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# FOOD INSECURITY: UNDERSTANDING LOCAL DELIVERY, IMPACT AND INNOVATION IN THE NORTH

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# INTRODUCTION

The VCS Emergencies Partnership has commissioned Selby District AVS, East Riding Voluntary Action Services and Cheshire West Voluntary Action as the thematic leads in the Northern region to gather intelligence on the issue of food insecurity. We carried out research to develop a deeper understanding of the activity, challenges, successes and priorities at a local level and disseminating case studies of best practice and innovation.

In conjunction with the findings from other regions, this will be shared with the national Food Group to inform their Hunger and Hardship report and develop the national evidence base for tackling food insecurity.

## **CHESHIRE WEST VOLUNTARY ACTION (CWVA)**

CWVA work with charities, social enterprises, community groups, voluntary organisations and faith groups across west Cheshire. We support local voluntary and community groups thrive. We help with governance, good practice, volunteering, funding, training and networking. CWVA has been one of the lead partners of the Cheshire West and Chester food poverty project known as 'The Welcome Network' as the work has expanded since 2017 we identified a need for wider aspects of the food agenda to be brought together.

CWVA created a part time specialist food infrastructure role in March 2021, this role is bringing together CWVA members together around the food agenda and leading on the creation of the strategic board known as the West Cheshire Food Partnership leading on a borough wide food strategy.

CWVA have worked together with Warrington Voluntary Action and CVS Cheshire East to undertake the role of Subject Lead Liaison.

## **SELBY DISTRICT AVS (SDAVS)**

SDAVS is the local support and development organisation for Selby District and during the Covid-19 pandemic has been appointed as the local Community Support Organisation by North Yorkshire County Council. The purpose of SDAVS is to develop and promote local voluntary and community groups to improve the quality of life for individuals, groups and communities. Activity aims to encourage effectiveness, collaboration and co-operation within the voluntary and community sector.

In 2019, SDAVS established the Selby District Anti-Poverty Partnership and in 2020/21 supported the launch of the Selby Community Fridge, a project led by the resident-led Selby Big Local (for which SDAVS is the Local Trusted Organisation).

## **EAST RIDING VOLUNTARY ACTION SERVICES (ERVAS)**

ERVAS is an infrastructure organisation providing support to the voluntary, community and not for profit sectors (VCS) which includes a large variety of different types of organisations, primarily in the East Riding of Yorkshire. We have a formal membership of 442 organisations who each have a vote on the way the organisation runs, in addition, we have an e-bulletin distribution list of approx. 1,167 organisations and over 1,900 VCS organisations registered on our Local Links Directory. ERVAS provides services to all voluntary sector organisations that request support and does not restrict support to members only.

As a result of Covid we engaged and brought together organisations addressing food poverty, initially to provide a support mechanism for each other and in June 2020, we developed the East Riding Food Poverty Alliance (ERFPA) a partnership of organisations providing food bank provision across the East Riding. ERVAS was appointed the Locally Trusted Organisation (LTO) for this partnership.

# SURVEY

## Food insecurity and the impact of local delivery in the North

The Survey focuses on the four foundations as identified by the VCSEP Hunger & Hardship group. As well as mapping what is going on across the North we have sought to draw out specific local examples of the following:

- Strengthening the Safety Net
- Enabling Financial opportunity
- Enhancing Food Access
- Enabling Community -Led Access

# RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A key part of our research was to design and survey food projects across the North. The purpose of this was to gain a broad overview of the range and diversity of organisations and projects delivering in this space, highlighting the range of activities on the ground designed to address different elements of the food insecurity landscape. As research leads we wanted to understand the drivers behind the projects, the impact of Covid-19 on their operations and beneficiaries and their perceptions on the future for their projects. Through the survey we wanted to identify examples of good practice, areas of innovation, and gain a deeper insight into the impact of such projects on community empowerment.

The survey was distributed via existing networks and partnerships known to the research team, the VCSEP MAC network, the Big Local programme and the beneficiaries of food-based funders in 2020. The survey structure was shared with the VCSEP and Food Leads for the other regions, with the intention that regional comparison could be achieved.

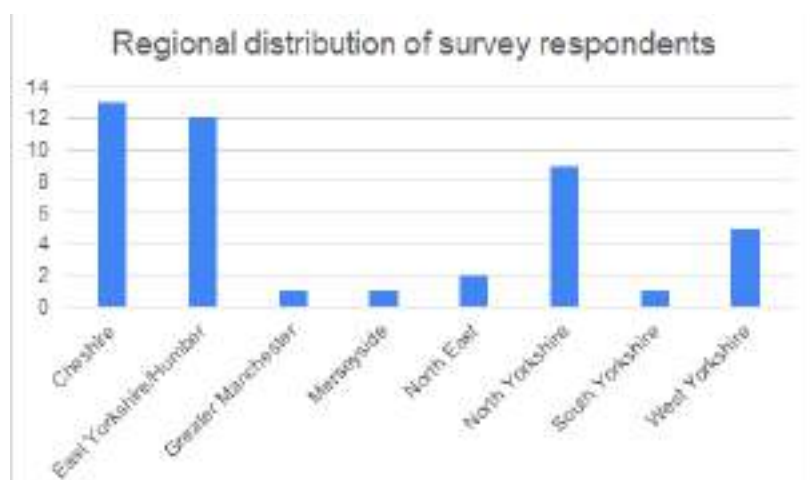


Figure 1: Regional distribution of survey respondents

We received 45 responses to the survey from across the region (see Figure 1). This section highlights some of key findings and a summary of survey responses can be found in Annex One.

As anticipated, the survey confirmed that there is a wide range of project delivery across the region in response to community need. Figure 2 provides a summary of project activity. The most common focus on delivery is emergency food provision, reflecting the existing network of food banks and new operations developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Interestingly, of the 45 respondents, 18 projects had been operating for over five years but 12 projects had been established in the last year in response to the pandemic and the resultant impact on food insecurity, social isolation and the closure of other services.

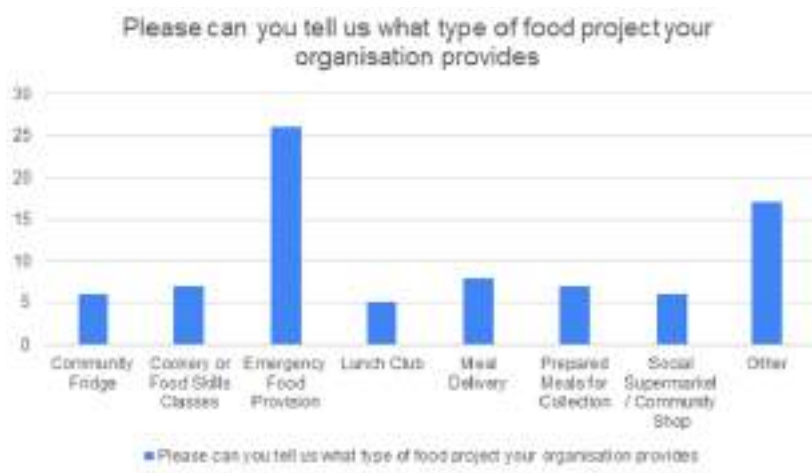
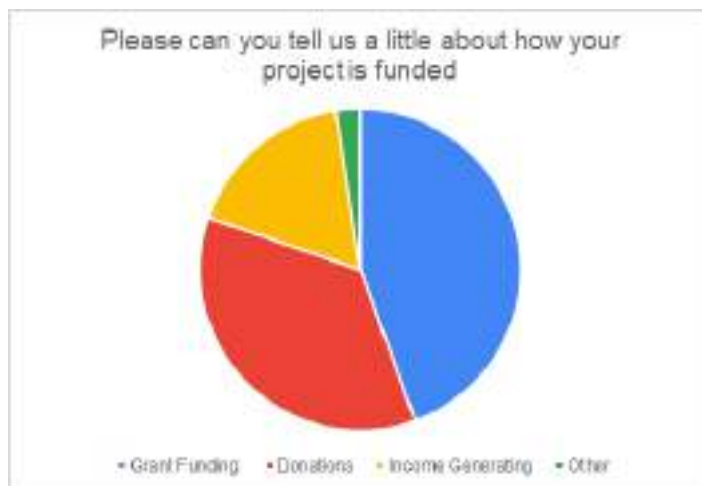


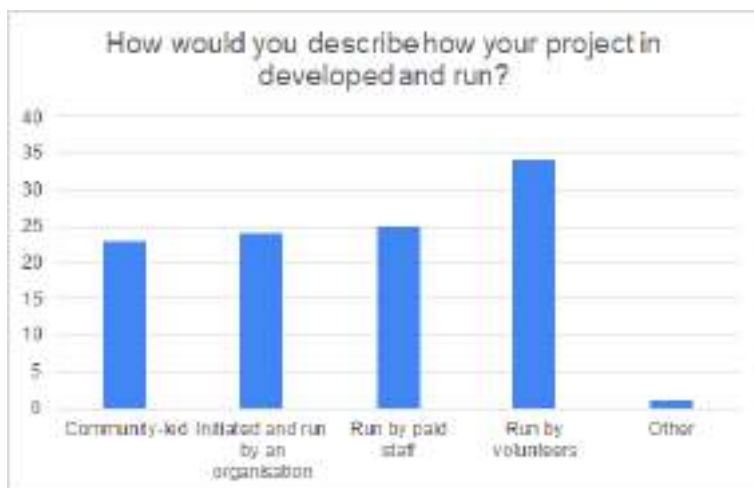
Figure 2: Type of food projects delivered

The research team were interested to understand how projects in this sector are funded. Projects across the VCS sector are often vulnerable to short-term project funding, having a negative impact on already vulnerable communities.

**Figure 3** shows the range of funding received by surveyed projects, most of which relied on a blended funding model. We talk more about the financial insecurity and the impact on the sustainability of local delivery further in our Reflections and Conclusions.



**Figure 3: Project funding sources**

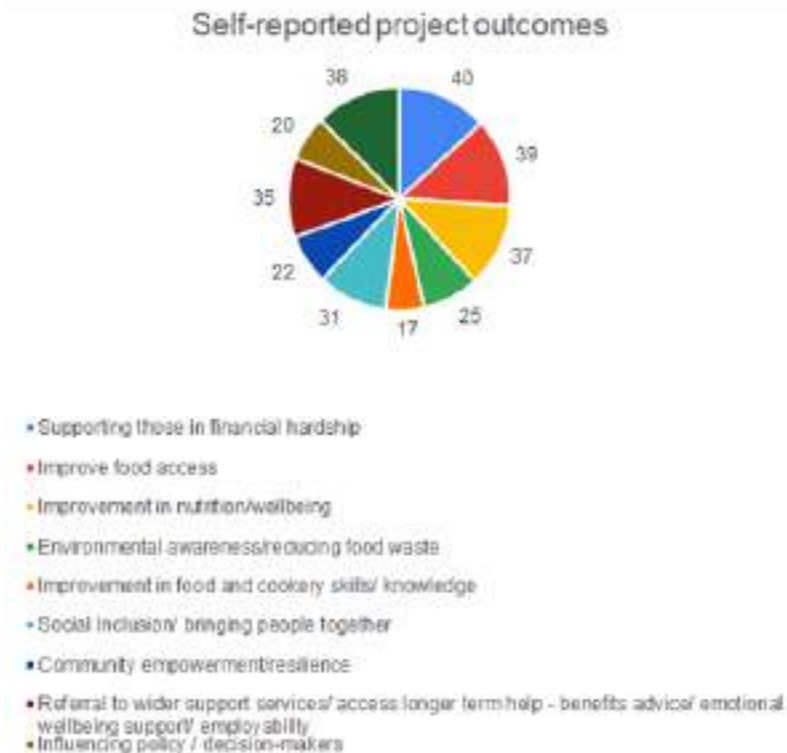


**Figure 4: How is your project run?**

**Figure 4** illustrates the heavy reliance on volunteers for successful delivery. The case studies in this report and the survey summaries in Annex 1 demonstrate the huge benefits of volunteering, both for organisations and projects and for the volunteers themselves. The experience of the Selby Community Fridge is an example of how volunteering during the pandemic proved a lifeline for individuals as it gave a sense of purpose and togetherness during a time of huge upheaval and social disconnection. However, reliance on volunteers can also leave projects vulnerable and the burden on individuals to keep services going can be overwhelming. Recruiting, supporting and maintaining volunteers is a huge priority and challenge for the VCS sector overall, and is of particular concern when food projects are fulfilling such basic needs as emergency food provision. It is interesting to see from these findings that around 21% respondents described their project as community-led and this impact on community empowerment is discussed further in the report.

We asked survey respondents to select which outcomes their project achieves from a pre-determined list. **Figure 5** presents these findings.

Every food project identified multiple outcomes for their delivery, demonstrating the cross-cutting impact and co-benefits of tackling food insecurity. Particularly innovative projects sought partners and opportunities for collaboration to maximise these co-benefits and as such tackle some of the root causes of food insecurity, drawing together different elements of the food system within one approach. Projects such as the Selby Community Fridge have been designed to provide emergency food, whilst tackling environmental issues such as food waste, and then building on trusted relationships to offer further support to vulnerable clients through support referrals and bringing people together to share skills and improve wellbeing through community cookery.



**Figure 5: Reported project outcomes**

Through the research we were keen to understand how supported and connected projects feel to sources of support. Our case studies on 'Working together as an Alliance', 'Cheshire Together' and 'The Greenway Grocer' demonstrate the strength of collaborative work at a local and regional level, but for more isolated projects or those in geographies without a local policy framework to hook on to, the ability to access support is vital for project sustainability.

**Figure 6** illustrates the range of support organisations feel able to access, and encouragingly, nearly all felt there was more than one source of available support. Only one project felt there was no support or advice available to them.

As an organisation/project, please can you indicate the sources of support that you feel you are able to access



**Figure 6: Sources of support available**

## Making a Difference

The survey asked a few open ended questions designed to dig below the surface of each project, to understand what makes each project special and to provide project leads and volunteers the opportunity to share their thoughts on the impact of their activities on the long-term alleviation of poverty. What is it that will make a long-term difference to addressing hunger and hardship?

### Critical success factors - what makes the difference?

We asked respondents to tell us what critical factors are crucial to the success of their projects and despite the diversity of projects, operating models and funding environments, the following factors were shared by many:

- Supportive local community - welcoming to new ideas, providing donations
- Passionate and committed volunteers - nearly every project stated that it wouldn't succeed without these individuals
- Strong local partnerships and positive working relationships with stakeholders
- Sharing data and best practice with others
- Building on local assets and taking a co-production approach to project design and delivery
- Communication - with beneficiaries, partners and wider stakeholders

### Innovation - what's the thing that makes your project different?

Innovation comes in many shapes and sizes. Respondents shared their views on what makes their project particularly different or innovative. For some this was how the project is constituted and managed, for others it was the nature of the partnership or network, and for some it was in the individual interactions in the community. In almost every case, the innovation can be tied back to the critical success factors identified. Please also refer to the Case Studies for discussions around innovation.

- Taking the 'field to fork' approach (Full Circle Food, Northumberland)
- Finding creative solutions to bring the community together, particularly during Covid (Osmotherly Community Group, North Yorkshire)
- The power of empathy and respectful engagement (Love Driffield, East Yorkshire)
- Development of a Food Power Alliance, aiming to secure funding to research food inequalities (Durham Community Action)
- Focus on young people to address high levels of youth unemployment (Rooted in Hull, Hull Food Partnership)
- Focus on confidence building and community resilience (Incredible Edible Marshland, East Riding)
- Coordinated, distributed leadership and multi-sectoral working (GMCVO, Greater Manchester)
- Focus on removing the barriers to participation (Wishing Well, Cheshire East)

## Community Empowerment

We asked respondents a specific question on the impact of their food project on community empowerment. We have many examples in our own areas where community led provision ensures that it is 'fit for purpose' for a community, and not something which is 'parachuted' in to meet an actual or perceived need. Additionally, when it is run by and for local people there is a sense of people being 'in it together' whether they are volunteering or accessing the provision, or sometimes both at the same time. It is important at a time of crisis people can turn to trusted venues and people in their community, this is positive for the person who needs the support as well as empowering for those who are providing it.

"If projects have enabled bring people to move out of food poverty, this can have a huge impact on self-confidence, empowerment and hopefully a brighter future for all". Two Rivers Community Pantry (East Riding)

There was recognition that those projects that are community-led tend to generate more easily recognisable evidence of community empowerment, with increased community cohesion and capacity to stimulate change in the local community. Also that community capacity building relies on long-term investment and support and strong local infrastructure.

- Safeguarding families from food poverty
- Greater community resilience - integration of disparate communities
- Greater connectedness, bringing people together and addressing social isolation
- Actively supportive community
- Direct community action in response to pandemic
- Clients becoming volunteers
- Impact of improved food knowledge and cooking skills
- Co-benefits - further support and advice for food project beneficiaries - positive choices
- Improved community cohesion - a place for interaction
- Open door policy



**Survey Example** - Food Durham project led by Durham Community Action: community activism around food has been reinvigorated with new local mutual aid groups, identifying gaps in community to support residents. New initiative incorporate dignity in their approach e.g. community pantry rather than handouts.

**Survey Example** - Hope Food Partnership - broad sense that the work of the Partnership has shown how the communities have come together to support those in need, and statutory partners and communities alike have gained a sense of care for each other.

**Survey Example** - Lache Larder (Cheshire West Communities Together) - massive impact on empowering residents to set up their own neighbourhood groups and social supermarket, including opening a shop/cafe in their area.



## Alleviating food poverty

Whilst recognising the limitations of a broad surveying approach, the research team wanted to provide the opportunity for community leaders (organisations and individuals) to share their experience and perspectives on how long-term change can be achieved to alleviate food poverty. We were particularly keen to understand the extent of local coordination, at a strategic and operational level, that would contribute to a system-led, holistic approach to tackling the root causes of food insecurity. We reflect further on this in our conclusions and a summary of responses is included below:

- Food poverty is just the symptom - we need to address the reasons for poverty - living wages, mental and physical health
- We need long-term change and coordination across agencies, not “sticking plasters”
- Weaknesses in the food system mean those most in need are often located in areas with poor provision and options
- Call for maintaining the increase to Universal Credit
- Local coordinated action is important but government intervention is needed to end the cycle of poverty - basic living income
- Focus on food preparation and cooking skills, budgeting
- Sustainable funding for local delivery
- Coordination at a local/regional level to lobby government.

# Case Studies

## 1. Creating a Mapping Tool of Food Provision across the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Due to the time scale we have had on the project ERVAS wanted to focus on developing an in-depth mapping tool of charities and organisations to enhance accessibility and awareness of food provision in The East Riding of Yorkshire.

The East Riding Food Poverty Alliance is made up of 12 partners across the region with visible gaps within rural areas so we wanted to dig a little deeper to see the bigger picture.

It has been invaluable to spend some time mapping the range of food provision available across the East Riding of Yorkshire. We have made 13 new connections with organisations and charities offering food provision which has allowed us to develop a mapping tool for residents who are in need.

This has enabled us to build some key relationships within our region and has encouraged the East Riding Food Poverty Alliance to really look at what membership means to them and develop an ‘onboarding’ process for associate members to take advantage of the information sharing on a regional basis.

The mapping tool is currently available on the East Riding Food Poverty Alliance website and is available for all to use at [www.erfpa.org.uk](http://www.erfpa.org.uk)



## 2. Working together as an Alliance



### Background to the project:

The East Riding Food Poverty Alliance (ERFPA) came together specifically in response to the rise in food bank provision during the Covid-19 crisis. East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS) Ltd was appointed as the Locally Trusted Organisation (LTO).

The East Riding of Yorkshire comprises of 26 Wards, 171 Parishes, and in 2019 the population was estimated at 341,173 (2019 ONS Statistics Mid-Year Estimates).

ERFPA is made up of 11 food banks and food pantries across the East Riding of Yorkshire, namely, Love Driffield, SHoRes (Withernsea), Hessle and Anlaby Food Bank, The People's Pantry (2 branches at Market Weighton & Pocklington, Beverley Cherry Tree Community Centre, The Hinge (Bridlington), Two Rivers Community Pantry (Goole), Mission Trinity (Goole), East Yorkshire Riding Food Bank, Hedon Community Food Bank.

The purpose of the Partnership is to contribute positively to addressing food poverty within the East Riding of Yorkshire, by:

- Enabling its member agencies to submit joint funding bids and contract tenders for projects that further their shared as well as their own discrete objectives and to which they can contribute effectively.
- To enable increased support for beneficiaries, to build their resilience.
- To facilitate and enable information sharing and best practice; and develop a sustainable food poverty strategy that will be continuously reviewed to anticipate the needs within individual communities and identify the hidden needs that stem from food poverty.

ERFPA secured funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and hired a Food Bank Development Officer with a focus for addressing food poverty and developing a strategy and action plan to tackle food poverty across the region.

### Identify strengths & key relationships

#### *Strengths:*

- A great platform to share and exchange knowledge with all members benefitting from working towards a common goal
- Covid-19 has worked in our favour as it has brought awareness to food poverty across our communities and has brought us together as an alliance to help serve our local residents
- Allows collective problem solving via our regular ERFPA online meetings/whatsapp group
- Provides fast action response to emerging issues and community needs in real time
- We have developed a strategy and action plan grass roots up on a local and regional level which we are allowing to evolve over time in response to current and future issues
- Brought together a dynamic group with varied skills sets to share across the region

#### *Key Relationships:*

- Enhanced partnership working – since the alliance was formed we have worked with various partners and delivered successful projects alongside the **Department of Education** and **East Riding Yorkshire Council** such as the Easter Holiday Activity and Food Program.
- We have built relationships with various media channels to help share our projects and build awareness.
- The East Riding of Yorkshire Council have been an incredible support network promoting funding opportunities and partnering with ERFPA on various projects, such as 'increasing access to cooking equipment.'

## What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

- **Covid-19** has been a very present issue that all of the organisations have had to deal with since we started the alliance and our sector will be at the forefront of the country's recovery from coronavirus, and we will need the correct support in place to do this. We have recently raised this with local MP Graham Stewart.
- **Time** - you simply can't underestimate the time it needs and takes to set up an alliance, especially with developing good working relationships and the development of our Strategy and action plan.
- **Membership** – we are currently in the process of understanding what does membership mean for us as an alliance specifically in relation to welcoming new associate members.
- **Momentum** - Keeping the momentum going is going to be key as we transition out of the pandemic as food poverty was and still will be an issue we need to address and focus on preventing.
- **Funding** – We have secured funding until November 2021 for ERFPA to continue its good work however, we are unsure of the future and if we will be able to secure further funding to carry on with driving and evolving our strategy and action plan.
- **Duplication of Efforts** - We want to make the best use of local resources and expertise, but it can be hard to know everything that's going on. It's essential to maximise collaboration and minimise duplication of effort.
- **Brexit** -as an alliance we are concerned about the immediate operations of the food provision we are providing as we are noticing issues emerging with haulage and the food supply chain which is a concern.

## Key achievements and impact to the food system, reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...

### *Key Achievements:*

- We formed the East Riding Food Poverty Alliance which has now been running for a year and we continue to have fortnightly meetings.
- We have developed our 'Three Course Strategy to Increase Food Security across the East Riding' and created a task and finish group to be the leads of our Action Plan.
- Achieved successful joint funding applications for 'increasing access to cooking equipment' which we created white goods packages with and liaised with Citizens Advice Bureau to help those in need of such items which were are currently being distributed via our alliance members.
- Working on the HAF Programme and delivered food hampers containing recipe booklets to over 1300 children on free school meals over the Easter holidays. We are currently submitting our joint bid to perform the same project for 4 weeks over the Summer Holidays.

### *Reflections on Sustainability:*

- The future of the alliance is not secure due to reliance on funding which is a concern to keep the momentum of the strategy and action plan going. However, we are currently considering the option of becoming our own entity to improve our chances of securing future funding.

### *Community Empowerment:*

- We have built strong relationships between members across the East Riding of Yorkshire in order to work effectively and efficiently towards the aims of the alliance creating a fast action response to community needs.
- We believe that Food Poverty Alliances are a community led initiative with a grass roots approach. Building partnerships and relationships form a community led manner.

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## Our Next Steps

- Continuing to evolve our Action Plan which will be monitored and reviewed quarterly by our task and finish group which consists of members of the East Riding Food Poverty Alliance.
- We are currently in discussion in regards to the future of the East Riding Food Poverty Alliance and if the members want it to become its own entity and we are reviewing the potential of becoming a CIO to enable an improved chance of securing future long term funding.
- The VCSEP Project has enabled us to network and map all of the food provision across the East Riding therefore we are going to focus on the associate member process to allow our work to be accessible to the wider food network in the East Riding region.

# 3. Developing a Social Supermarket



## Background to the project:

The Southern Holderness Resource Centre, (more commonly known as the Shores Centre) is recognised a key community hub throughout the South East Holderness community. As a charity serving the area for over 15 years, they have extensive experience of supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals by providing a wide range services, resources and facilities that positively contribute to health, economic development, enterprise, employment, financial and social inclusion.

As a community hub they have operated a foodbank for over 5 years, during recent months due to COVID 19 the demand on this service has been huge, and now as lockdown measures ease, they are now seeing a demand on services due to the increase in poverty that is impacting their community.

Withernsea has been subject to various crisis emergencies over the last few years including the 2007 floods, gas outages, and now the Corona Virus Pandemic of which the town emergency plan has been instigated. Unfortunately, the response rates of local authorities can take time to get the money pumped into the area of need as this is impossible to do within a day or two. During the first lockdown in March 2020 services and support was needed at a critical time therefore Shores rose to the challenge and looked at how can they can support their community and work with the local authorities in doing so.

The key question was - How can we develop something that has a local impact for individuals, deal with future emergencies and be sustainable?

Therefore they took the social supermarket model and developed a social supermarket bespoke to the needs and wants of their local community. Shores offer their members a weekly shop at a fraction of what it would normally cost and in a social, positive, community setting. The money then helps provide stock for the store/food bank and 5% of our revenue goes into an emergency crisis pot that we can use

## Identify the strengths of developing a Social Supermarket, key relationships and areas of innovation

### Strengths

- As they are a small organisation locally based they have a fast action response to the needs of the local community.
- The Social Supermarket model allows Shores to refer clients from their food bank to their social supermarket to prevent dependency on the food bank and help enhance financial management skills. Since opening the have began to see a decrease in the food bank members and an increase of social supermarket membership.
- Prevents waste especially with fresh/chilled and frozen produce that we are unable to make use of at the foodbank.
- Enables access to healthier food options at a much lower cost.
- More financially viable for organisations/businesses to redirect their food waste into social supermarket's and reduces landfill impact and costs.
- Creates access to an affordable broader range of products such as lifestyle essentials for personal hygiene and house hold cleanliness.
- Removes the stigma of using a foodbank and welcomes the community as a whole.

### Key Relationships

- As they work with their community on a day to day basis the relationships they make with the public help identify localised issues that they can respond to.
- They have made very strong relationships with other food banks in the region and helped advise them with developing a similar model.

### Areas of Innovation

- Use this as a trading opportunity to generate income to invest into the food bank for food parcels if emergency helps is needed.
- Developed an emergency response fund that gives them a safety net for future emergencies and crisis response. At the end of the financial year 5% of surpluses generated go into this fund.
- Developed educational tools and community inclusion with our recipe idea cards called - take it, make it, eat it.
- Steps to Food Security model – this enables them to help clients move from food bank support and become more financially independent.
- They have developed something that is relevant in size to the community that they are serving and they have let it organically grow.

## What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

- Social Supermarket within the Withernsea area was a completely new concept therefore they learnt how to evolve and develop along the way to meet the needs of their community. Due to them opening during the pandemic the dependence on food provision increased therefore they evolved at a very fast pace. Initial stages were constantly changing allowing them to add layers of intelligence. Evolving something and delivering something at the same time at a fast pace was quite a challenge for them.

- Funding has been very accessible for the last 12 months which has been a great help however, the income of the social supermarket we feel is essential to help have some sustainability going forward.

## Key achievements and impact to the food system, reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...

There was a need for a more community focused food project within our local community and if anything the pandemic has highlighted the need for food systems to be more community-led, resilient and sustainable.

The Social Supermarket has been a hub for the Withernsea community during these difficult times allowing access to affordable food, offering volunteering opportunities to local residents and preventing social isolation.

They allow 3 emergency food parcels for individuals and families once they have been referred to the food bank and then allow them to take the next step to food security by having access to the social supermarket on a banding system.

Band A – resident could be employed, no current receipt of benefits. Band B – universal credit pension etc attracts a 20% discount off the shelf price.

Social Supermarkets enable empowerment for the individuals as they are making a financial contributing and have a degree of choice within food provision.

## Our Next Steps

1. Continue to evolve the Social Supermarket based on the needs of our community.
2. Continue to monitor the demand of our services and respond to emerging issues and opportunities.
3. Assist others food provision services in the region who are wanting to set up a similar operation by giving advice and guidance. We are currently helping The Peoples Pantry and Two Rivers Community Pantry with the opening and planning of their Social Supermarkets in the Market Weighton and Goole areas.



## 4. The Growth of 'Rooted in Hull'



### Background to the project:

In 2014 two friends, Adrian and Mark, had the idea of creating an Urban Farm in Hull, to educate local people on growing and eating healthy food. Their vision was to build a community around the sharing of ideas, skills and produce to make Hull more food resilient.

After conducting a feasibility study for the local council for such a project and concluding that it was feasible, they were both on a mission to ensure a city farm was accessible for the residents of Hull. After visiting various other food projects around the country they were inspired and were convinced that if it was possible in London, why we can't they build an Urban Farm in Hull!

It was important to the pair that the land was central to ensure accessibility for all and to enable the culture of Hull to thrive within the Urban Farm.

With thanks to support from local businesses, education establishments and people, they have transformed a derelict dry dock in Hull into an impressive living, thriving community.

For more information please visit - [www.rootedinhull.org.uk](http://www.rootedinhull.org.uk)

### What are the strengths of developing a City Farm, identify key relationships and areas of innovation

#### *Strengths*

- Prevents social isolation and has been described as an oasis of calm on the edge of a busy industrial city centre.
- Nothing is wasted, therefore great for the environment and sustainability.
- No Chemicals are used onsite
- There is an onsite Bakery, Café, Farm Shop, Shed and Office which are all based in shipping containers fitted out by Hull College students. Additionally all of the flower beds are risen therefore everything can be transported to a new location if needed.

#### *Key Relationships*

- Myers Beck Nursey (<https://www.miresbeck.co.uk/>) supplier of the City Farms Herbs.
- Beverley Bee Keepers (<https://www.beverleybeekeepers.co.uk/2020/>) Provide training and local honey for the farm to sell.
- Local small scale producers for the supply of jams and chutneys.
- Arthurs organics (<https://arthursorganics.com/>)supplier) of vegetables.
- Giroscope (<https://giroscope.org.uk/>) who are a registered charity, buys and renovates empty properties in West Hull to provide affordable homes for those in housing need. They also work with Rooted in Hull to provide volunteers for their project.
- Police and probation services offer volunteering opportunities at Rooted in Hull for individuals to gain new skills, meet new people and contribute to a project where they can make a difference.
- Hull College students helped fit out the container units.

#### *Areas of Innovation*

- Innovative with how they use earth's resources. Reed bed recycling from café for grey water, waterless composting toilet, rainwater harvested from royal mail sorting office roof.
- Working with ex-offenders and people in recovery, working with people to help encouraging, building skills, mental health.
- Using the place for social community fathering and starting some music events. Generate income, build awareness, not linked with food growing but community and sharing the space, sell pizzas and teas and coffees.
- Podcast – (<https://soundcloud.com/user-206122183>) they have launched a Rooted in Hull podcast which highlights the projects progress, and keeps the community connected.

## What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

- As Rooted in Hull developed and they were ready to fully operate they soon recognised that they were unable to carry the project on their own. They wanted to bring in others to help build a wider network across the city and build diversity within the project. Therefore they reached out to community workers, business people, and creative thinkers to meet on a regular basis to develop a 'think tank'.
- Although Rooted in Hull are a grassroots organisation they soon realised that they needed some structures in place. They have been conscious from the start about not having a hierarchical structure however, they have some roles in place to ensure that they are offering a safe environment and taking responsibility for processes and procedures in place.
- Funding will always be in the back of their minds as they are reliant on funding for various aspects of the running and development of Rooted in Hull.
- One issue that is also apparent is that they do not own the land however, with their future planning and innovative thinking the land is no longer such an issue as they are prepared for if they are required to move. All of the Rooted in Hull structures are not permanent and are transferrable.

## Key achievements and impact to the food system, reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...

### *Impact to the Food System*

- The project educates the public to grow their own healthy and nutritious food.
- It provides opportunities for local community to have access to affordable and healthy food.
- During the pandemic Rooted in Hull applied for funding and assisted those in need with free food provision.

### *Project Sustainability*

- Pay it Forward scheme – this is an expression for describing a good deed or a gift given to another and allows visitors to add a contribution that can be used to help others.
- They welcome groups and organisations to hire our farm shipping containers for workshops, training days, or away days. There is also an outside decking area, making Rooted In Hull an ideal venue for events in the current Covid-19 climate.
- They operate a dry compost loo, recycle and reuse rain and grey water.

### *Wider Community Empowerment*

- Rooted in Hull has been built by the community for the community and connects people to each other, the environment, nature and food.
- The open air and outdoor space has helped improve many of their visitors mental health and has prevented social isolation.

## Our Next Steps

1. Day to day we will be operating and further establishing what they are doing going forward and evolving within our journey.
2. Continue to building awareness – social media promoting.
3. Focus and develop our entertainment offering working with various organisations over the summer to test the waters.
4. Long term goals will be to have Rooted in Hull as the main 'Plant' and spread our roots and do other projects across the Hull region



## 5. Selby Community Fridge

### Background to the project:

Selby Community Fridge was created as a response to a tangible need in the local community for an accessible source of free, fresh food—without the need for referrals from a local authority or other agency. Developed by Selby Big Local with start-up funding from the Defra Food Projects Fund and support provided by Selby District AVS, Selby Community Fridge was conceptualised through consultations with residents. An overwhelming majority of residents expressed concern related to food and food poverty, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hailed a marked increase in the usage of food banks. The Fridge was developed to help address some of these concerns.

One of the founding ethos of the project was to reduce food waste in the local community. The food we supply is primarily sourced from local supermarkets and food businesses.

Selby Community Fridge is open three afternoons a week. The Fridge is open later on a Wednesday to ensure people who may not find the earlier hours accessible have a chance to access the Fridge. The Fridge is managed by a paid member of staff, with food collections and Fridge opening hours primarily manned by a team of dedicated volunteers.

### What worked well? Identify key relationships and areas of innovation

The Fridge's opening during the COVID-19 pandemic complicated our ability to announce its presence. To address this there was a focused and lively social media campaign designed to make the Fridge's opening far more visible in the local community. The Fridge's social media presence is still a vital part of the project's continued success, providing an accessible platform to communicate changes in opening times, community events and generally create a space for community engagement.

Major supermarket chains in the local area, such as Tesco's, Aldi, Co-Op, Sainsburys and Morrison's have been really supportive, providing multiple donations a week. Additionally, we also receive donations of surplus foodstuff from smaller local businesses. A result of these relationships, we have a constant, reliable supply of surplus food to distribute to the wider community. We have a positive working relationship with Selby Food Bank, who will often make referrals to us to compensate for a lack of fresh foodstuffs in the food parcels they provide. Links with other agencies, such as Citizens Advice, means that Fridge visitors can be referred to additional support as needed.

### What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

In the initial stages of the project, there was some concern that supermarkets and businesses in the local area would not engage with the Fridge. This was quickly disproven, as virtually every supermarket chain in the local area cooperates with us in some capacity, providing us with their surplus food in addition to equipment for our cookery events.

There is currently a distinct lack of non-perishable goods being donated (rice, coffee, sugar, cans, etc). In addition, we do not currently receive many donations from members of the public. One way we have attempted to garner more donations is to suggest residents bring any surplus food they have in their cupboards before they go on holiday. This has obviously been challenging in the current climate, though as travelling becomes safer, we hope to see an uptake of donations of this type. The fact the Fridge is not means tested has led to some frustration amongst visitors of the Fridge, particularly in cases where some visitors are perceived as having taken too much food.

Heavy reliance on volunteers, many of whom are vulnerable, has been particularly challenging during a pandemic but strong support from the Fridge manager and Selby District AVS has mitigated this impact.



## How does the project/case study relate to the food system and wider sustainability? Reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...

We currently have a dedicated team of 10 volunteers from in and around the Selby area, without whom the Fridge would simply not function. They are all incredibly passionate about the project and have largely taken ownership of the day to day running and upkeep of the Fridge. The Fridge provides a valuable space for our volunteers to gain experience, develop confidence and to be supported in the development of interpersonal skills.

As we begin to exit the pandemic, we gain the ability to offer the community more opportunities to practically engage with the Fridge. Our latest event, Eat and Energise, is a free three-day course that allows participants the opportunity to cook three healthy vegetarian meals in a slow cooker, with an overall aim of promoting energy efficient methods of cooking. Ingredients are provided and where possible are sourced from the Fridge. The course, which is ran in conjunction with the Yorkshire Energy Doctor, has had a fantastic reception from participants thus far.

### Reflection and key points:

In the sixth months since Selby Community Fridge opened to the public, the project has distributed 2435 bags (as of 18th June 2021) of surplus food to members of the local community. We have served approximately 657 individuals. Despite the many obstacles imposed by COVID-19, the Community Fridge has been a resounding success, allowing those struggling with food insecurity to access free, fresh food, no questions asked. We have working relationships with virtually every major supermarket in Selby, as well as several local food businesses and individuals who provide us with produce. The feedback we have received users of the Community Fridge has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the importance of the non-judgemental attitudes of our volunteers and just how critical the service provided by the Fridge is.

Selby Big Local is keen to develop the Fridge model and build on the strong, trusting relationships it has developed with residents. In addition to community cookery, there are plans to develop a community cookbook, link with local gardening and food growing projects and continue to use the convening power of food to bring people together and tackle loneliness and isolation.



## 6. Cheshire Together - Development of a sub regional partnership

### Background to the project:

Over the past 12 months CVS's have played a significant role in supporting both established and new food providers. The Covid response has highlighted the need for partnerships, collaborations and networks, to ensure that local resources are optimised, and areas of innovation and challenges are able to be discussed and shared with others.

Cheshire East established their food network as part of this response (see Case Study) and Warrington were looking to their Cheshire neighbours to identify a model for their network. The food network in Cheshire west (The Welcome Network) have shared how their network was established with both Warrington and Cheshire East emerging food partnerships which include both the CVS's and the local Councils.

This has also sparked conversations about what stays at the borough level and what could be delivered across the sub region. The SLL has brought representatives from across Cheshire to have time to discuss and develop these ideas, the meetings, conversations working through these options are known as 'Cheshire Together'

### What worked well? Identify key relationships and areas of innovation

- Having a shared vision across 3 Local Authority Area CVS's
- Engaging Council Staff across 3 Local Authority Areas
- Working with Cheshire Community Foundation
- Work with the Lord Lieutenant and his High Sheriffs, who in turn have influential relationships across Cheshire
- Working with Feeding Britain to identify how each area engages, whether that is individually or as 3 separate areas.

#### *Innovation*

- Having time to talk and reflect, and be creative
- Time outside of a 'set project' to think about what grass roots organisations need
- It has put CWVA on the map in terms of specialist infrastructure, playing a coordination role of Cheshire Together and of the SLL work locally.

### What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

- This new initiative brings an extensive range of partners and stakeholders together. This comes with the challenges of keeping everyone update on the development plans, ensuring that people are with you on the journey, ensuring that there is a role or function for everyone.
- We recognise that people are still working in silo to achieve a consistent offer of food provision
- The 'red tape' of Council processes doesn't always allow for speedy progress to be made which can be frustrating to some stakeholders
- When the development and thinking moves to a large geographical area and is potentially more strategic in its thinking it is a challenge to stay relevant and meaningful to local (often volunteer led) community groups

## How does the project/case study relate to the food system and wider sustainability? Reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...

- Being organised on a sub regional level we hope will open up doors to local supply chains, local economic growth, understanding of the job market, looking at gaps in the labour market/unemployment
- We hope it will also lead to the possibility of sub regional funding opportunities
- We hope that sharing local examples across a wider geography will create a movement of people who are learning together and working collaboratively towards a shared goal.
- This work has played a key role in the development work of CWVA's Community Food Charter which will be a tool to share values and ways of working towards a common goal. It is hoped that this could be adopted across all 3 boroughs and could be a practical and tangible way for groups to engage.

### Reflection and key points:

- We have found this such a valuable time to meet together, to collate local information and reflect on how we work together going forward. We are seeking funding so we can continue this work beyond the SLL Food funding.
- Initial conversations with a local funder have been positive, we have highlighted our desire to create a clear ToR for 'Cheshire Together' and look to collectively host a 'Cheshire Food Summit' in the Autumn 2021.
- The 'Food Summit' would aim to share best practice, challenges, defining pathways for communication/discussions/decision making both at a local and sub regional level. We believe that this could be a meaningful way to engage community groups in a partnership and collaborative way, and share a long term vision for lasting change and sustainable food options that reduce the need for emergency food.



# 7. The Greenway Grocer - Working with a local retailer to make fruit and vegetables more accessible

## Background to the project:

A Food poverty network and support known as 'The Welcome Network' has been coordinated through a partnership of organisations in west Cheshire since May 2017. The key partners include Cheshire West Voluntary Action, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Healthbox (a Public Health CIC), Citizens Advice Cheshire West and the two Trussell Trust foodbanks which cover the whole of the borough.

The focus of the project has been:

- Community Led Food Provision and upskilling local people
- Development of Holiday provision (in all school holidays)
- Development of 'Meeting Places' which is a wider offer for people in trusted community settings. This includes food, advice, a safe place to be and wellbeing.
- Since March 2021 this work has developed into thinking at longer term, more sustainable food solutions. Continuing with a community approach enhancing food access.
- This project has emerged from wanting to work more strategically on the food agenda and the work is being led by Cheshire West Voluntary Action.

## What worked well ? Identify key relationships and areas of innovation

*Relationships (see annex 2 for the full range of partners involved)*

- Local Community Organisation is taking the lead, seeking funding and using their existing governance structures
- Cheshire West Voluntary Action , together with University of Chester Masters Research Student, Local Food Retailer, Healthy Start Working Group, West Cheshire Foodbank, Cheshire West and Chester Council Licencing Team.
- Feeding Britain and the Westminster Foundation have committed funding to the project which means it can begin in August 2021.

*Key area of innovation*

- Working with a local retailer to provide a solution to access to food, as well as affordable food.
- Looking at access to food from a practical rather than financial angle
- Seeking to create local jobs and routes to employment
- Working in partnership with the Healthy Start scheme to provide local outlets for Fruit and Vegetables and links to community groups offering a wider food provision and cooking support.

## What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

- The key challenge before getting started is working with a small community group to have the skills, procedures and confidence to operate a small trading element to their organisation.
- Ensuring that all partners have a shared understanding of the realistic time scales of the project
- Speaking with local people to ensure the bike 'pops up' at times that connect with existing community activities, and with produce that people would like to buy. This is tricky while covid restrictions mean that many groups still are meeting virtually or not at all.

## **How does the project/case study relate to the food system and wider sustainability? Reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...**

- The project has long term sustainability at it's heart. It is aiming to take a long term view about food access in local communities, and see whether this can increase local food security and decrease the need to emergency food provision.
- It is testing whether local retailers and local communities can work together to provide food in local communities in a way which is economically viable for the local retailer
- We hope that it is empowering to local people because the nature of the bike means it can be flexible to 'pop up' where the local demand dictates it stops.
- We envisage it will be empowering for families eligible for Healthy Start as it means there will be fresh local produce available and hopefully the bike will mean there is no additional transport needed for people to get it home.

### **Reflection and key points:**

- This project is building upon over 4 years of relationship building both locally in Chester and across the borough.
- It has partnership and collaboration at the heart (see annex 2 for the full range of partners involved)
- It is taking a long term approach to food accessibility and providing an alternative to emergency food.
- It feels very much the 'right time' for a project like this, all stakeholders have seen the value in their role, and this has been matched by the funders we have approached for us to begin the project.

# 8. Cheshire East - Setting up a Local Food Network



## **Background to the project:**

Creation of a food network for Cheshire East. In June 2020 as a response to the COVID pandemic, DEFRA announced a grants programme to fund the purchase of food. The minimum grant was for £30,000 so not realistic for any one foodbank to manage. CVS Cheshire East contacted several foodbanks in the area to gauge interest in a joint bid, these groups then joined with the Cheshire Food Hub to submit a Cheshire wide application. The application was unsuccessful, but the food groups expressed a desire to continuing working together and so the Cheshire East Food Network was created.

## **What worked well ? Identify key relationships and areas of innovation**

The Cheshire Food Hub is facilitated by CVS, and without this facilitation is unlikely to come together. Due to the pandemic and the geographical reach of Cheshire East, the food network started as a virtual network, and will continue to do so.

CVS contacted organisations individually to understand their needs, and to establish a relationship before bring them together. A smaller network is already established in one town, and so we were careful to engage the leaders of this, to show that we were not taking over or duplicating their work.

The network will have a group on do-it life, and a whatsapp group going forward for exchange of goods and ideas. Through relationships made in the network food groups have been able to swap or sell ambient food to each other, distribute surplus fresh food quickly, and share plans and ambitions to support people to move out of food poverty. CVS has also planned some joint communications about supporting local foodbanks

## **What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?**

Each food provider works differently. In Cheshire East we have a mix of foodbanks, food groceries and community kitchens. Most of these have been established for a long time – pre pandemic and work well. The food network has included some key partners, such as the Local Authority development workers, and Housing Associations, one discussion about have a standard referral form and procedure was dismissed by the food providers as they each are happy with their own methods.

Many of the food providers have struggled to get referrals through health professionals, and some have had difficulty with job centres. CVS will support with some joint comms to reach these partners, and invite them to the network.

Recently, food providers are having to source food to purchase and have found some elements challenging. Bulk buying from supermarkets or wholesalers is ideal, but can take a lot of time to build up. There is also a greater need for financial donations or grants to do this.

## **How does the project/case study relate to the food system and wider sustainability? Reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...**

Many food providers in the network wish to try and alleviate the wider causes of food poverty and reduce reliance on food banks. Some do this through restricting the number of food parcels a household is able to access – and putting the responsibility back to the referrers. Others are providing, or planning to provide some debt support – however – this only seems to work if the household has a relationship with the food provider and it is a safe space. Phone support does not seem to have the same effect.

## **Reflection and key points:**

There is a clear need and desire for the Cheshire East Food Network, however, financial support was the catalyst to bring it together. There is a chance that interest will wane over time if there are no concrete outcomes other than the mutual support. CVS is not funded to support the food network, and so limited time can be spent on this project.

# 9. Warrington - Setting up a local Food Network

## **Background to the project:**

The aim of the project (which launched at the beginning of May) is to form a Food Network between the community groups providing food within Warrington, with the purpose initially of sharing ideas, resources, best practice and encouraging collaboration. This will then feed into how we address food insecurity across the borough together.

There are approximately 15 groups currently delivering varying forms of food provisions within Warrington. We have a Trussell Trust Foodbank, Local Foodbanks operating delivery models, Community Fridges, Pantries, Community Shops and cafes. These are registered charities/ CIC's/ Faith Groups/ Community Groups of varying size.

Most organisations that have popped up since the start of the pandemic have continued to offer support as lockdown has eased. Most organisations require no referral and are giving out food on a weekly basis for free either via free food stalls or by providing food parcels of non-perishable and some fresh items.

## **What is working well? Identify key relationships and areas of innovation**

### *Key Relationships*

**Sub regional Food Network leads** - As the project has only been going since the beginning of May, building contacts with the surrounding boroughs to gain advice and support from has been invaluable. West Cheshire, East Cheshire & Liverpool City Region have all provided excellent insight into how they have established Food Networks and have offered advice on how to develop positive relationships between groups.

**Group leaders** - Meeting the groups and developing an understanding of the landscape of support available has been crucial within the first two months. Meeting group leaders in person has enabled me to engage them in the benefits of a Network and build positive relationships. Groups are extremely protective of their service and the area they operate in and therefore tempering their suspicions and getting them on board has been important.

**Council and Councillors** - Having a role that sits outside of the council has been well received by the community groups, however being part funded by the council has also given me a strong link into the relevant teams and will facilitate bringing challenges to the forefront. Several Councillors are heavily involved in food provisions within certain areas of Warrington and therefore engaging with them has been extremely important.

There are opportunities for shared learning, resources, ideas and collaboration in the short term and huge opportunity to create a joined-up pathway that supports people out of crisis and long-term food insecure situations by food groups working more collaboratively and linking in better with the other support services.

There are opportunities to create links with local producers to create a more sustainable fresh food supply and improve the offer.

## **What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?**

**Information** - There is no easy, accessible way for the general public or an organisation to access information on where you can get support with food within Warrington. Communication from the majority of community food groups is on a very local level, predominantly via social media, making it difficult to access help if you are unaware of the support available.

**Models** - Most food provisions within Warrington are providing immediate crisis support in the form of weekly food parcels or free surplus food via stalls. Initial observations suggest that the borough is in need of an improved offer of affordable food models (such as pantries/ social supermarkets) coupled with wider wrap around community support (such as employment support/ cooking classes/ money advice/ etc) as there are people and families who are long term low income who are using emergency food provisions on a weekly basis to get by.

**Funding/ Sourcing Food** - Feedback has been that groups are struggling to secure funding as the pandemic is easing. Surplus food supplies have reduced from both Fare Share and the local supermarkets. Many groups are purchasing product from Lidl/ Aldi where there could be better links with local suppliers. Good Practice - Some groups have been operating in a reactive way in response to the pandemic which has caused some oversight when it comes to good food hygiene practices.

**Group Interaction** - There is friction between groups providing food across the borough, partly due to historical differences or opinions on types of food support. Groups have also been in competition for surplus food from retailers. Navigating the dynamics between groups will cause challenges throughout the project.

**Understanding the bigger picture** – Encouraging groups to look at how to support beneficiaries to move away from living in food poverty and not just satisfying their immediate needs with emergency food.

**How does the project/case study relate to the food system and wider sustainability? Reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...**

Working with the sub regional teams has highlighted the opportunity to work on local sourcing, strategy development and project development collectively.

Diversifying where groups source food from would create a more stable supply. Links with local producers would support a more sustainable supply and support local businesses.

Community support and involvement is key to ensuring services are sustainable. A strong community network creates a 'net' to catch people and stop them from hitting crisis point as they have the information and support to not hit that point. Community led affordable food models support this.

Working with local infrastructure organisations supports group development and links groups into an already established borough-wide community.

**Reflection and key points:**

Strong links with other Food Networks have been essential when starting up a network.

Mapping provisions and understanding the gaps in the initial stages of set up is key.

Physical accessibility to food support for people across the whole borough is extremely important and not considered enough currently.

Models need to be right for the communities they are supporting and consideration regarding both emergency provisions and affordable food provisions should be made.

Supporting and encouraging groups to understand food insecurity from more of a strategical point of view would help build the understanding of how community groups/ initiatives are able to support people out of poverty and not cause dependency.



# 10. Cheshire East - Food Models working together in Macclesfield

## Background to the project

Through the facilitation of the Cheshire East Food Network, CVS has developed a relationship with the food providers in the town of Macclesfield. The food provision in the town was largely faith based, and a group called the Hope Partnership has been long established which brings together these providers.

## What worked well ? Identify key relationships and areas of innovation

Macclesfield has in many way, a model ecosystem of food provision. A food bank was established 10 years ago through one of the Churches, which has grown considerably. In more recent years another foodbank, community kitchens and growing schemes have been set up in the town, providing low cost or free cooked meals in a café environment, or during COVID through a delivery service. As a response to the pandemic, a food grocery has been established enabling local people to access low cost ambient, fresh, chilled and frozen produce. Another community grocery operates to distribute surplus food, to avoid food wastage.

The food partners meet regularly and share surplus stock, or short dated stock between the groceries, kitchens and food banks. Each has their own relationship with National bodies such as 'my local pantry', regional distributors such as Fareshare or neighbourly and the local supermarkets.

## What are the challenges or emerging issues you have identified?

Due to the level of provision in the town, each organisation has seen a reduction in the amount of donations from the public as the giving power of local people has been spread more thinly.

There is also a risk that organisations such as fare share, and also funders will be reluctant to have a relationship with each provider and so there may be some competition.

## How does the project/case study relate to the food system and wider sustainability? Reflections on project sustainability and wider community empowerment...

The ideal process for an individual facing food poverty would be:



The model in Macclesfield has the potential to provide this journey for household in need

## Reflection and key points:

The Macclesfield Town food partnership has come together naturally through Churches together, and has a good leadership in place. Any developments will work best when generated organically through the members groups, however, infrastructure support and funding will be needed.

# Key Connections

- Connecting with **Rooted in Hull** has been extremely beneficial to ERVAS. Their forward thinking and focus on sustainability and health is a very inspirational aspect of good practice. As we are based in the East Riding of Yorkshire there is significant amounts of rural land however we have yet come across such a project.
- Rooted in Hull also hosts the **Hull Food Partnership** brings together organisations, businesses and individuals from across Hull and the surrounding area with the collective aim of making sustainable, healthy, affordable food a reality for everyone.
- Meeting on a weekly basis with our fellow **Subject Liaison Leads** in the northern cell has been a fantastic opportunity to collaborate with other regions, share ideas, and feedback of our findings.
- Developing a wider food network within East Riding of Yorkshire region has been valuable and will build our Alliance to help further support **food provision organisations** across our region. In total we have an additional 12 charities and organisations listed on our mapping tool that are accessible for members of the public in the East Riding of Yorkshire.
- Since starting the VSCEP project ERVAS have connected with the **Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN)** who are supporting the co-development of cash first referral leaflets in local authorities across the UK. The leaflets are co-designed as simple resources for people facing financial crisis, and those supporting them, to quickly see available advice and cash first support options and which agencies are best placed to help. The aim is to reduce the need for emergency food aid by helping people access any existing financial entitlements and advice on income maximisation.
- It was valuable attending the **Multi Agency Cell** meetings on a fortnightly basis as this allowed us to connect to various organisations to keep up to date with emerging issues and this has also been significantly useful with the sharing of our Survey during the project.
- North Yorkshire is characterised by small, local projects but there is a lack of overarching policy framework or alliance structure to enable projects to connect, share and learn from each, and collectively prioritise action that can alleviate food poverty. Without this structure, action is piecemeal and whilst undoubtedly there is evidence of impact at the community level, there is significant opportunity learn from the sub-regional activity in other parts of country, and inspire an approach that can be more ambitious in its aims to promote a fairer and more equitable sustainable food system.
- At a local level, Selby District AVS will share the research and findings with partners of the Selby District Anti-Poverty, and colleagues at the District and County Council (North Yorkshire is currently under a Local Government Review). Our aim is to build commitment to develop a regional Food Network and a collective vision for action.
- As an organisation supporting the **Selby Community Fridge**, SDAVS involvement in food insecurity projects has been limited to date. The survey research has inspired and underpinned some initial ideas for the how the model can develop over the coming year.
- Having bi-weekly meetings with counterparts in Cheshire East and Warrington, creating a **Sub Regional Working Group** this has been fantastic for the work locally. We have had time, outside of a specific project to connect, share ideas and discuss what would most benefit local grassroots organisations
- Understanding the **National Food Road Map** has been great for framing the work locally and giving us confidence that we are focusing on the same areas of work. We hope that we can feed back to the working group on Hunger and Hardship to make the connections between this work and the National Strategy
- It has been incredibly productive to have funded time outside of a specific project to do **specialist infrastructure work** where connecting, documenting good ideas is the focus of the work. We believe this has been the most beneficial part of this work, and our local sub regional work has progressed at a very fast pace due to having this time to work together.
- CWVA have had a positive conversation with a **local funder** who is keen to continue to fund the sub regional work and we have identified the need for a **Food Summit** where a wide range of stakeholders will come together to share local best practice, challenges and highlight some areas of development which people can engage with.

# Reflections & Conclusions



Throughout our research we have looked to align examples of local activity with the identified direction of travel of the emerging of the 'hunger and hardship' recommendations

## Community Empowerment

- Survey and case studies have highlighted that, particularly during the pandemic, communities have acted in real time, working collaboratively to respond to the needs of their community. Resulted in strong local teams, increased volunteer confidence, greater agility to respond and projects have evolved to changing situation. This has empowered communities to think about the future shape of delivery as we emerge from the pandemic and beyond.
- The survey revealed that 23% of existing projects expect to continue operations after Covid-19 and 20% expect to expand, highlighted the grassroots response to community need.
- Surveys showed 21% projects have developed as a result of community-led activity - they epitomize 'community empowerment in action'.
- Pandemic has highlighted the need for our food systems to be more community-led, sustainable and resilient.
- Investment is needed to enable community-led change - compelling evidence of success of community projects, yet there is instability in short-term project funding and an over reliance on volunteers and small VCSE organisations that struggle to access appropriate support when required.

## Bringing people together to share skills, knowledge and connections to harness opportunities

- 'The growth of Rooted in Hull' - an urban farm with the community at its core and is a perfect example of a project focusing on growing, sharing and learning about food and bringing people together.
- Selby Community Fridge has shown how a community fridge project has evolved in response to local feedback, embarking on the development of a series of community cook-a-long courses that bring people together to share and develop new skills.
- The convening power of food is evidence in many of the projects/case studies, projects creating hubs of community support with food at their heart.
- The 'Cheshire Together' partnership has showed us that as food network coordinators we have a lots of skills and experience to share, but also we recognise that across our sub region there are more a wide range of local initiatives that will benefit our local region. We have identified the need for a 'Food Summit' where will be able to share the skills and experiences
- Recognition that volunteer led projects bring together a wide range of people with a diversity of skills and experience. However, also volunteer models can also present a challenge, and it's important to make the best use of people's skills and time to maximise project delivery.

## Creating the foundations for long-term change

This research has been an important catalyst for some really valuable work, specifically being able to take time to reflect on what good food innovation looks like, how we can share that with others and how we can support our local communities in ensuring long term and sustainable change to local food provision. Learning, developing connections, harnessing opportunities and replicating best practice are key to tackling the fragmented approach that exists in some areas of the country and developing the relationships that are key to fostering systemic change.

The survey and case studies have demonstrated the breadth of local delivery that is having a meaningful impact on alleviating food poverty. But as one survey respondent commented, “food poverty is the symptom not the root cause”. Long-term prevention of food poverty requires much more fundamental attention to employment and education which are not being addressed systematically. Those projects that do take a holistic approach and are achieving wider outcomes, are typically funded with short-term project funding and rely on strong local leadership.

Whilst this research and report focus on addressing food poverty and tackling wider food insecurity, food policy and projects also bring the opportunity to engage communities on other issues. There is increasing attention on the importance of a community-led transition to a net zero carbon economy and food as a policy area has the ability to bring issues together in a way that is tangible and meaningful for communities. SDAVS is currently embarking on a new project, ‘Our Zero Selby’, in collaboration with Forum for the Future and Involve, with a thematic focus on food as a way to engage local communities on climate change. CWVA is also undertaking interesting work with local businesses, exploring the role of food-based social enterprise, through the pilot of ‘The Greenway Grocer’ which can also have a role to play in local economic futures.

# Next Steps

This research has provided the team of Subject Lead Liaisons with a greater insight into what is going on in local communities across the North. It would be a fantastic outcome of this work to link these findings back to the Hunger and Hardship working group and the road map for long term change. The identified areas of good practice, and examples of food innovation and community empowerment sit as powerful case studies as to how the road map can be implemented in local community organisations and highlight the role that everyone is playing for lasting change in increasing food security for all.

We have all benefited immensely from talking together, sharing ideas, and having time outside of a specific project to do this. The research has proven a valuable and unique opportunity to look at activity and perspectives across the North region. At the outset we identified four themes we wished to consider in our analysis:

- Surveillance
- Sharing Findings
- Story Telling
- Sustainability

The survey and case studies enabled us to undertake a surveillance approach, identifying action and taking a deep-dive into areas of good practice and innovation. There are a wealth of stories to tell and the power of storytelling is crucial in sharing the findings. We feel it is important for the wider VCS network to have time to network, share ideas and best practice as ultimately this will share the wealth of knowledge, skills and experiences which can make the sector more effective learning from those who have gone before us.

What do we need at a national level and what conditions do we need to foster locally to strengthen the collaborative, sustainable approach that's needed to address more than the symptoms?

With further time for investigation and dissemination there are a range of issues and challenges that we would have liked to have explored further, collectively and as an individual organisations. In our analysis we were only able to take a high-level view of sustainability and this is one area that we would recommend warrants further research. We asked survey respondents about the impact on sustainability and it is clear from our findings that 'project sustainability' and the impact of projects on sustainability as a system, are both of interest and concern.

SDAVS is keen to disseminate the research findings and work partners in the sub-region to strengthen a collaborative approach to tackling food insecurity, learning the lessons from the alliances and partnerships identified in the case studies, and to create a framework locally for coordinated, strategic action. The impact of Covid-19 only strengthens the importance of action that strengthens community resilience and the food system. As a result of this work, ERVAS is in further discussions with 'Rooted in Hull' about replicating their urban farm model to more rural areas where there is greater land availability.

CWVA is seeking funding for a Food Summit that will be run across the whole of the Cheshire Sub Region. It will allow for greater opportunities for collaborative working across Cheshire West, East and Warrington CVS's and also bringing together the member organisations to create opportunities for conversations and learning. SDAVS and ERVAS have already expressed interest in seeing how this approach can be replicated in their respective regions.

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# Appendix

**Annex 1: Summary of Survey Results**  
**Annex 2: Fruit and Veg Stakeholders - Greenway Grocer**