Eatwell Guide. 27% were either in food crisis or unable to afford healthy food.

Over the course of the pandemic - with lockdowns, job losses and reduced access to shops and supermarkets – we have seen a rise in people in need of emergency food support and the long-term help of the community food network. Food bank usage doubled in the first lockdown (2408 vouchers issued in March/April 2020, compared to 1273 in March/April 2019). The summer holidays saw 114% increase in foodbank 'holiday top up vouchers' - 614 parcels providing for 873 Adults/1302 Children in 2020 (2175 individuals fed) compared to 2019's figures of 289 parcels providing for 403 Adults/617 Children (1020 individuals fed).

A lot has been achieved in this first year of the Access to Food Partnership, thanks to the beginning of the role of the Community Food Coordinator at BCP Council, and the partnership approach of the broader Together We Can Community Resilience work.

Reflections over the last year of the Access to Food Partnership include:

- Thanks to a clear shared purpose there was a very tangible openness within the Partnership to work collaboratively and share learning and resources
- The core group worked at pace, with a targeted focus, since the crisis meant we had to move quickly
- The Partnership was part of a nurturing environment, born out of shared leadership of the Community Resilience subgroups, which lead a new way of working with shared responsibility (between statutory and CVS)

The work over the course of the year has focused on partnership working and networking; distributing resources and training; sharing information and signposting and responding to challenges brought by the pandemic.

2. Highlights of work in Year One

2.1 Partnership Working & Networking:

- The Partnership started in April 2020 and now has 168 partners, 84 organisations, with 20 organisations signed up to the Charter. Partnership includes grassroots community groups, the community and voluntary sector, schools, businesses, housing associations, NHS and other statutory organisations.
- Access to Food Forum has monthly meetings for partners to share knowledge and expertise, understand current situations and challenges, as well as identify partnering opportunities for shared resources, such as sharing growing hubs, vans and support with starting up a new initiative in another neighbourhood.

- Neighbourhood conversations in priority deprivation areas have provided space for partners to discuss the food needs in their communities and consider ways to provide better access to food, such as West Howe partners now coming together to look at setting up a community fridge.

2.2 Distributing resources across the network

2.2.1 Funding: There has been significant additional investment from central government in response to the challenges faced in accessing food due to the impact of Covid, which has seen an extra £1.45m allocated to BCP Council specifically for food and winter warmth support. Of this allocation, £106,049 has been distributed specifically through the Access to Food partnership to build capacity and extend services offered by local community food projects, such as cooking support and access to equipment, community stores and food boxes that are culturally sensitive.

2.2.2 Food surplus: In lockdown 1, a WhatsApp Group was created to quickly distribute food donations from businesses (closed due to lockdown) and to move surplus donations to those who need it. Works with 20 food initiatives to redistribute over 70 surplus food offers, with an additional 10 large business offers being matched outside of the WhatsApp group.

2.2.3 Training and support for partners: Working with the Homelessness Partnership to offer Community Meal Safety training sessions for those working with rough sleepers. Further work on safeguarding and hygiene training. Wellbeing Champions training with Live Well Dorset to support the wellbeing of projects who have been responding to this crisis.

2.3 Sharing information and signposting:

[BCP Community Food Map](#) – created map of 50+ community food settings across the conurbation, including foodbanks, pantries and social supermarkets, community fridges, Covid food support parcels, hot meal deliveries and cooking workshops. 6,500+ hits.

Christmas – Sharing list of 30 additional one off food projects over the Christmas period including hampers and hot meals.

Food insecurity training live sessions and videos – to 800+ frontline workers from Access to Food Partnership, including Council staff, Tricuro Day Centres, Citizens Advice, Dorset CCG

Schools Information Sharing sessions - specifically for schools representatives, attended by Headteachers, pastoral workers and other staff to gain information on community food initiatives, share learning and opportunities. Two sessions held with 19 schools, of which 3 schools have higher than 35% pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

Signposting via website information – creation of webpages on the Council's website on how to access support if you are struggling to pay for food – signposting to information pages.

2.4 Responding to Covid challenges

Online Food Home Deliveries directory – created for those who were struggling to get to the shops during lockdown, and struggling to access online delivery slots.

Offers of Corporate Support directory - from businesses closing down e.g. vans, storage spaces, kitchens, food donations and helped to match to need, such as Poole Pantry working with Yellow Buses to deliver emergency food parcels; Russell Court Hotel with Unity in Vision to deliver 20 hot meals a day, delivering over 1000 meals to date; Chez Fred chip shop with Branksome Fridge to donate 20 fish & chip suppers a week while they were shut during lock down.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents - In the second lockdown, the Access to Food Partnership worked with Together We Can team to manage the local authority responsibility to deliver food parcels to CEV residents. Working with Foodbanks and Pantries, weekly parcels are delivered to 35 eligible CEV residents.

Emergency Food support for TWC helpline – creation of food hub models to provide immediate emergency support when other community food projects were closed, such as at certain times over the Christmas and Easter holidays.

3. In depth review of Year One

3.1 Partnership Working & Networking

3.1.1 Core Group

The Access to Food Partnership core group was established in April 2020 with members from BCP Council (Communities, ASC Crisis, Children's services), Public Health Dorset, Faithworks Wessex (Chair) and Community Action Network. This core group meets weekly-fortnightly (depending on level of need) and works to an agreed Terms of Reference.

The purpose of the core group is to respond to Covid pandemic and issues raised from the wider Partnership. It is there to support the community food partners through the pandemic.

The Access to Food core group reported into the Together We Can Community Resilience response steering group led by Kelly Ansell and Cllr Greene.

3.1.2 Access to Food Forum

The wider Access to Food Partnership and Forum was established as the first action of the Access to Food core group, in April 2020. There are now 168 partners from 84 organisations. These organisations include grassroots community groups, the community and voluntary sector, schools, businesses, housing associations, NHS and other statutory organisations. The Access to Food Forum was created as a meeting place for partners to share knowledge and expertise, understand current situations and challenges, as well as identify partnering opportunities for shared resources such as funding.

There have been 16 themed meetings to date with 20-40 attending each session. Themes have included hot meal distribution, holiday hunger, financial resilience, using good data, building cooking skills and confidence, working with growing initiatives.

The key outcome is there is a stronger connection between groups and organisations enabling a great flow of support and resources, for example:

- Grounded Enterprises and Your Planet Doctors – working together to develop growing hubs throughout the conurbation
- Boscombe Fridge quickly finding a new venue (after libraries shut due to covid) through Bournemouth Foodbank
- Hope for Food gifting Feed Our Community (Boscombe) initiative a van to enable stock pick ups and deliveries
- Christchurch Community Partnership offering support and advice to Hamworthy Together as they start up their multi-partner food support programme in Turlin Moor.

- Established fridges – such as Branksome & Rossmore Fridge and Townsend Fridge – supporting West Howe Community Enterprise to set up a community fridge in their neighbourhoods.
- Greater understanding of CAB services and greater signposting to Let's Talk Money programme and CAB's increased understanding of community food offer
- Greater understanding of the role of Social Prescribers within GP Surgeries and organisations such as Help & Care, with referrals being made from community food settings to Social Prescribers, and Social Prescribers referring to community food settings.

The Access to Food Partnership Charter was launched in October 2020, setting forward an agreed vision and mission for the Access to Food Partnership. 20 organisations have signed the charter to date and committed to active involvement in the Partnership.

3.1.3 Neighbourhood Conversations

Neighbourhood conversations have provided space for partners to discuss the food needs in their communities and what is needed to provide greater access to food. Neighbourhood conversations have taken place in:

- **Christchurch:** The main outcome of these calls was supporting the multi agency approach providing hot meals to those who would normally be attending lunch clubs. These calls allowed space for 2 more partners to join this work and expand their reach to distribute 229 hot meals a week, feeding 114 individuals.
- **Hamworthy:** Established Hamworthy Together, who subsequently set up Moor Community Food (a subsidized community store) was set up in response to the impact of covid in Turlin Moor & Hamworthy. Moor Community Food has now been running for 9 months, open 1 day a week, with 60 shoppers each week.
- **Boscombe:** Worked to facilitate better links and communication between food projects already existing in the neighbourhood (Boscombe Fridge, Grounded Communities, Love Church and Boscombe Foodbank). Working with The National Lottery Community Fund regional manager, conversations allowed the development of a successful Boscombe partnership bid, worth £50k.
- **Kinson:** Multi partner approach to developing West Howe Community Fridge, led by West Howe Community Enterprise

3.2 Distributing Resources & Training

3.2.1 Funding

The core group shares funding opportunities with the network to help build capacity within the community and voluntary sector partners.

An additional £106,049 has been distributed across the community food network from funds allocated from Central Government, on top of support given for applications to grant making bodies (eg. The National Lottery Community Fund).

There has been **significant investment from central government** in response to challenges faced in accessing food due to the impact of Covid, which has seen an extra £1.45m allocated to BCP Council specifically for food and winter warmth support, including:

- **Emergency Welfare Grant:** In September 2020, £26,049 was distributed from Central Government's Emergency Welfare Grant out through the Access to Food Partnership:
 - £4500 to top bulk food orders, topping up food stock at Christchurch People's Pantry and Moor Community Food – to match need.
 - £15,549 given to Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch foodbanks and Friendly Food Club to distribute 1500 meal recipe packs and provide online video tutorials.
 - £6000 given to Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch Foodbanks and Hope for Food to distribute 200 sets of cooking equipment (plug in slow cookers and hot plates)
- **Covid Winter Grant scheme:** Allocation of £1.06 million to ensure residents can access food and winter warmth support until the end of March 2021. In Dec 2020 – Feb 2021, £80,000 was distributed to community food projects from this grant to continue to build capacity within the community food support network. Working with Dorset Community Foundation, this funding was distributed via their Coronavirus Community Fund, which included an additional round specifically for Access to Food Partners. Members from the Partnership (Romany Ross, Social Prescriber with Bournemouth Central PCN) were invited to be on the funding panel to open up decision making. This funding has supported 14 different organisations and an estimated 3000 residents will be helped with food thanks to this funding. The scheme has been extended to 16th April 2021 with additional funding to cover the Easter holiday period.
- **Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF)** – Allocation of £1.02 million to BCP Council to expand the programme in 2021 to provide healthy food and enriching activities disadvantaged children during school holidays.

3.2.2 Food surplus

A WhatsApp Group was created to quickly distribute food donations from businesses (closed due to lockdown) and to move surplus donations around to those who need it. There are 27 participants from 20 food initiatives across the conurbation. There have been over 70 offers that have been matched through the WhatsApp group, with an additional 10 large business offers being matched outside of the WhatsApp group.

A collection and sorting service was set up to manage the redistribution of unwanted CEV food parcels. Parcels were sorted, quality of the food was checked and then sent to foodbanks.

3.2.3 Training

On top of Forum meetings, where guest speakers are brought in to share information, advice etc there have also been dedicated training sessions available to community food projects where a need has been expressed.

Working with the Homelessness Partnership, two Community Meal Safety training sessions we run, for those working with rough sleepers, with 10 projects attending. At these sessions all groups received up to date information about how to operate takeaway community meals in a 'covid secure' way; single point of contact in Environmental Health; Food hygiene best practice, and advice and support if informal groups wish to become constituted or a charity, through Community Action Network. Planned training also includes:

- Wellbeing Champions training with Live Well Dorset (29th March). This training is to support the wellbeing of projects who have been responding to this crisis and for them to sustainably support the wellbeing of their clients.
- Food Hygiene Training for community food projects. (date TBC)
- Safeguarding training for community food projects. (date TBC)

3.3 Sharing Information and Signposting

3.3.1 Mapping

Through the development of the Access to Food Partnership we were able to map the growing number of community food projects across Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch. Of the 50 community food settings in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, 10 were started directly because of the pandemic.

Working with BCP Council Insights Team, we have mapped the 50 different community food settings across the conurbation. Using Tableau partners can easily navigate the foodbanks, pantries and social supermarkets, community fridges, Covid food support parcels, hot meal deliveries and food workshops.

The Access to Food Map was launched 8th August 2020 and made available to the Access to Food Forum and frontline statutory services. This map is being actively used by Schools, Social Prescribers, the Access to Food Partnership, BCP Crisis Advice, CAB etc.

In February 2021 the map was made available to the public. Working with BCP Comms, 2 Access to Food Map social media posts were put out on Facebook. These two posts had a combined reach of 29,417 people, with 369 reactions (likes, comments and shares) and the map was visited 370 times as a result.

To date the map has been used 6527 times.

In the run up to Christmas the Access to Food Partnership identified 30 one off food projects that provided Christmas Hampers, hot meal deliveries and food based community connection over the Christmas holidays. This was compiled into a live online list that could be updated throughout December.

The list was released on the 2nd December and was shared with the Access to Food Partnership and approximately 800 frontline staff through the Community Food Training sessions.

3.3.2 Training on Community Food Support

To support the roll out of the Access to Food Map tool and additional one off seasonal support, 11 training sessions have been delivered to frontline statutory agencies. These 11 sessions have provided training on the breadth of community food support available, and how to use the map, to over 900 frontline workers from Access to Food Partnership, BCP Council Members, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing, Tricuro Day Centres, Citizen's Advice, Dorset CCG

Alongside this a training video was created and circulated to the list above and the Together We Can helpline.

Community Food Info & Learning Sessions are run for schools as a regular session to share information, learning and opportunities. During these sessions school representatives were supported to:

- Partner with their local foodbank to distribute top up vouchers over the Christmas holidays
- Understand the process for distributing Wonde vouchers (funded by the Winter Welfare Grant)
- Understand the breadth of one off community food support available over Christmas – through the Christmas Support list

- Use the Access to Food Map when supporting households who are at risk of food insecurity.
- Sharing knowledge of community food projects and how schools can partner with them to develop food project

These sessions were also used as an opportunity for the Access to Food Partnership to understand:

- Which schools are working with which community food projects
- Which schools are in neighbourhoods without community food support
- What key challenges families are facing

Two sessions have been run to date with attendance from 21 representatives from 19 schools. 3 schools of which have higher than 35% pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

3.3.3 Together We Can Website and Comms

Working with BCP Council Comms information has been shared via the Together We Can Website. Copy for dedicated 'food information' pages was written to ensure that clear advice was given for those impacted by Covid-19 and lockdown. Two key issues were food those who can't afford to pay for food and those who are unable to get to the shops, whether they are shielding or isolating.

For those who can't afford to pay for food information was shared about:

- How to access foodbanks, community stores and community fridges
- How to sign up for Free School Meals, Healthy Start Vouchers and Let's Talk Money

For those who are unable to get to the shops information was shared about:

- local food delivery directory
- direct links to sign up to supermarket delivery slots
- how to buy volunteer shopping cards and vouchers
- Together We Can helpline for someone to access volunteer support.

For the Winter Welfare Grant a dedicated page was added for the specific support available over winter, which included access to food vouchers (through Together We Can, Schools and Family Information Service) and support to pay the cost of bills over winter.

For those who wish to support their community a dedicated page was set up to help direct individuals to where help is needed most. On this page links to how to volunteer (through Community Action Network, and the Access to Food Map), how to support those who are homeless, and how to refer someone who needs help. Updated lists of what items foodbanks needed was shared on social media platforms.

All these pages have been kept up to date, and additional content – such as videos produced for the Winter Support campaign – has been shared on the website, as well as more broadly.

The Access to Food Partnership also worked closely with BCP Council Comms to share press releases on the following:

- Summer cooking and community support across the area
- Partnership working provides affordable food in Turlin Moor and Hamworthy
- Food redistribution in Poole and beyond
- Hot meals for Christchurch residents in need
- Community projects help feed Townsend residents

3.4 Facing Covid-19 Challenges

3.4.1 Directory of food businesses and support

Online Food Home Deliveries from local businesses in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (alongside Dorset businesses who deliver to BH postcodes) were mapped and shared on the BCP Council website. This was specifically for those who were struggling to get to the shops during lockdown, and struggling to access online delivery slots.

Offers of Corporate Support directory - from businesses closing down e.g. vans, storage spaces, kitchens, food donations – was created to share opportunities with the Access to Food Partnership. Examples of matched support includes:

- Poole Pantry with Yellow Buses to deliver emergency food parcels over Christmas
- Russell Court Hotel with Unity in Vision to deliver 20 hot meals a day, delivering over 1000 meals to date.
- Chez Fred chip shop with Branksome Fridge to donate 20 fish & chip suppers a week while they were shut during lock down.
- Working with BH Live venues to distribute Café stock that would have gone to waste during lock down.

3.4.2 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents

The second lockdown the Access to Food Partnership has worked with Together We Can to manage the local authority responsibility to deliver food parcels to CEV residents. Working with Foodbanks and Pantries, weekly parcels are delivered to 35 eligible CEV residents. These residents have received weekly food parcels and will continue to do so until the end of March.

3.4.3 Emergency Food support for TWC helpline

Three emergency food hubs were established (Bournemouth Learning Centre, Poole Civic Centre, Christchurch foodbank) to provide additional emergency support where other community food projects were closed. Anyone who was in an emergency situation 'out of hours' can call Together We Can and can have a food parcel delivered. This was available over weekends, Easter and Christmas bank holidays.

3.4.4 Other Needs Arising from Pandemic

Throughout the year there have been other gaps and needs that have been highlighted through the Access to Food Partnership. These have included:

- Working with BCP Council Senior Leadership to engage supermarkets in bulk food solutions for Foodbanks
- Supporting the set up of streamlined e-referral for
- Reviewing the impact of lunch clubs closing and supporting the development of hot meal deliveries in hardest hit areas (eg. Christchurch)
- Working with BCP Council Communications team to share through newsletters and social media the donation requests from community food projects

- Matching Together We Can volunteers with community food projects who needed extra volunteer support
- Working with Environmental Health to agree a designated point of contact for the Access to Food Partnership, to ensure new projects are operating safely
- Working with Public Health Dorset and Dorset CCG to understand the food needs of healthcare workers
- Exploring storage facilities to increase community food storage needs
- Processing PPE requests from community food settings through BCP Council PPE supplies
- Ensuring that frontline community food volunteers, who are supporting those who are vulnerable, have access to the vaccine and regular testing.
- Exploring the response to the 'Bread surplus issue'
 - Work with supermarkets to reduce the quantities of 'fresh' baked goods going to waste
 - Communicate the importance of nutritional value in donations – countering the attitude of 'are your people hungry or not?'
 - Turn stale bread into something else of nutritional/economic value (eg. A local beer where profits go to community food projects)

Key Contacts / Further Information: Access to Food Partnership – Chair Alistair Doxat-Purser (Faithworks Wessex), Amy Gallacher and Daisy Carr (BCP Council), Michelle Smith (Public Health Dorset)

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