

Report subject	BCP Access to Food Partnership update: Working together to address food insecurity & improve wellbeing
Meeting date	15 July 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report updates the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Board on the work of BCP's Access to Food Partnership since October 2021. It has grown into a thriving collaborative network, with a breadth of partners, working together with place-based and strength-based approach to empower and build community resilience. The continued impact of the cost of living crisis has put significant pressure on frontline workers and food projects, but together they have shown strength in their ability to co-create new neighbourhood initiatives to respond to the evolving needs of local communities. The Partnership is now in the final year of its 3-year funding from the National Lottery Community Grant.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that HWB Board Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Acknowledge how the work of the Access to Food Partnership (A2FP) has contributed to upstream prevention by supporting those most vulnerable to the impact of health inequalities and the cost of living crisis in BCP. b) Commit to highlighting at a strategic level the importance of the A2FP in addressing food insecurity and hidden hunger in communities, and champion local system change to enable community and voluntary sector partners to continue to grow and thrive. c) Recognise the significant ongoing challenges in high levels of demand from local people struggling with the cost of living and support the A2FP to meet this need. d) Recognise the A2FP's increasingly important role as a point of trusted communication and collaboration in neighbourhoods and commit to ensuring that their frontline workers have up to date knowledge and

	<p>understanding of the A2FP.</p> <p>e) Facilitate work between the A2FP and all system partners to enable better health outcomes and reduced inequalities.</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>The A2FP is a vibrant example of community-led activity across neighbourhoods to address the challenges of food insecurity and improve access to other preventative support services that helps to build community resilience.</p> <p>It demonstrates how communities working together on issues that matter to them can create meaningful connections of voluntary and community sector and Integrated Care System (ICS) partners. This offers new opportunities for early help, intervention and prevention to reduce health inequalities.</p> <p>This work requires the backing and support of all HWB Board organisations as part of a shared problem to ensure that the scale of hidden hunger and food insecurity is understood locally and remains on the agenda as everyone's problem.</p> <p>The cost of living situation continues to see high levels of need for community food support and local partners are working hard to respond to need, whilst also being challenged by lower levels of food and financial donations.</p> <p>It is important that frontline workers and senior management are better connected with the A2FP work and the community support that is available, so that together we can effectively help those most vulnerable in our communities.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	<p>Cllr Millie Earl, Portfolio Holder for Connected Communities Cllr David Brown, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing</p>
Corporate Director	<p>Jillian Kay, Director of Wellbeing</p>
Report Authors	<p>Access to Food steering group including: BCP Council - Amy Gallacher, Community Initiatives Manager; Faithworks Wessex - Alistair Doxat-Purser, Chief Executive and Chair of Access to Food partnership; Public Health Dorset – Bernadette Pritchard, Health Programme</p>

	Advisor; Daisy Carr, Community Food Coordinator. BCP Council.
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	Recommendations

Background about BCP Access to Food Partnership

1. BCP's Access to Food Partnership (A2FP) uses a strengths-based approach to achieving its Vision of: "A Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole where everyone is able to feed themselves and their family nutritious food, all of the time".
2. The A2FP is currently funded by a National Lottery Community Fund award of £194,000 over three years until April 2025. This includes a dedicated Community Food Coordinator (BCP Council post), alongside a budget to build infrastructure, host activities and events, and offer a small grant funding pot for partners to address arising issues and set up innovative 'grass roots' projects.
3. Since the start of the partnership in March 2020, the A2FP's membership has grown to include over 300 individuals from more than 150 organisations, supported by over 1,400 volunteers, all working to address food insecurity locally. It includes a breadth of knowledge, skills and experience from across the Integrated Care System, local businesses, voluntary and community sector groups and organisations.
4. Together, it focuses on using strengths-based approaches to build food skills and confidence across BCP communities. These include skills and access to grow, cook and eat together, and in turn creates the ability to feed themselves and their families nutritious food. The A2FP is also a critical trusted social and connection point, linking people with timely additional support, such as money management and debt advice, as well as other services and information.
5. One of the partnership's strengths is the collaborative working and knowledge share between community food partners, which helps to reduce duplication, share resources and better support the needs of the community through shared knowledge.
6. The work of the partnership is included the BCP Council's Corporate Strategy and it continues to work in partnership to help those who need support to receive it when, and where, they need it. The work also ensures households are supported with information to help with the cost of living situation.

The National Context:

7. Between April 2022 and April 2024, the cost of an average basket of food for a UK adult increased by just over 25% to £52.97 per week¹
8. Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, foodbank use in England has increased by 37%²
9. Between Jan 2022 and Jan 2024, Food Insecurity (defined as 'insufficient or insecure access to food due to resource constraints'²) has more than doubled, now affecting 14.8% of all households.
10. Some households are more at risk than others; for example 20.0% of households with children reported experiencing food insecurity compared with 12.7% of households without children³.
11. In single-adult households with children, 35% are experiencing food insecurity, with 17% of these adults admitting to having gone for a whole day without food⁴.
12. 14.5% of workers in some kind of employment in England reported experiencing food insecurity. Our local partners are also seeing many in employment needing emergency support. The 2021 Census and the Trussell Trust have identified those groups at higher risk of food insecurity. These include people who are renting, from a minority ethnic group, are disabled, LGBTQ+, and unpaid carers^{5 6}.

BCP: the local picture

13. Around 43% of households in BCP are likely to earn less than £30k per year (Source: Experian Mosaic, 2023). The UK median household income in the financial year ending 2022 was £32,300⁷.
14. In BCP, 9.4% of all households (over 16,000) are single-adults with children. If we apply the Food Foundation's latest national findings⁸, this equates to over 2,700 single adults with children having gone for more than a day without food.
15. In May 2024, average monthly private rents in BCP were £1,278, an annual increase of 11.2% from £1,149 in May 2023. This was higher than the rise in the South-West (7.0%) over the year.⁹
16. Based on national Food Foundation research and 2022 Census household numbers¹⁰, there are at least 25,000 households in BCP living in food insecurity currently.

¹ [Food Prices Tracker: April 2024 | Food Foundation](#)

² [Food banks in the UK - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

³ [Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation](#)

⁴ [Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation](#)

⁵ [2023-The-Trussell-Trust-Hunger-in-the-UK-report-web-updated-10Aug23.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

⁶ [Characteristics of adults experiencing energy and food insecurity in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Average household income, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ [www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk](#)

⁹ [Housing prices in Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

17. Pupils eligible for free school meals in BCP has risen from 14.6% in 2019/20 to 20.5% in 2023/2024¹¹.
18. There are 7,105 children (10.8% of total number of children) in BCP living in absolute low income families¹²
19. When faced with increased living costs, households reduce their food consumption. Research by the Office of National Statistics continues to show that poorer households need to spend proportionately more on housing, fuel and power.¹³ BCP Citizen's Advice reports seeing increasing numbers of households in 'negative budgets', with outgoings exceeding monthly income.
20. Food-insecure households were more likely to be cutting back on purchasing healthy foods such as fruit, vegetables, fish, dairy and eggs.
21. Since September 2021, the Government's Household Support Fund (HSF) has helped households struggling with the costs of living. In 2023-24, BCP Council was allocated £5.3 million, which helped over 60,000 eligible BCP households with:
- Household grants of up to £200 administered through Citizen's Advice BCP as mainly food and/or fuel vouchers to help with household bills.
 - School holidays food vouchers for families via local schools and the Family Information Service for eligible Under 5s. Vouchers of £15 per child per week every school holiday (£195 per child per year).
 - Energy support to households including insulation grants, home visits, practitioner referrals for appliances and emergency boilers.
 - Distributing £400,000 in small grants to approximately 60 local VCS organisations through the BCP Food and Energy Support Fund.
22. The Household Support Fund has been extended for a further six months until 30 September 2024. There are concerns if this Fund doesn't continue it will create a 'cliff edge' for those households relying on the payments to meet their basic needs. This is likely to lead to a significant rise in demand for A2F partners' support into the winter period and beyond.

BCP Access to Food Partnership progress:

23. The A2FP partnership [reports](#) give a comprehensive overview of key annual outcomes.
24. The A2F partners are dedicated to providing support for those in crisis that need emergency food, as well as look at ways to build resilience and help prevent further crisis.

¹⁰ [Statistics about our population | BCP \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals \(used for FSM in performance tables\)](#)

¹² [read - Starter Portal \(powerappsportals.com\)](#)

¹³ [Family spending in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

25. The partners are committed to working together to share resources and identify 'back up' plans and ways to respond to rising local demand.
26. Partners work together to effectively signpost people to other support that help people out of crisis, such as debt advice or other support to help with the costs of living.
27. Food partners are struggling with levels of supply, which is a national challenge, with reduced levels of surplus from supermarkets in some places, alongside fewer public donations. This is an issue in terms of responding to need as well as financing purchase of additional food. In June 2023, A2FP (in particular foodbanks and community food pantries) shared information about spend required to top up food supplies due to demand, which is estimated to be around £286,000 per year.
28. Following an application process, the recent BCP Food and Energy Support Fund (financed by Household Support Fund 5) has distributed £50,500 in grants to eight of the main foodbanks and community pantries across BCP to replenish food stock over the next 3 months (July - Sept).
29. Foodbanks and other community food projects are often regarded as a 'first responder' to those in emergency crisis, with the offer of a foodbank voucher providing a tangible, practical response to someone in need.

Collaboration and Working Together

30. Many A2FP workers and volunteers have lived experience of food insecurity – often ongoing. This means that the work of the A2FP is led by the people it supports, and partners are intrinsic to local neighbourhoods. Those accessing the support value the emotional and social support they receive from partners, and their trusted relationships with volunteers.
31. The A2F Forum is a quarterly in-person opportunity for all partners, stakeholders and volunteers to get together and discuss successes, challenges, and opportunities. The open agenda encourages partner-led discussions, facilitated by the Community Food Coordinator utilising practices developed by the Poverty Truth Commission¹⁴.
32. The Partnership is further enhanced by a committed and active A2F Steering group, made up of key community partner organisations alongside ICS partners, meeting fortnightly.
33. The A2FP works closely with other partnerships and projects, including the BCP Homelessness Forum, Poverty Truth Commission, Together We Can, Adult Social Care's 3 Conversations team and other work across the ICS that are focused on place-based and strength-based approaches. We value HWB

¹⁴ [Poverty Truth Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole – What If... Change is possible? \(povertytruthbcp.org\)](https://povertytruthbcp.org)

Board Members' insights into their own organisations to identify where we can work better with system partners across health, care and beyond.

34. The A2FP has shared much learning, experience and knowledge with Dorset Council and food partners. Following the success of the A2FP, Dorset Council has now secured funding to appoint a part-time community food coordinator to work with food projects across its Council area.
35. The A2FP was recognised nationally, through iESE's Public Sector Transformation Awards, achieving a Gold Award in March 2024 for the "Working Together" category.

Communication and raising awareness of support

36. The digital [Access to Food Map](#) has full details of 83 different initiatives, such as foodbanks, social supermarkets, community meals, community fridges, food parcels, cooking workshops, food growing projects and community cafes.
37. To date, the map has been used 42,661 times by both the public and frontline staff/volunteers. A range of frontline workers have reported how useful the map has been in supporting residents, including social prescribers, BCP Housing and Crisis advice line as well as community food projects themselves.
38. Non-digital resources including posters and business cards were distributed to over 250 venues, and cost of living posters were translated into eight of the most commonly-spoken languages in BCP. Over 7,000 business cards with a QR code to the Map have been distributed.
39. Partners are seeing increasing numbers of people with mental wellbeing issues including depression, anxiety and stress¹⁵. This has an impact on the wellbeing of their volunteers and workers. In 2022, in response to this need, Public Health Dorset provided Mental Health First Aid awareness training to 12 partner organisations. Attendees are now part of the ICS-wide Mental Health Champions network.

Sharing resources across the A2FP network

40. A small amount of grant funding is set aside for 'arising issues' throughout the year, meaning the A2FP can be agile and responsive in their approach to supporting community needs. For example:
 - a. In 2022/23, in response to residents' concerns about using their ovens due to energy costs, as well as knowledge that others do not have access

¹⁵ [Food Insecurity Is Associated with Depression, Anxiety, and Stress: Evidence from the Early Days of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

to cooking equipment, the Partnership worked with 12 food projects to distributed more than 126 pieces of energy efficient cooking equipment.

- b. This further led to partners wanting to share recipes (to avoid duplication and share resource) and together produced the “Start Cooking Recipe” book together, created by local community groups sharing recipe ideas, and working with Bournemouth University to evaluate different ways to share the recipe book to best engage people in using it.

41. In December 2023, partners co-created ‘The One Stop Glut Hut’. Responding to last year’s Christmas, when many volunteers were picking up surplus frozen turkeys from supermarkets on Christmas Eve and trying to store or redistribute them right up to until the early hours of Christmas morning! The ‘Hut’ operated over the Christmas period, with 3.5 tonnes of food being donated, shared and redistributed.

Working with diverse communities and in neighbourhoods

42. In January 2023, City of Sanctuary and International Care Network highlighted a desire to ensure that Muslim asylum seekers and refugees in the resettlement hotels could access culturally appropriate food (an ongoing challenge) and community activity throughout Ramadan and to connect asylum seekers with the wider BCP community and support. A2FP Grassroots Funding was invested to support projects and organisations providing community connection through Ifthar meals and celebrations. The Community Food Coordinator connected eight organisations who applied to the fund to develop their work further, including Inara Project, Unity in Vision, International Care Network.

43. The Community Food Coordinator hosted neighbourhood conversations to bring together projects in Winton. This led to two new local free voucher schemes for families in need to access fresh food on their local high street and also to enable them to enjoy a day out and a treat at the park.

44. The A2FP October 2021 presentation to the HWB Board generated further engagement with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service’s Safe and Well teams. We gathered insight on their knowledge of older peoples’ behaviours around food insecurity, their coping mechanisms, and barriers in asking for support, as well as trained frontline workers on the A2FP support. This later led to a research project with Bournemouth University’s PIER department with a Highcliffe lunch club, to better understand the ‘hidden’ barriers and solutions that will enable better access to relevant support for older people experiencing food insecurity.

Priorities for 2024-25

45. The A2FP’s four priorities for 2024-25 are:

- a. Prevention, Crisis Support
 - b. Resilience Building and Training
 - c. Communications and Engagement
 - d. Network-strengthening
46. In 2024/25, the A2FP wants to strengthen the 'no wrong door' approach by helping to create a well-informed ICS workforce to help those who need support to receive it when, and where, they need it.
47. The A2FP will provide a training and awareness package about community food support across the ICS. This will enable more timely and effective referrals to get the right support at the right time. A2FP has already established relationships with Dorset's Access Wellbeing delivery partners Help & Care and BCHA to ensure that the soon-to-recruited teams of 60+ Wellbeing Coordinators are welcomed into the partnership, ready for the BCP-wide rollout of the initiative.
48. The A2FP is focused on improving working together as a system to better help with the right support when needed, and ensure all frontline workers have the knowledge to be able to connect residents and communities to relevant help. This is already being seen with new models of working such as the coming together of support services at drop-in sessions at Henry Brown Centre in West Howe, with Shelter, BCP Housing, Citizen's Advice BCP and the foodbank all being present to provide advice and support. This has now been implemented with Christchurch Foodbank and other areas being considered.
49. Through Access to Food training and communications about its work, it is hoped the heightened workforce awareness of the current challenges and work will provide an opportunity to work together to increase food and financial donations to local projects.
50. Evidence and community insights will inform the delivery of our priorities over the coming year, ensuring that we are working with the right partners and frontline workers to reach seldom-heard communities and those most at risk of food insecurity.

Summary of financial implications

51. No set financial implications for the HWB Board except the request to consider how they can help with the long term sustainability of the partnership.

Summary of legal implications

52. None identified at present

Summary of human resources implications

53. BCP Council's Community Food Coordinator is currently funded through external funding by National Lottery Community Fund and has received short term funding.

Summary of sustainability impact

54. The partnership is focusing on growing initiatives and in turn this will help to reduce carbon emissions by growing local food.
55. It identifies surplus food wastage within the system and redirects this resource to local community food projects.
56. The cost of living crisis response has raised awareness on energy efficiency, such as more energy-efficient cooking equipment, which in turn is helping to reduce carbon emissions.

Summary of public health implications

57. Food insecurity is associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes. It also disproportionately affects certain parts of our communities, already being unfairly impacted by other wider determinants of health (see section 12). Therefore, addressing food insecurity is a vital component of work to reduce health inequalities and deliver better health outcomes.

Summary of equality implications

58. The A2FP includes a workstream to focus on lived experience. This work seeks to engage with those that have experience food insecurity to better understand how they can be supported to access food in their neighbourhoods to recovery and prevention.
59. The A2FP gathers feedback from community food partners and frontline staff about how all communities and residents access food and any barriers or impacts resulting from service changes. These approaches demonstrate the principles of integrated neighbourhoods in action.

Summary of risk assessment

60. The Access to Food Partnership is currently reliant on limited resource and generous partnership working from the Chair and others. The Partnership lacks a longer-term sustainable resource and funding strategy.
61. The A2FP has funding through the National Lottery until the end of April 2025, but require more longer-term sustainability to ensure the partnership work is funded to continue beyond this date.

62. The Partnership's action plan includes several short-term objectives that could become delayed without sufficient focus and resources.

Background papers

- [BCP Access to Food map](#) and [Access to Food partnership webpages](#)
- Citizen's Advice – Universal Credit & Food Bank Briefing Letter
- The Food Foundation- The Impact of COVID -19 on Household Food Insecurity.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Access to Food Partnership Annual Review 2023/24

Appendix 2. Cost of Living report annual review 2023/24

Appendix 3. BCP Council Insights – Current and Future situation in relation to Food Insecurity in BCP