

LIVERPOOL'S
**GOOD
FOOD
PLAN**

Listening To Our City Phase 1 July 2021



Feeding
Liverpool



What we did

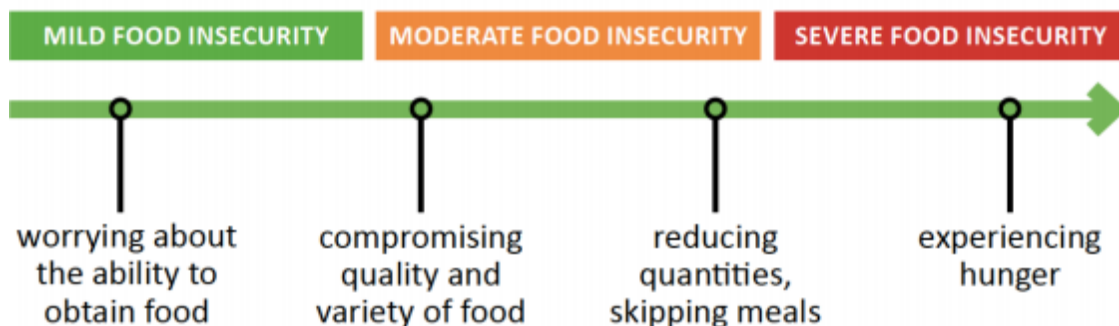
We want Liverpool's Good Food Plan to be developed with local residents, shaped by their ideas and experiences.

In the first phase of the Good Food Plan, Feeding Liverpool conducted interviews and focus groups with 48 residents.

This included:

- Supporting 20 people who have recently experienced severe food insecurity to share their story. Working in partnership with emergency food providers, we used a Sustainable Livelihoods Approach¹ to conduct semi-structured interviews.
- Facilitating five focus groups with 28 Liverpool city residents, including those who may have experienced mild to moderate experiences of food insecurity, to learn about their experiences of food and begin the process of co-creating a vision for a Good Food City.

WHAT IS FOOD INSECURITY?



¹ <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-toolkit-for-wales-297233/>

Who was involved?

48 residents from nine different organisations were involved in either interviews or focus groups.

Eight emergency food providers were approached to partner with us to identify people who have recently experienced severe food insecurity to be involved in the project.

These included the four largest emergency food providers in the city, North Liverpool Foodbank, South Liverpool Foodbank, Micah Liverpool and the L6 Centre, and five smaller emergency food providers, Liverpool Arabic Centre, Asylum Link Merseyside, Merseyside Youth Association, New Beginnings, Improving Lives. These five were identified via the emergency food provider survey as engaging with a demographic seen as at a high risk of severe food insecurity (e.g. young people and asylum seekers).

Interviews were conducted in December 2020, April 2021 and May 2021.

Six men and 14 women, from four of these emergency food providers told their stories. They were aged between early 20's and 70's. Eight had moved to Liverpool from Asian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European or African countries.

Seven community organisations were approached to partner with us to host focus groups. They were identified by Feeding Liverpool and Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services based on their geographic locations: Nugent Care Pantry/Epsom Street Community Centre (Kirkdale); Joseph Lappin Centre (Old Swan); Torus Housing Association (South Liverpool); St Aidan's Pantry (Speke); Croxteth Gems (Croxteth); The Greenhouse Project (Toxteth); Kensington Fields Community Association (Kensington).

Focus groups were conducted in April 2021 and May 2021.

Eight men and 20 women took part in the five focus groups held at five of these community organisations. The participants from the Greenhouse Project focus group were aged between 7 and 10. For the other four focus groups participants were aged between early 20's and 70's.

All participants were given the choice to attribute their comments or use a pseudonym.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted by Feeding Liverpool. We are grateful to Together Liverpool and Food Power for enabling this project.

What we heard

Barriers to a healthy diet

What's happening now: There was a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. For some, 'good food' meant home cooked and for others it was a take away. Many of the participants were able to make use of the ingredients available from pantries and food banks and they felt that they were able to achieve a balanced diet. In some cases participants noted that they receive fresh produce that they don't know how to process such as pheasant, and celeriac. Participants felt that they could benefit from cooking lessons and recipe cards so that they are able to improve their diets. Children who took part in the focus group commented that they frequently eat on their own or away from their family members. Fast food was frequently used as a treat. Many community organisations noted that produce from FareShare is often unsuitable as it is going off or the quantities of one particular fruit or vegetable are too high.

Drivers and root causes: Some participants didn't have access to kitchens or cooking materials and rely entirely on prepared food. Many of the community organisations were able to support service users to make the most of their shop at the pantry. In the case of food banks there was limited support available to recipients, this effected their ability to make healthy food choices. They were also exclusively reliant on the food provided by the food bank, whereas shoppers at pantries frequently supplemented their shop at other outlets. Long term physical and mental health sufferers were unable to consistently make healthy dietary choices as their medical needs created chaotic lifestyles. This meant that healthy diets were not prioritised. The higher prices of food for those with dietary requirements was a barrier to purchasing sufficient quantities of food.

I'm not ashamed to say that I will go without to feed my husband and my son, I'll go without this, I'll go without that because I can't afford [lactose free products] because they need to eat. [...] Why is that food higher than normal food, I don't understand that. Normal milk is £1.10, oat milk is £1.30."

Jenny (50's, volunteer St Aidan's Pantry)

My benefits totally supplies all three of us, which it doesn't. And we are on pre-paid metres, in a very cold, old Victorian flat in Toxteth. We are tossing up, do we put money in the metres or eat? But without money in the metres we can't cook anything. You know I was reluctant to use foodbanks because it's all tinned food, I have multiple food allergies and I am allergic to all pharmaceuticals, I get sick, so I use my food as medicine. I tailor all my vegetables, food is medicine to me. When I just rely on tins I get sick really, really

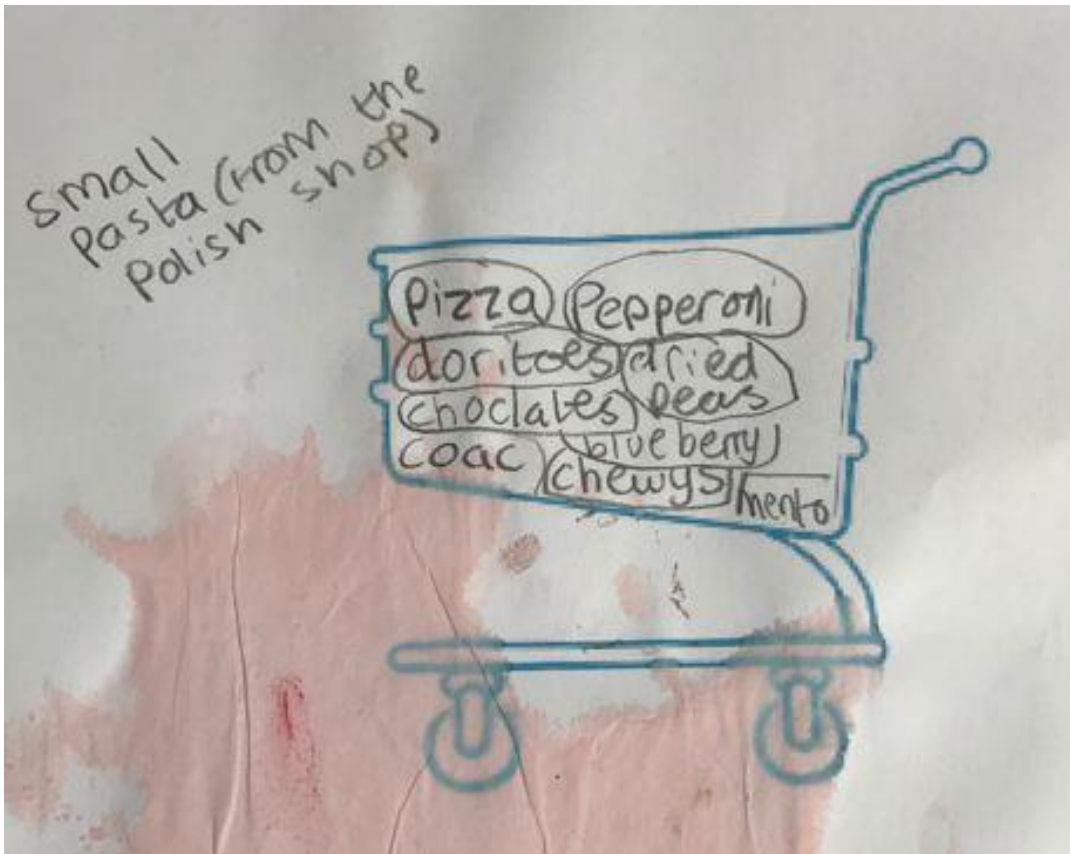
quickly.”

Cheryl, (50's, Micah Liverpool)

Hopes for the future: Many participants said that they would like more access more fresh produce, especially in the case of food banks All organisations who took part in focus groups commented that they would like to have improved community growing spaces so that residents can readily access high quality fresh produce and improve their knowledge of the food system. Many focus groups commented that they would like improved access to cooking lessons and the support to grow their own produce. There were hopes that children will become more involved in the cooking process. Younger participants wanted fast food advertising to be banned.

Stop putting food billboards and adverts. Like when you're playing a game you have a bar that has food stuff on it and when you try to press the cross, it will say, why do you not want to see this advert? It's so annoying.”

Mudiwa (9 years old Greenhouse Project)



‘What’s in my trolley,’ Greenhouse Project participant

Affordability of food

What's happening now: Participants stated that food in supermarkets was too expensive. Many participants travel outside of their locality to access affordable food. Food was identified as the first area to economise in when money is being squeezed. Participants suffering acute food poverty were unable to purchase food without borrowing money from friends or family. Participants of both interviews and focus groups stated that they would like there to be more independent shops but that food should be affordable and not overpriced. Some participants said that they had started to grow food to reduce the overall cost of food.

You know yourself how you feel when you're eating just processed stuff all the time. If that's all you can afford, what else do you do? You feel sluggish and you feel lethargic.”

Deborah* (48, recently unemployed, Joseph Lappin Centre)

Drivers and Root causes: Poor physical and mental health (including long term conditions) has prevented participants from generating income. Changes in PIP or benefit payments had, at times, resulted in a need for support. Reduced income due to furlough had resulted in a reduced household food budget. Some participants in focus groups had recently lost their jobs resulting in a need for support after a lifetime of working. Several interviewees were navigating the asylum process. They were unable to work but were not eligible for benefits. This resulted in acute food poverty.

I find it as well for me personally because I live on my own it's probably sometimes cheaper to eat in a chippy than to prepare a meal for myself. And you know it's rubbish but by the time you get all the stuff in to make it, it's not even for the convenience, it's just more cost effective. And I know it sounds bizarre to say that, but it does. Just a small chippy meal.”

Colin (40's, organisation coordinator, Nugent Care Pantry / Epsom Street Community Association)

Since furlough, I see people on the phones with their calculators. Adding all their shopping up.”

Keith (40's unemployed, chef, volunteer, Kensington Fields Community Association)

Hopes for the future: Pantries were seen as a way for people to start enjoying food again rather than it just being a means of survival. Participants who accessed emergency food services felt that the service provided a lifeline. There was an appetite for an improved service in both circumstances. In the case of pantries, volunteers felt that the service should be more holistic and that the lack of communication across organisations left the service open to abuse. In the cases of

participants accessing emergency food support, they felt quite strongly that they would like a job so that they didn't need to use the service going forward.



'Good Food', Greenhouse Project participant

Availability of shops in locality

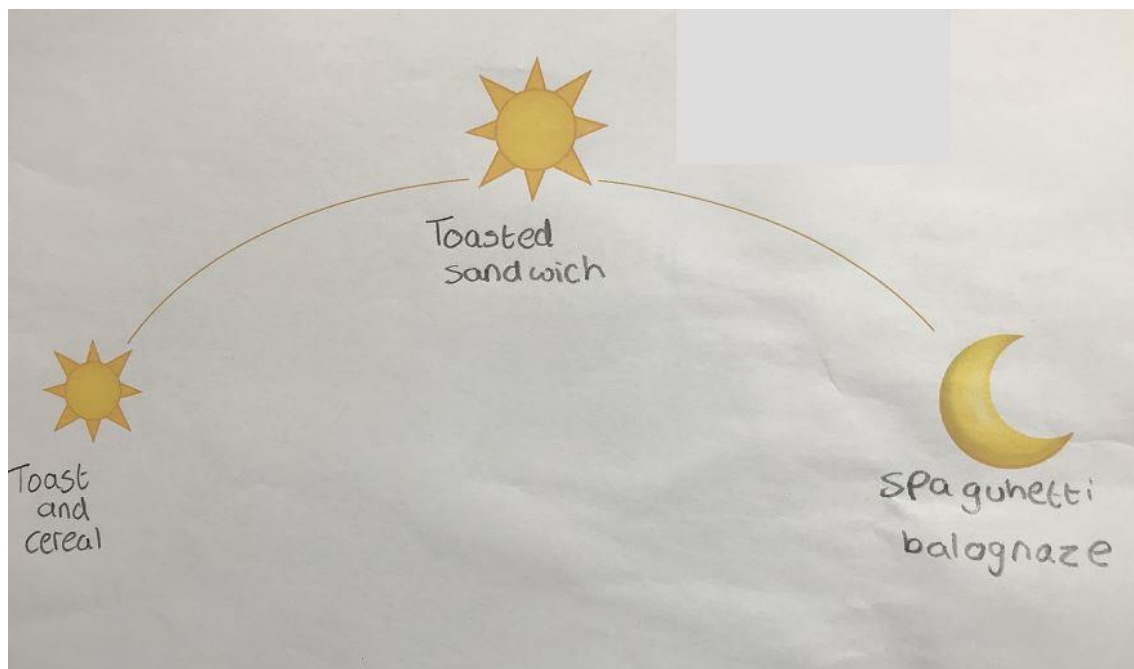
What's happening now: Many of the focus groups and interviews took place in food deserts. Participants frequently noted that they must travel outside of their area to access food that they could afford. Many participants said that they have to drive, take a taxi or use public transport to access shops. They cannot access shops on foot. In some cases, local independent shops have been replaced with fast food outlets which has effected participant's ability to make healthy food choices.

Drivers and root causes: Planning decisions and low cost supermarkets have resulted in a number of food deserts. Participants can access all of the food that they would like providing they have access to transport. However, the cost of public transport is prohibitive to movement. One participant living in acute food poverty frequently walked from Walton to the city centre to access emergency food support as he could not afford the bus fare.

Hopes for the future: Participants suggested that the community would benefit from smaller shops as you get to know vendors and see the same people in the shops regularly. However some participants said that they couldn't afford price variations in smaller shops.

We want to live in a city where everyone can access healthy local, affordable food"

Debbie (40's, unemployed chef, St Aidan's Pantry)



'My daily routine', Greenhouse project participant

Stigma around accessing food support

What's happening now: Participants expressed 'shame' or 'shyness' in accessing food support. Some participants suggested that people who need support wait for long periods of time before they eventually contact an organisation for support. However, participants who were interviewed individually said that they had no other option than to access food support services as they would otherwise struggle to access food. They did not express a feeling of stigma or shame. Community organisations play a key role in identifying those in need to support and reducing stigma. Participants frequently noted that as there is a widespread need for help, this is helping to reduce social stigma.

“I think sometimes people are just too proud. And because we're established in the community, we tend to pick up on it. So whereas it's not about picking the phone up and saying 'I've got no food', it's about the fact because we live in the community, we know these little tell-tale signs that you look for something one of the kids might say to you like, 'they forgot to feed me again today'. And that's not a joke. Because they've obviously got nothing to feed them with. So you don't make a big thing of it. You just sort of say take that home to your mum tonight.”

Sue (50's, community coordinator, Kensington Fields Community Association)

Drivers and root causes: Participants said that there is a general feeling of community support around pantries and food banks, this is helping to reduce social stigma. Participants from food pantries felt that a £3.50 contribution towards the cost of food made the support feel like a hand up rather than a hand out.

Hopes for the future: Participants at pantries said that they want the organisations to offer a more holistic community support service. This would reduce the stigma attached to accessing support. Participants who were suffering acute food poverty did not state any feeling of stigma or shame and were keen to access jobs and improve their own circumstances. One participant suggested that the food banks and pantries should be combined with a creche so that parents and children feel more comfortable using the service.

“When I first came, coz I've worked, I felt terrible having to come to this place. Well, you have to put your pride behind you. You have to go. What I found, coz the girls were all

laughing and smiling, it made me relax.”

Deborah* (48, recently unemployed, Joseph Lappin Centre)



‘Good Food’, Greenhouse Project participant

Community support

What's happening now: Voluntary organisations consistently provide additional support so that no one in the community is without food. Complex relationships mean that, especially in the case of younger adult participants, community organisations are the main support mechanism not only for food support but also for financial and health advice. There is a wide variation of the services offered across the city by community organisations, with many going above and beyond their remit to support those in need. Some pantries are at capacity.

Even when I was working and needed the food bank, I'd ring Louise at about 12 o'clock and say 'I know you open 1-3 but I don't finish work until half 4 so could you leave it by the desk and I'll pick it up around 5' and she's left a couple of bags behind the desk for me."

John (25, unemployed, father of two, Merseyside Youth Association)

Drivers and root causes: Community organisations are, at times, best placed to respond to the need for meal support in their areas. They are visible within the community and residents feel secure in asking them for help. This means that they are able to identify residents who need further/ongoing support.

Hopes for the future: In some cases the support that is provided by volunteers and community coordinators is outside of the remit of their services. Most participants requested improved funding so that they can finance the extra measures that they take. Focus groups highlighted the need for improved connectivity between organisations so that services can be more holistic.

There's no way of easily finding out what's available that I'm aware of, no centre point you can go to that will list all the places and the times. Some sort of collation of information about soup kitchens and food banks so we know how to access them. Outreach would be useful."

Neil* (60's, no fixed abode, unemployed, Micah Liverpool)

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