

A Food Poverty Action Plan for Oxfordshire

GOOD FOOD OXFORD REPORT

Authors: Good Food Oxford, with contributions from the Community Food Networks and those who have pledged action to tackle food insecurity.

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Healthy, fair, sustainable and delicious food for Oxfordshire

www.goodfoodoxford.org

Contents

Summary.....	1
Extent and causes of food poverty in Oxfordshire.....	1
Existing work to tackle food poverty in Oxfordshire.....	2
Collective action.....	2
Key recommendations to improve food poverty responses.....	3
Introduction.....	5
Food insecurity.....	5
Food insecurity estimates for Oxfordshire.....	7
Food Insecurity at an Oxfordshire district level 2021.....	8
Causes of food insecurity.....	9
A picture of people who access food banks.....	9
Food insecurity in Oxfordshire: a county of two tales.....	10
Deprivation as an indicator of food poverty in Oxfordshire.....	10
Physical & mental health and caring responsibilities.....	10
Affordability of healthy food.....	11
Children.....	12
Fuel poverty as an indicator of food poverty in Oxfordshire.....	12
People from ethnic minority backgrounds.....	12
Spotlight: Food experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities during COVID-19 in Oxfordshire.....	13
We listened to people in Oxfordshire.....	13
Food related issues faced by participants' communities.....	13
Opportunities for more positive food experiences for BAME communities.....	14
Actionable points for tackling food insecurity among BAME communities in Oxfordshire:.....	15
Tackling food insecurity in Oxfordshire.....	15
The people of Oxfordshire say “no’ to food poverty.....	15
Food access map.....	16
A mixed model of community food services.....	16
Foodbanks.....	17
Community larders.....	17
What can be done nationally to reduce food poverty/food insecurity?.....	18
Cash-first approach.....	18
What can we do to reduce food insecurity in Oxfordshire?.....	19
Principles for tackling food insecurity in Oxfordshire.....	19
Oxfordshire’s food poverty action plan-pledges and commitments to action.....	20
Table 1: Framework for food poverty pledges mapped against three key themes.....	21
Live pledges from Oxfordshire.....	23

Emergency provision	23
Signposting.....	23
Co-ordination, co-operation, and knowledge sharing	23
Ensuring dignity.....	23
Ensuring dignity & nutritional value.....	24
Nutritional value	24
Raising awareness	25
Building resilience.....	25
Coordination, co-operation, and knowledge sharing	25
Ensuring dignity.....	26
Nutritional value	26
Raising awareness	27
Preventing food poverty.....	27
Signposting.....	27
Coordination, co-operation, and knowledge sharing:	28
Ensuring dignity.....	29
Ensuring dignity & nutritional value.....	30
Nutritional value	30
Raising awareness	31
Appendix 1: Examples of community-led local support services in Oxfordshire	32
Oxford Mutual Aid.....	32
Oxford Community Action	32
Carterton Community Foodbank	33
SYRCOX – Syrian Community in Oxfordshire.....	34
Cherwell Collective.....	34
Asylum Welcome	35
Oxford Food Hub.....	35
SOFEA.....	36
Abingdon Food Bank	36
OX4 Food Crew.....	36
Appendix 2: Examples from councils across the UK.....	38
Emergency provision	38
Building resilience.....	38
Preventing food poverty.....	38
Appendix 3: Food is a human right.....	39
References	41

Summary

In this report on food poverty in Oxfordshire we:

- ◇ describe the extent of food poverty in Oxfordshire and its underlying causes;
- ◇ highlight the work that is already happening to support those experiencing food poverty;
- ◇ make recommendations on how we can continue to support those in need, and move beyond emergency support to prevent food poverty and build resilience;
- ◇ share commitments to collective action with 63 pledges from 39 different organisations and individuals on how they are tackling food insecurity locally.

Extent and causes of food poverty in Oxfordshire

Food insecurity ranges from worrying about the ability to obtain food to hunger and skipping meals (FAO, 2021).

We estimate that 8-10% of households in Oxfordshire experience food insecurity. This equates to 55,000-69,000 people.¹

Groups with higher levels of food insecurity include those limited by health problems or disability (5 x more likely to experience food insecurity); those severely clinically vulnerable (x2 more likely to experience food insecurity); food sector workers (x1.5 times); BAME residents (x2) (Source: Food Foundation, 2021).

“The root cause of food poverty is poverty.” (Sustain)

Average incomes are higher than national averages in Oxfordshire, which masks severe inequalities. Five of the 86 Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOA) in Oxfordshire are among the nation’s 20% most deprived areas and seven of MSOAs have a higher than national benchmark for child poverty (JSNA, 2021.b)

The high cost of living in Oxford City, particularly housing, means that in order to “Eat well”² in line with government healthy eating guidance, a minimum income of £19,911 is required - which exceeds the minimum wage, the real living wage, *and* the Oxford living wage. Even on £19,911, a single person would have to compromise on some items considered in minimum living standards such as socialising or fitness activities (Green, 2019).

Eight MSOAs in Oxfordshire have a shorter life expectancy than the England benchmark (JSNA, 2021b). In Oxfordshire and health inequalities persist - North Oxford and Northfield Brook have a 15-year gap in male life expectancy between them.

¹ Food Poverty is not consistently measured at a national or local level. This figure is based on indicators of financial and food poverty including national data from Food Foundation, 2021; regional data from DWP and FRS (2021); Oxfordshire data from LG inform, 2021 and ONS, 2020

² The Eatwell Guide is NHS guidance on how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>

Existing work to tackle food poverty in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire has a long history of community food support, and COVID-19 drove a huge surge in activity to support those experiencing food insecurity. Over 100 community food services, including foodbanks, community larders and fridges, and prepared meal delivery services provided support to over 6,000 people countywide (GFO, 2020). The dedication of people running these services – mostly volunteers – has been inspiring. Over 15,000 volunteers have supported their neighbours and local communities. Community Food Services have worked tirelessly, not only providing emergency food support but supporting people to access the support, advice, knowledge, and skills that they need to alleviate their struggles and to feel a sense of community and belonging.

Councils stepped up, providing emergency support via community hubs, cash-first solutions via a range of light-touch grants programmes, and extensive work with the community and voluntary sector to ensure that they were listening to the needs of communities and providing resources and support where most needed.

As we move beyond the initial stages of the pandemic, organisations and people across Oxfordshire are keen to support a planned and sustained response to tackle food insecurity.

Collective action

Over 40 organisations and individuals have made nearly 70 pledges to tackle food insecurity in Oxfordshire around three key areas: Emergency Provision, Building Resilience, Preventing Food Poverty.

We are grateful for their commitment to collective action. We will continue to celebrate and promote the work already being done to tackle these issues, and highlight the gaps that these pledges have identified.

Key recommendations to improve food poverty responses

What can councils, local decision-makers, and institutions do?

Commit to adopt a standardised approach to measuring food poverty in the county. Measure, monitor, and report uptake of support services.

Support the development of the Community Food Networks and other informal collaborations and partnerships that promote systems and networks to share data, knowledge, and experience.

Continue to fund emergency food services, acknowledging that ongoing requirements to self-isolate and a complex web of individual situations, including poverty, mean that healthy food retail options are not accessible to all.

Support the development of affordable community food retail options. Support the development of larders, planning, and growth agendas that back affordable, sustainable food businesses that are accessible to all.

Provide access to more growing spaces and provide **resources and training** to help residents and communities to grow their own food.

Support and invest in community hubs that are community-led, where people can come together to access food, wrap-around services and advice, share cultural experiences, and engage in enriching community activities.

Support the expansion of community-led cooking skills training programmes through **access to spaces, support to get projects started, and funding for coordinators** to provide residents with the opportunity to learn and share skills in their locality.

Continue to invest in tools and systems to support access to food and support services e.g., maps, directories, leaflets. Offer support in a variety of formats to ensure inclusivity and reduce discrimination.

Expand the roll-out of food poverty training to ensure support is delivered in a **non-stigmatising and dignified way, providing choice and upholding autonomy**, ensuring culturally appropriate food, ways to access services, and communications.

Promote and adopt a living wage that reflects the real living costs in Oxfordshire and enables people to both live with dignity and buy healthy food.

Promote 'cash-first solutions' (cash-grants) as the preferred route for emergency aid, acknowledging that food poverty is just poverty, and when treated with dignity and given appropriate support, people make the best decisions for themselves. This promotes dignity and empowerment, reduces food waste, and supports the local economy.

Lobby central government to measure food insecurity nationally and **to end discriminatory practices, policies, and legislation** such as No Recourse to Public Funds, benefit cuts, caps and sanctions, and elevated thresholds for services.

What can organisations and individuals do?

1. Pledge an action

You can make a pledge of action to reduce food poverty in Oxfordshire that will be featured on the Good Food Oxford Website. To see actions already pledged [click here](#). To make a pledge click [here](#).

2. Join the Good Food Movement

If you are an organisation, join the Good Food movement by signing The Good Food [Charter](#). If you are an individual sign up to the mailing list to receive the Good Food Oxford [Newsletter](#).

3. Join the Community Food Network

Organisations and community groups can join the Community Food Network in their district to connect with other people working and volunteering in community food projects. To get involved email mail@goodfoodoxford.org

4. Participate in growing schemes

You could start a neighbourhood growing scheme or support one that already exists in your area. One such growing project that would welcome your support is the Cherwell Collective's Harvest @ Home. You can find out more at www.cherwellcollective.com, by emailing cherwellcollective@gmail.com, or call 01865 817676. The [Good to Grow map](#) can help you find a community garden near you where you can start growing food and meet like-minded people.

5. Donate surplus food

Share any allotment or garden surplus with your local community food suppliers. To find community food suppliers local to you see the Good Food Oxford [Food Map](#).

6. Support community larders and foodbanks

Support your local community larder or foodbank with donations of food, money, or through volunteering.

Most supermarkets have an online button you can click to make a cash donation whilst shopping. To find out how to get involved with FareShare click [here](#).

7. Go to community cafés, lunch, and breakfast clubs

Get involved with or start your own community café. One community café that that could use your knowledge, time, and or financial support is Flo's Café. To find out how to get involved click [here](#). You could support or set up a lunch or breakfast club at your local school, community centre, or day centre.

8. Help with cooking and nutrition programmes/courses

Do you have good cooking skills and/or knowledge of nutrition? Good Food Oxford are looking to recruit volunteers to teach cooking classes based on the Good Food Cooking Toolkit in 2021. If you are interested in becoming a cookery tutor, find out more [on GFO's volunteering page](#).

9. Campaign for change and sign petitions

Sign up to support local and national campaigns to reduce food insecurity such as [#ENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY](#), the Trussell Trust's [HUNGER FREE FUTURE](#), [#5WeeksTooLong](#), [Bite back 2030](#), [Children's Food Campaign](#), [Oxford Living wage campaign](#), [Older people's food campaign](#), [Feeding Britain: A Hunger Free UK](#). Sign petitions on websites such as change.org and 38degrees relating to fair access to food and income security. If you are a social media user, post links to petitions and campaigns to raise awareness.

10. Organise fundraising and/or awareness raising events

This could be a small neighbourhood gathering, a community group coffee morning or a city or town centre event such as a foodless feast, abundance distribution drive, or live cooking sessions. Find out more about support and funding via Food for Life's [Get Togethers](#).

12. Read and share the food insecurity toolkit

If you would like to know how best to support people who are facing food insecurity, please visit the Good Food Oxford [Food insecurity toolkit](#).

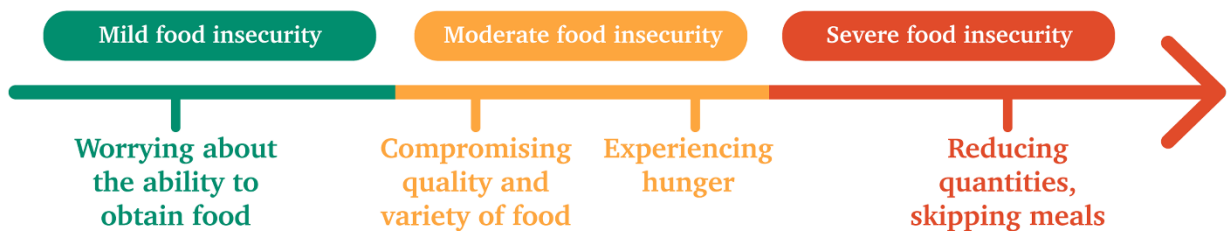
Introduction

With dreaming spires, a rich history, and one of the world’s leading universities, Oxfordshire has much to boast of. One of the strongest economies nationally (OxLEP, 2018), food poverty is not something commonly connected with an affluent county. However, Oxfordshire is very much a county of two tales – the rich can expect longer, more prosperous and healthier lives than the national average, whilst poor neighbours can expect to have poorer health outcomes and die younger than the national average. The people of Oxfordshire are uncomfortable with these stark inequalities and have mobilised in their thousands to support where they can. But more needs to be done.

This report details food insecurity and its commonly understood causes. It looks at the national and local picture of food insecurity, and its undeniable link to poverty. Additionally, this report explores solutions to food insecurity, what is working well locally, projects that have been successful in other areas, and addresses the structural changes needed to tackle this growing problem.

Food insecurity

In the UK, hunger isn’t about food. We have a plentiful supply. It’s about income, in which, nationally and locally, we have significant inequalities (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017, Sustain 2021). Food insecurity is anything from ‘**worrying about the ability to obtain food**’ to ‘**reducing quality and quantity of food and skipping meals entirely**’ (FAO, 2021).



FAO. Food insecurity experience scale

Food insecurity is not tracked or measured consistently across the UK. But the scale of the problem is huge. The following data points give us some sense of the scale of the problem:

8.4million people in the UK are struggling to afford to eat, of which 4.7million live in severely food insecure homes (FareShare, no date). Household food insecurity causes significant negative impacts on mental and physical health, social and economic wellbeing, and child development which decreases productivity and educational attainment, and increases costs to health and social services (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017).

Understanding food insecurity in Oxfordshire



Over **5,000** people regularly access **Community Food Services** across 76 locations in Oxfordshire. This includes foodbanks, community larders and community fridges (GFO, 2020).

We conservatively estimate that in

Oxfordshire **8-10%** of all households are currently experiencing **food insecurity**. This equates to approx.

55,000-69,000 people.



An estimated

15.3% of all adults in Oxfordshire find meeting monthly bills/commitments a heavy burden or are regularly in arrears with bills (LG

Inform, 2018). Equates to **85,725** adults. (JSNA, 2021)



In 2018, **8%** of all Oxfordshire households experienced fuel poverty (LG Inform, 2021) leading some of our residents to have to make difficult choices between heating or eating.



5 of Oxfordshire's MSOAs are amongst the nation's **20%** most income deprived areas.

6.3% of workers in the South-East earn below the national minimum wage. (ONS, 2020)



The average house price in

Oxfordshire is almost **26** times that of the **National Living Wage** and most rentals exceed monthly income of the National Living Wage.

Oxford is the least affordable city in the UK with regards to housing.

(Oxford City Council, 2020)



7 of Oxfordshire's MSOAs have higher rates of **child poverty** than the national benchmark. (JSNA, 2021.b)

In Oxfordshire from January 2020

10,127 children were known to be eligible for **Free School Meals**. (JNSA, 2021a)

After housing costs **21%** of children in Oxfordshire live in poverty. (JNSA, 2021a)



People affected by disability and long-term illness are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity. In 2019, in Oxfordshire there are an estimated

131,400 people living with a long-term illness or disability (JNSA, 2021) and **61,100** unpaid carers. (JSNA, 2019)

Groups with higher levels of food insecurity nationally:

- **Limited a lot by health problems/disability x5** compared to those with no health problems/disabilities
- **Severely clinically vulnerable x2** compared to average
- **Food sector workers x1.5** compared to non-food sector workers
- **BAME x2** compared to white British

(Food Foundation, 2021)

Food insecurity estimates for Oxfordshire

We conservatively estimate between **8-10% of households in Oxfordshire are experiencing food insecurity**. This equates to 20,000-25,000 households and **55,000-69,000** people. Of these we estimate that **6-7% of all households** are experiencing **moderate to severe food insecurity**. This equates to **15,500-18,000** people.

This estimate is based on the following data:

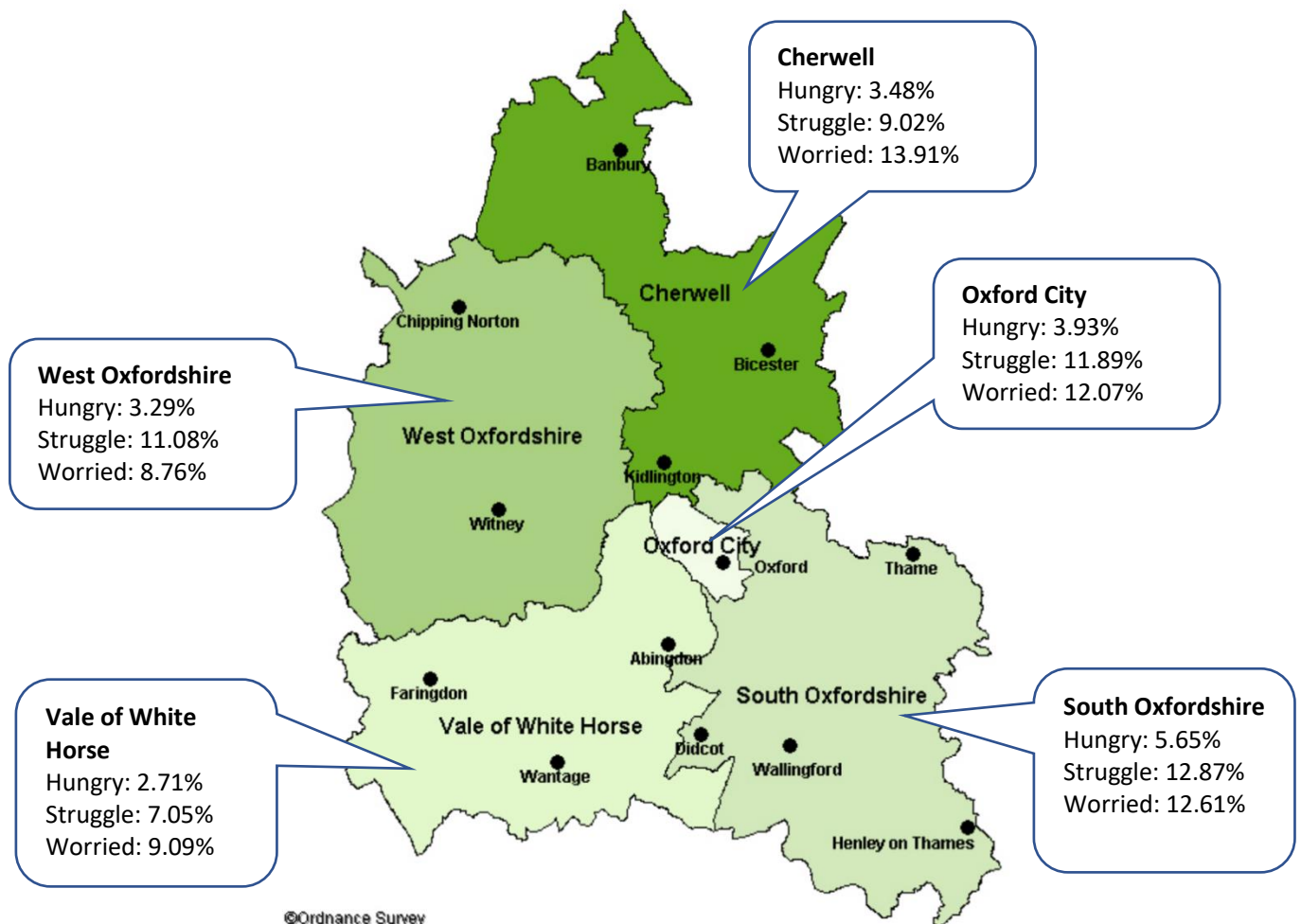
- *National data*: Food Foundation research (2021), which showed 9% of all adults in the UK experience food insecurity.
- *Regional data*: DWP and FRS (2021) calculated that 11% of households in the South-East of England experience food insecurity.
- Oxfordshire data:
 - 8% of households experience fuel poverty (LG Inform, 2021)
 - 6.3% of working age adults earn below the minimum wage (ONS, 2020)
 - 15.3% of adults in Oxfordshire struggle with bills (LG Inform, 2018).

Recent research published by the University of Sheffield (2021) supports these estimates, and provides a district-level breakdown of food insecurity in Oxfordshire in three categories:

- **Hungry**: defined as having skipped food for a whole day or more in the previous month, or indicated they were hungry but not eaten because they could not afford or get access to food.
- **Struggle**: defined as a positive response to having sought help accessing food; skipping or shrinking a meal; and/or giving a reason for not having enough food.
- **Worry**: defined as choosing 'very worried' or 'fairly worried' when asked about getting food.

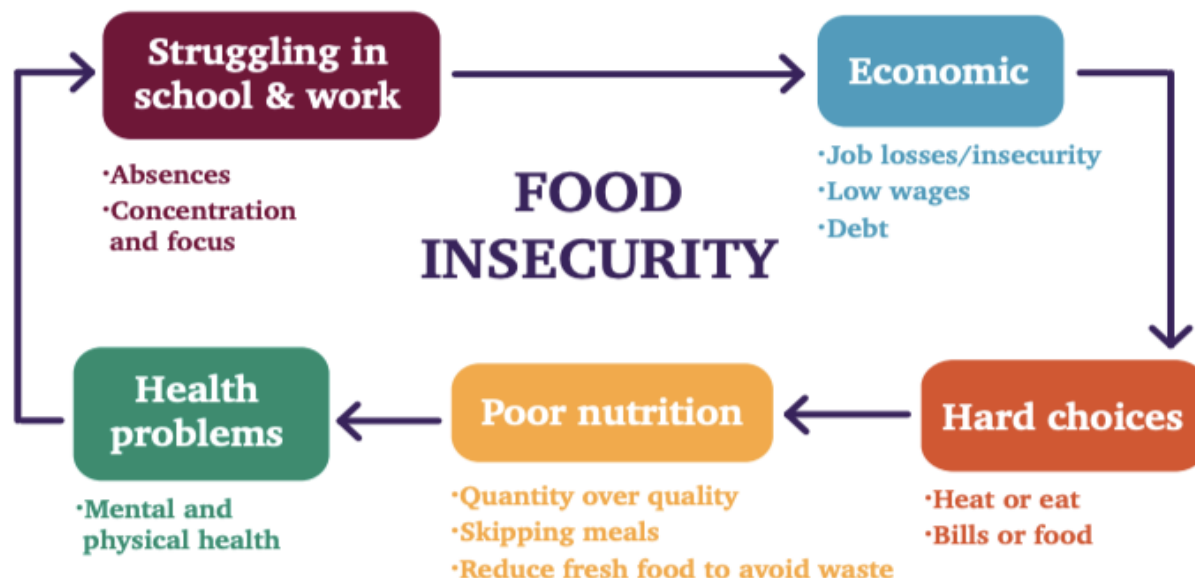
Food Insecurity at an Oxfordshire district level 2021

Adapted from Sheffield University research into UK local food insecurity of adults, January 2021 (Moretti, Whitworth and Blake, 2021)



The **high cost of living**, particularly housing, in Oxford City means that in order to “Eatwell” in line with government healthy eating guidance, a minimum income of £19,911 is required which exceeds the minimum wage, the real living wage and the Oxford living wage. Whilst average wages in Oxfordshire are high relative to the rest of the country, this is skewed by a small proportion of high earners, which masks the reality of the large number of those at the lower end of the income spectrum.

Causes of food insecurity



A picture of people who access food banks

The increasing demand for food aid in the UK suggests users are likely victims of recent socio-political and/or economic circumstances which **could affect any of us**. The impacts of austerity, zero-hour contracts, (Bowe et al, 2018) and, more recently, Covid19 have all driven up food bank usage. To date UK research findings point to there not being a single reason for foodbank attendance, but rather a **complex web** of reasons which, combined with an **adverse life event**, tips the scales from just about coping to being in need of external support (Prayogo, et al 2018). In having to request food aid, people find themselves in the **uncomfortable, shameful, and embarrassing** position of having to admit that they are struggling to meet **basic needs** (Bowe et al, 2018). During the Covid-19 pandemic one Oxfordshire resident with health problems found their inability to work reduced their access to food:

“...can’t work, nobody will employ someone in heart failure to work, that if they catch a virus they have to be off for weeks and weeks trying to get over it.”

(Interviewee from Mukondiwa, 2020)



The available literature on food bank usage can be difficult to interpret due to differing approaches to study design and focus. Additionally, a **lack of nationally standardised reporting** makes it difficult to obtain a clear picture of the extent of usage. The Trussell Trust in partnership with Oxford University attempted to address this gap in knowledge (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017). The report found that people most likely to use food banks are from **low-income** households with **single people, single parents** and people affected by **disability and poor health** being disproportionately vulnerable and relying on food bank support. Chronic low-income did not appear to lead to food bank usage as frequently as **changes in economic conditions** did, such as benefit changes/cessation or loss of a job/earnings. All households covered by this study had experienced **'deep income poverty'** in the month leading to their food bank use, a quarter of whom reported no income at all (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017 p29). The majority of respondents had experience of **unexpected expenses** and **rising living costs** in the previous three months with **housing costs** including utilities, heating or rent and rises in food prices being most commonly cited.

Food insecurity in Oxfordshire: a county of two tales

Due to the stigma and reservations many people have in attending a foodbank, foodbank use alone is a poor proxy to monitor food insecurity (Prayogo et al, 2018). This, coupled with a lack of standardised measurement of food insecurity both locally and nationally, means we have to look at other forms of deprivation to attempt to draw a picture of the extent of food insecurity in Oxfordshire. Indicators of food insecurity include low income, income after housing costs, malnourishment & obesity, poor mental and physical health, and other forms of poverty such as fuel poverty.

Deprivation as an indicator of food poverty in Oxfordshire

Five of the 86 MSOAs of Oxfordshire are amongst the nation's 20% most income deprived areas: Greater Leys, Banbury Ruscote, Barton, and Littlemore & Rose Hill. Seven of Oxfordshire's MSOAs have higher than the national benchmark child poverty (JSNA, 2021.b). Northfield Brook ward, South-East Oxford, is ranked within the 10% most deprived LSOA areas nationally. A further 16 areas were ranked in the 20% most deprived areas nationally. Oliver and Wagstaff (2019) captured the juxtaposition well, commenting that "wide-scale poverty doesn't fit with most people's view of Oxford, a city with one of the highest average salaries in the UK and a world-renowned university that has £6.1bn in total funds and endowments as of 2018. But living just a few miles from the wealthy colleges are those who find it hard to get by every day, and have radically different health prospects".

Physical & mental health and caring responsibilities

Overall, Oxfordshire as a county has a higher-than-England average life expectancy, however, **eight of Oxfordshire's MSOAs have a shorter life expectancy** than the England benchmark (JSNA, 2021b). In Oxfordshire, there are an estimated 131,400 people

living with a **long-term illness or disability** (JSNA, 2021), and 61,100 **unpaid carers** (JSNA, 2019). Figures from 2016-17 found that 56,800 people were diagnosed with depression (JNSA, 2018). These figures suggest that there is a significant number of people in Oxfordshire who, due to poor physical or mental health, or life circumstances, are vulnerable to requiring food aid.

Obesity can be a result of people experiencing food poverty or insecurity as this can lead to substituting better quality food with cheaper high energy foods or easily palatable foods (FAO, 2021). **7.3% of reception age children, 16.4% of children in year 6, and 20.7% of adults in Oxfordshire are classified as obese** (OCC & DDS, 2021). It is estimated that the **NHS spent £6.1 billion on overweight and obesity** related ill-health in 2014-15 nationally, with an estimated **wider societal cost of £27 billion** (PHE, 2017). For context, this spend is greater than that for the police, fire service, and judicial systems combined (PHE, 2017).

Affordability of healthy food

“Food is so expensive, very, very expensive, especially if you want to live a healthy life.”

Oxfordshire resident (Hansford & Friedman, 2015)

Once reasonable living costs are considered, a single person earning the government’s National Living Wage would only have £25.97 a week to spend on food, as opposed to the required £41.93 to afford the government’s recommended Eatwell Guide. Even on the Oxford Living Wage, that leaves a £5.24 deficit (Green, 2019). **Food price rises have a greater negative impact on people from low-income households** due to a larger proportion of their income being spent on food and no tolerance for deviation (DEFRA, 2020).

Access to affordable, healthy food is often an issue of transportation and time and can price people out. “On the issue of cheap groceries, take Oxford as an example. In an ideal world, people would be able to quickly access affordable shops, such as Lidl, Aldi, or cheap local sellers of fresh produce. Yet in this city, which has an incredibly stark wealth gap, the city centre caters for the wealthier with Marks & Spencer, and cheap supermarkets are only to be found in the outer suburbs” (Calder, no page). In 2015, Good Food Oxford along with the Student Consultancy at Oxford University, found significant differences in the cost and availability of fruit and vegetables in three wards in Oxford. The elevated cost of eating healthily without access to a larger supermarket was stark and highlighted both the disadvantage and disincentive to eating fresh food bought at local markets.

<i>Ward</i>	<i>Nearest store with fruit & vegetables</i>	<i>Nearest supermarket</i>
<i>Barton</i>	30p	18p
<i>Rose Hill</i>	35p	16p
<i>Blackbird Leys</i>	28p	12p

Table: Access to affordable food. (GFO, 2015)

Children

Approximately 10.3% of all Oxfordshire children under 16 live in poverty, which rises to 21% when housing costs are taken into account (JNSA, 2021a). This is measured through use of food support schemes. 10.9% of nursery and primary aged children and 9.2% of secondary aged children are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) (LGA, 2021). In Oxfordshire, from January 2020, there were 10,127 pupils “known to be eligible” for FSM with 7,616 “eligible pupils taking FSM” (JNSA, 2021a). Healthy Start Vouchers (HSVs) is a government backed scheme for pregnant women and families with a child under 4. There are 3,899 people/families eligible for this support in Oxfordshire though take up of the scheme in Oxfordshire is only 46%, which falls below the England average of 52% (JNSA, 2021a). This low-uptake presents an opportunity for relevant bodies – health visitors, schools, GPs, food services, and voluntary sector organisations – to promote the scheme and support families to access these extra resources. Training and resources need to be available to these organisations to ensure they understand the scheme, can support and advise families, and have the capacity to do so.

School holidays are recognised as a particular point of vulnerability for food insecurity (Holley et al, 2019). In a positive move, through the **Holiday Activities and Food** (HAF) grant scheme funded by the Department for Education (DfE), Oxfordshire County Council have commenced work identifying organisations that can offer school holiday activities combined with food to children across the county, focusing on children who are eligible for and claiming free school meals. Providers must be able to demonstrate that they will offer **healthy meals** (OCC, 2021a).

Fuel poverty as an indicator of food poverty in Oxfordshire

“If I ain’t got enough for the electric I go without a meal.”

Oxfordshire resident (Hansford & Friedman’s 2015)

Fuel poverty is when a household spends more than 10% of their income on fuel for heating, water, lighting, cooking, and appliances. In Oxfordshire in 2018, **8% of all households experienced fuel poverty** (LG Inform, 2021) leading some residents having to make impossible **choices between heating or eating**.

People from ethnic minority backgrounds

In January 2021, 20% of BAME households in the UK had experienced food insecurity over the previous six months, compared with 9% of white British household (Food Foundation, 2021).

There were a total of 107,000 Oxfordshire residents from an ethnic minority background (other than white British) in 2011, equivalent to 16% of the population (JNSA, 2018a). The majority of the ethnic minority population in Oxfordshire is based in urban areas of Oxford and Banbury (JNSA, 2019a). The 2011 Census survey showed that 5,500 people in Oxfordshire could not speak English or speak English well, which can obviously hinder the ability to access health, food, social, and other services (JNSA, 2018a).

Identity and nationality can affect people's **food-related lived experience** when facing food insecurity and/or accessing food aid.

Aamaal and family are Turkish and have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). They found themselves facing food insecurity while Aamaal applied for jobs: "I passed the interviews and everything went really well but when I sent my, like, visa document, when I sent my passport I was rejected because uhm so it's like hard to find a job as well even though you want to work uhm even though I had two kids..." (Aamaal from Mukondiwa, 2020)

For people who have No Recourse to Public Funds (unable to receive government assistance) foodbanks are often the only option for accessing food. Whilst foodbanks do their best to provide food that meets dietary requirements, they are dependent on surplus food and donations. Aamaal explained why it is easier to ask for a vegetarian box rather than a Halal food box as she doesn't "expect them (the food suppliers) to send any Halal food, to be honest, because it's a huge amount of work and then it would add some extra burden for them to-to like uhm create boxes and uhm only for like Muslims or whatever so that was quite normal... With the Halal food it's already hard to find Halal food here in the – in Oxford because Tesco doesn't sell any Halal food unless you go to the Tesco in Cowley and there's some like shops in Cowley where you can find Halal food. So, it's already difficult so I wasn't expecting SOFEA to provide any Halal food to be honest" (Aamaal from Mukondiwa, 2020).

Mukondiwa (2020) suggests that Aamaal felt her and her family's needs as undeserving of being met, and that from the start of the pandemic, when services prioritised efficient service delivery, dignity for families such as Aamaal's was compromised.

Spotlight: Food experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities during COVID-19 in Oxfordshire

We listened to people in Oxfordshire

In late 2020 and early 2021, Good Food Oxford hosted two focus groups with participants from BAME communities to listen to their experiences of accessing food services during COVID-19. Participants had a range of nationalities including Iraqi, Iranian, Algerian, South African, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Syrian and Afghani. Participants had been invited to attend through partner organisations including The Oxford Living Wage Campaign, African Families in the UK, Oxford Community Action, Banbury Mosque, Refugee Resource, Iraqi Women Art and War, and SYRCOX. The sessions were facilitated by Jabu Nala-Hartley, Chair of the Oxford Living Wage Campaign.

Food related issues faced by participants' communities

People experienced feelings of shame and stigma using foodbanks: what people wanted was food to be more affordable, and to have sufficient income to buy their own food and make their own choices.

Low unstable incomes lead to hard choices: choosing quantity over quality; eating one big meal a day.

Healthy, culturally appropriate food is expensive in Oxford: buying culturally appropriate foods such as halal is much more expensive in Oxford compared with other cities. People even travel to

London or Birmingham to stock up on basics. A whole sheep costs £37 in Birmingham, but £80 in Oxford.

Food parcels are often culturally inappropriate and lead to food waste: Participants were extremely grateful for emergency food support they received and acknowledged that the balance of foods in parcels had improved since the initial lockdown. However, people continued to receive foods that they were not accustomed to eating, such as tinned soups and beans, and some of this went unused. Participants did not feel as though they could refuse the free food or express preferences.

Understanding food labels presented difficulties for some and contributed to food waste: Participants were not always clear on the differences between ‘use-by’ and ‘best before’ dates. Where food labels were not in a language that the participants could read, this created stress and uncertainty and contributed to more food waste as people naturally erred on the side of caution.

Experiences of oppression and legal insecurity left many hesitant to engage with formal services: Many participants knew of community members reluctant to access services – food, advice, health – due to a mistrust of formal services. Where support was delivered via trusted community members it was far more openly received.

Opportunities for more positive food experiences for BAME communities

Foodbanks provide a valuable resource for many participants – knowing that food is available removes stress and enables people to focus on other areas of their life. However, allowing choice of items would reduce waste and improve dignity.

Food is a connector and a way for communities from different cultural backgrounds to come together to share food. Many focus group participants spoke about the value of shared experiences they had around food during COVID-19 – how supporting each other with food had brought a deeper sense of community. People expressed a desire to build on this foundation and socialise around food when in-person events resume.

“What if we could have a huge celebration where everyone cooks different dishes and share in a big party – like a celebration of diversity and life”

(Focus group participant)

Community-led services can build trust, social capital, and deliver culturally appropriate services for BAME communities. Trust was a huge factor in enabling people to engage with food and other support services during COVID-19. Where services were delivered by a friendly face, speaking a familiar language, and being part of the same community, people felt able to access services they needed.

“The message is loud and clear-that to build access, trust and create culturally appropriate services-communities want to see support designed and delivered with their input, within community settings, and building on community networks” (Oxford Community Action, 2021).

People were keen to expand their cooking skills and share these within their community. There were mixed levels of confidence in cooking skills. Some participants felt confident in cooking food

from their own culture but had little knowledge of other cultures and were keen to learn more. One participant commented that her children wanted a Sunday roast because that was what their friends ate but she did not know how to prepare this.

There is demand for more healthy, culturally appropriate food at affordable prices available locally. People did not want to travel to get the food they needed but affordability of healthy food was the biggest driver for many. Local growing projects that could engage communities in producing their own food, as well as providing the types of food people want such as rice, yams, herbs, and spices, would be welcome additions.

Actionable points for tackling food insecurity among BAME communities in Oxfordshire:

- Promote and support food events that are community-led and engage communities in sharing food and cultural food experiences
- Develop the Good Food Cooking Toolkit in a range of languages
- Support the development of growing projects that engage communities and produce the crops that people want
- Ensure that Cooking Tutor Training Programmes reach a range of communities and are designed around the needs of these communities
- In future focus groups, invite participants to bring someone to help with language barriers where needed and give more time to enable participants to translate for each other

Tackling food insecurity in Oxfordshire

The people of Oxfordshire say 'no' to food poverty

In May 2020, Good Food Oxford identified **100 community food services** operated by 74 organisations. According to the local ward profiles available on Oxford City Council website, on average **27% of Oxfordshire's residents provided unpaid help** in the last 12 months.

During the pandemic the number of residents who volunteered to support their community rose to approximately 15,000.

These figures suggest that Oxfordshire residents are uncomfortable with friends and neighbours struggling and are prepared to take action to address it.

Food access map

The food access map has been a valuable resource to members of the public, volunteers, and frontline workers to signpost people to services near to them. The map includes summary information about services offered, eligibility criteria, opening times, etc. Such signposting tools have proved vital during the pandemic with the map receiving 9,554 page views from 2,723 unique users between July 2020-March 2021.

The screenshot shows a web interface for 'Food Services in Oxfordshire'. The main map displays numerous red location markers across the region. A popup window for 'Witney & West Oxfordshire Foodbank' is open, providing the following details:

- Address:** Cottsway House, Heynes Place, Avenue Two, Witney, OX28 4YG
- Website:** <https://witney.foodbank.org.uk/>
- Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/witneyfoodbank>
- Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/witneyfoodbank>
- Contact:** —
- Tel:** 01993 890 000 / 07949 442342
- Email:** info@witney.foodbank.org.uk
- COVID-19 Update:** For updates check the website.*** Free delivery for those unable to visit the foodbank. Requires Red Voucher - please see www.witney.foodbank.org.uk
- Opening times:**
 - Mon 10:00-1:00
 - Tue 10:00-1:00
 - Wed 10:00-1:00
 - Thu 10:00-1:00
 - Fri 10:00-1:00
 - Sat Closed
 - Sun Closed
- Disabled access?** No

A mixed model of community food services

Oxfordshire has a range of community food services (CFS) providing free or subsidised food, across all districts, providing access to food and essential supplies for a wide range of residents (source GFO, May 2020). Many offer home delivery, particularly for those self-isolating due to COVID-19 or who are house-bound due to transport, health or mobility issues.

	Definition	West	Cherwell	South	Vale	City	Total no. of services*
Emergency Foodbank	Access limited to particular communities of need. May require referral from another organisation	7	9	6	6	11	39
Community Larder	Typically a membership scheme. Members receive regular food supplies for minimal cost - food is donated, fees cover operational costs	3	3	3	1	4	14
Community Fridge or Cupboard	Typically no charges, open to all to take or donate food, helps those in need and reduces food waste	2	3	2	3	3	13
Community Kitchen/ Prepared Meal Service	Typically provide meals for communities with identified needs	0	2	0	0	25	27
Other	May include community shop and other settings where food is shared e.g. growing projects	1	0	0	0	6	7
Total		13	17	11	10	49	100

Foodbanks

Foodbanks have been vital to supporting people in desperate need. Foodbank volunteers are often the first friendly face people encounter when in crisis, and they offer much more than food supplies – they also help **link people with other organisations** that could be instrumental in helping them out of crisis.

However, the role of foodbanks has become increasingly politicised (Bowe et al, 2018), with some fearing that the need for foodbanks is **becoming normalised in the UK**, and that this normalisation could prevent necessary action identifying **root causes of food poverty** and the implementation of legislation and policy needed to prevent it (Butler & Sherwood, 2020).

Policy makers are consistently reminded by UK food charities that foodbanks cannot be solely responsible for filling the gaps left by **insufficient wages, nor are they the social safety net** people need to manage in times of crisis (Marshall, 2020). The Trussell Trust, which supports more than 1200 foodbank centres in the UK, campaigns for an end to the need for foodbanks (Trussell Trust, 2021). Their five-year strategy ‘Hunger Free Future’ is ambitious in its aim to end the need for foodbanks in the UK.

Open access foodbanks, such as Oxford Mutual Aid, do not require a referral and are open to all community members in need, with no questions asked. Limited access emergency foodbanks typically require referral from a partner agency such as Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) or the local authority, and may restrict the number of times a person can access services without further referral or a support plan in place.

“We need to get rid of food banks. We need change – a real living wage, benefits that reflect the cost of living, more social housing. Poverty does not discriminate – it can and will single you out through no fault of your own. We need to bring people together and think about whether this is the life we want – and how we can change it. It’s the community that can influence change.”

Anieta, a working mum forced to use a foodbank (Trussell Trust, 2021a)

Whilst it is evident that many of us would like to see the end of the need for foodbanks, many still rely on their services to get by. Considering the current picture in the UK, it is difficult to imagine surviving without foodbanks. Current systemic flaws in the UK have forced people into poverty and hunger at a growing rate and have increased the need for emergency food aid. We simply can’t manage without foodbanks.

Community larders

An alternative way of accessing **affordable food**, which simultaneously **reduces food waste**, are community larders, fridges, and pantries. A **community larder** is essentially a food club that offers low-cost food to its members. Anyone from the community can join, as larder membership is not means-tested. There is usually a joining or annual fee, and a weekly charge (Food for Charities, no date). The lack of means testing or referral is intended to **reduce the stigma** often associated with food aid or foodbanks (The Press and Journal, 2020). For the fee paid, you can typically choose a certain number of items and receive **free fruit and vegetables**. Community larders frequently offer **more than just food**. For example, The Leys Community Larder, run from Blackbird Leys Community Centre has a café, children’s play area, and several events run throughout the year (GFO, 2020a). Whilst the benefits of community larders are clear, one possible downside for people in need of emergency support is the joining and weekly cost. A quick fix would be local authority support to cover the initial fee and a week or two of the ongoing costs, with a view to supporting longer-term self-sufficiency.

Additional benefits of community larders and foodbanks include staff and volunteers **developing relationships** with visitors, which can enable **informal food education, tailored recipe advice, understanding of preferences,** and **support accessing services** where needed.

For Scarlett, the community support from Cherwell Larder in the form of vegetable grow boxes helped her daughter's autism and sense of independence. She commented that "where before we had trouble trying to get her to eat vegetables because she didn't like 'em. With the autism too, it's really hard to explain like 'you need to eat fresh veg'. So, literally getting her to go out there (to their grow boxes outside of their house as seen in Figure 1. and 2.) and say to her 'right is there any carrots that are ready? Is there any tomatoes that are ready to be picked?' She can see herself. She uhm likes going out there and it's like also given her a bit of independence 'cause she has to water them every day otherwise they'll die" (Scarlett, from Mukondiwa, 2020).

What can be done nationally to reduce food poverty/food insecurity?

Most people in the UK are deeply uncomfortable with friends and neighbours struggling to afford to eat. Nine out of 10 people agree that hunger is a problem in the UK (Trussell Trust, 2019) and more than 40,000 people volunteer at foodbanks across the nation (Trussell Trust, 2021).

In order to tackle food poverty, we must first tackle poverty by:

- ◇ Revising the benefits system;
- ◇ Improving time frames for accessing benefits and end the 5+week wait for universal credit (Trussell Trust, 2019);
- ◇ Reviewing or ideally scrapping, the sanction process;
- ◇ Removing the benefit cap and two child limit (Marshall, 2020);
- ◇ Changing the assessment process and criteria for claiming disability benefits;
- ◇ Paying fair carer's allowances for people/family members who provide care (Carers UK, 2019);
- ◇ Restoring the value of benefits to make up for losses experienced under the benefits freeze (Trussell Trust, 2019).

Central government funding for local crisis support – Allowing local authorities greater autonomy in distributing support that residents would best benefit from.

Fair employment – End zero-hour contracts and implement a Real Living Wage (Marshall, 2020 & Green, 2019)

Measuring and monitoring – Develop a national measurement of UK food insecurity, collect, and publicise annual figures

Legislation, policy, and guidance – Enshrine the Right to Food in UK domestic law and implement policies and develop guidance to safeguard UK people from the indignity relating to hunger.

Cash-first approach

Taking a cash first approach to supporting people in need of food aid allows them to buy **food with dignity and choice** (Marshall, 2020). Cash can be more efficient to deliver, and has capacity to **stimulate local markets** better than vouchers and food provision (Mikulak, 2018). It also provides people with the **autonomy** to decide what the most pressing issue is and resolve it, which

for some might be the need for fresh goods, whilst for others it might be the need to pay for electricity so they can cook and heat their home.

A strong body of evidence from emergency situations globally concludes that cash-responses to crises – providing unconditional cash transfers rather than food and materials – have a more beneficial outcome for diets and household savings, as well as being far more cost-effective to implement (Doocy and Tapis, 2016).

Oxford City Council helped individuals (by referral) and support groups through Covid-19 Support Grant (CSG). For individuals in need, the City Council offered support focussed on the **provision of food and fuel** with food vouchers, gas and electricity payments, and cooking appliances. In order to claim the support, Oxford residents needed to contact local advice centres for a referral. Small grants were also available to locally operating groups (up to £2000) and city-wide organisations (up to £5000). Thirteen organisations were awarded this grant including OX4 Free Food Crew, Syrian Sisters, and Oxford Mutual Aid (Oxford City Council, 2021a).

Oxfordshire County Council, alongside the city and district councils and in partnership with Citizen's Advice, offered Covid crisis support to families and individuals struggling to find money to eat or heat homes. By March 2021, this fund had supported over 5,000 families across the county (OCC, 2021).

What can we do to reduce food insecurity in Oxfordshire?

Principles for tackling food insecurity in Oxfordshire

1. **Acknowledge food insecurity, establish shared measurements**, then measure and monitor to build a local evidence base.
2. **Be informed by academic research, local data, and lived experiences**. Value **experts by experience** and the voices of those affected by food insecurity. Use this to reflect on and guide development of services and provision alongside data-driven solutions.
3. Recognise the **systemic, root causes of food insecurity** as external to the individuals experiencing it. **Actively seek deeper understanding about** changing social, economic, and political systems and services, and the needs and desires of those impacted by them.
4. **Listen, reflect, adjust, adapt**. Volunteers and frontline workers have unique knowledge to improve understanding of what is working and what is not in current systems and processes –value and act on this creativity and insight.
5. Recognise that a **mixed model of food support** is needed to meet the diverse needs of communities.
6. **Promote dignity and ensure nutritional value**. Ensure support is delivered in a non-stigmatising and dignified way, providing choice and upholding autonomy. Ensure fair access to food with good nutritional value. Consider the cultural appropriateness of services and provision. Provide welcoming experiences to people of all backgrounds to take part in forming and using services, community groups, and projects that support access to food.

7. **Share resources and knowledge to ensure both fair access and to reduce the climate impact of services.** Develop and promote ways of working including tools and systems that enable fair, inclusive access to food and economic wellbeing. Share resources, tools, and knowledge with partners to enable holistic support, avoid duplication, and minimise food waste and miles.
8. **Focus resources.** Employ effective and evidence-based solutions, and apply those to groups and individuals known to be most vulnerable to food insecurity. Acknowledge that 'simple' ways of allocating resources – such as means testing - are not always realistic or just, as individual needs and situations are complicated.
9. **Promote a 'cash-first' approach.** Acknowledge that food poverty is an issue of income. **Providing emergency cash grants** is not only the most efficient use of resources, but also promotes dignity, autonomy, stimulates the local economy, and reduces food waste. One element of this is campaigning for an **Oxfordshire Living Wage** and **National Minimum Income**.
10. **Commit to raising awareness.** Campaign for a fair and just food system for all. Take local evidence to central government. Lobby central government to measure and monitor food insecurity and to adopt legislation and policy to prevent it. Challenge discriminatory and oppressive practice, policy, and legislation. Work with initiatives, research organisations, and lobby groups who have experience in tackling food insecurity and systemic food problems. Support policies and legislation that seek to uphold the right to food and economic wellbeing.

Oxfordshire's food poverty action plan-pledges and commitments to action

There is some fantastic work already happening in Oxfordshire to prevent food poverty and a host of organisations and individuals pledging to go even further. Over 40 organisations and individuals have pledged more than 65 actions in a commitment to tackle food poverty.

The pledges are structured around three key areas: emergency provision; building resilience; preventing food poverty.

Table 1: Framework for food poverty pledges mapped against three key themes

Table 1 indicates the types of actions that individuals or organisations could take in each of the three key areas. The detailed pledges of individual organisations are in the following section.

	Emergency provision	Building resilience	Preventing food poverty
Signposting	Tools and systems to support access to food , e.g., maps, directories, leaflets. The provision of such information should be available in a variety of formats to ensure inclusivity and reduce discrimination on the grounds of language, digital capabilities/poverty, literacy level, etc.	Wrap around support-cohesive approach (Sustain webinar, 2021). Financial, debt, and broader wellbeing services should be accessible to people experiencing food poverty. Local authority benefit support officers who work alongside other local agencies should ensure a holistic approach to supporting families and individuals in need (Sustain webinar, 2021).	Measure, monitor, and report uptake of support services e.g. foodbank attendance, community larder membership, Healthy Start Vouchers, school meals and Free School Meals, and advice services
Coordination, cooperation and knowledge sharing	Share resources, avoiding duplication, identify gaps e.g., network meetings, collaborations between food, advice services and councils . Make good use of local resources such as volunteers and existing services, of which there was a ‘huge upswell’ in response during the pandemic (Oxfordshire all in, 2020).	Develop systems to capture and share data, knowledge, and experience.	Improve understanding of the scale of food insecurity through measuring, monitoring and reporting . Adopt a standardised approach to measuring food poverty in the county.
Ensuring dignity	Ensure support is delivered in a non-stigmatising and dignified way. Where possible, providing choice and upholding	Provide choice and uphold autonomy through increasing affordable access to good food through, e.g. healthy	Support programmes that ensure fair income such as Living Wage. Adopt an Oxford/shire living wage that ensures people are paid enough to meet the criteria of the governments Eat Well Guide without having to

	Emergency provision	Building resilience	Preventing food poverty
	autonomy. Culturally appropriate food, systems, and communications.	community food retail options, encourage home/community growing.	compromise other basic needs (Green, 2019). Challenge discriminatory practices, policies and legislation such as No Recourse to Public Funds, benefit cuts, and caps, sanctions, and elevated thresholds for services. Put pressure on housing developers to provide a greater percentage of affordable homes . Improve mental health provision to assist those more vulnerable to deprivation due to difficulties in maintaining employment, housing, and social connections (JSNA, 2018).
Nutritional value	Seek to improve the overall nutritional value of emergency food aid. Maximise the provision of fresh and quality tinned foods where possible.	Engage communities in healthy eating through supporting cooking skills, improving uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers (HSV) , free school meals, and school meals more broadly. Make funding applications to support free meal schemes, community growing schemes , and establish and increase capacity of community larders through e.g. refrigerated transport.	Consistent messaging about healthy food , availability of healthy food options to all communities, particularly near schools. Encourage housing associations and development agencies to dedicate space to community growing schemes .
Raising awareness	Ensure that the realities of food poverty are widely shared and understood. Service provision is promoted through a variety of mediums.	Through education and training , ensure frontline staff and volunteers understand the causes of food insecurity and its links to other types of poverty.	Highlight the challenges of multiple disadvantage and work in a cohesive manner to address these. Take local evidence to national decision makers . Lobby central government to measure food insecurity nationally.

Live pledges from Oxfordshire

Emergency provision

Signposting

To continue supporting and advising the families in need. We will measure effectiveness and reach by establishing a system that can be used by all government agencies.

Carterton Community Foodbank

Signposting and referring people in need to appropriate local food agencies and support organisations, recording the numbers of people referred, and evidencing the underlying reasons for the need.

Citizens Advice

We pledge to use waste food from food suppliers. Key getting the waste and surplus food.

North Oxfordshire Community Foodbank

Co-ordination, co-operation, and knowledge sharing

We are supporting people to build the connectivity around the community. We also show that the community can play the main role to support people during any crisis.

Our food service helps people in need to not feel that they are alone and provide a quality food parcel based on their needs every week.

Syrian Community Oxfordshire SYRCOX

We aim to continue to provide a service to clients referred to us by local agencies, churches and individuals who share our concern to reduce food poverty. At the same time, we will act on the vision statements provided by the Trussell Trust by strengthening our links to other local services. We aim to continue to provide an inclusive approach to welcoming our clients, recognising the diversity of our client base, and avoiding stigmatisation of individuals. We will continue to offer food packages which can be tailored to meet individual needs. Our parcels will continue to include such extras as may be available, e.g. toiletries, household supplies, and pet food. We aim to strengthen our links with local networks of support and explore other ways in which the local community can be supported by widening the remit of the foodbank. This will include exploring the development of the clothes bank, and other local support networks as may be offered through the local Churches. We hope to engage more fully with our volunteers to inform them of the Trussell Trust approach towards food poverty and poverty in general.

Abingdon Foodbank

Building and maintaining strong relationships with local food agencies with regular communication and collaboration.

Citizens Advice

Ensuring dignity

Whilst we began in response to the pandemic, OMA recognises that food poverty in Oxford existed before Covid-19 and that there is an ongoing need for emergency parcel and meal support. We also recognise that multiple barriers exist to accessing support, and that statutory provisions may not meet every need. We therefore pledge to continue our emergency food response and to ensure that our service is always free, accessible and non-means tested. We also pledge to build

this into a longer term, sustainable model. To ensure that we can be a long-term source of sustainable and inclusive support, we aim to improve our fundraising strategy by applying for more grant funding opportunities as well as working to increase our individual monthly donations.

Oxford Mutual Aid

We pledge to involve our food recipients in the choice of food they receive and in food delivery. We will measure the effectiveness of this by tallying the number of informal questions about food wishes; and number of times food recipients involved in food delivery.

Food for Charities

We aim to provide high-quality food to organisations who deal directly with those in food insecurity. We want people to have dignity of choice, and be treated equally to those who can afford to buy local and organic produce - this should not be an exclusive club. We will leverage our network and sourcing to ensure that good, local, fresh, high-quality fruit and vegetables are sourced not only for customers, but for organisations who deliver food aid. We communicate closely with organisations who deliver food to those who need it, to ensure that we are providing what they need or want and to modify appropriately.

Cultivate Oxfordshire (local food hub)

We provide emergency food parcels for those with insufficient means to purchase food. We pledge to provide an emergency food parcels, containing enough nutritional food items for 3/4 days on receipt of a referral from an independent agency working with the family in need of food. Due to COVID this is provided by a twice weekly delivery service. A 5 day collection service will resume after the end of lockdown.

The Community Emergency Foodbank

Ensuring dignity & nutritional value

We are committed to providing dignified and flexible access to emergency food, by offering home cooked nutritious meals in the OX4 area. We pledge to continue to offer people the chance to state their dietary requirements (lactose free, halal etc) when signing up for meals, as well as well as the opportunity to choose whether to have their meals delivered or come to collect, according to each household's unique preferences and circumstances.

OX4 Food Crew

Nutritional value

We pledge to provide fresh, healthy food to people experiencing homelessness and vulnerable housing. To measure the effectiveness and reach we will measure the number of pieces of fruit, bread, eggs being delivered.

Food for Charities

We pledge to deliver home cooked, nutritious meals to those most affected by Covid and unable to access food. Number of meals distributed (42,500 to date). To measure effectiveness, we gather feedback on how they are enjoyed and the difference that they have made.

The Branch Trust

We want the community to feel at ease accessing our food larder when they most need it. Having a range of food produce is important to meet certain diets, allergies and nutritional needs. The larder is available to the community Monday to Friday. This includes families with children who may choose not to buy fresh fruit/ vegetables as part of their supermarket shop, possibly due to financial hardship. Having a healthy balanced diet is important for everyone. We also provide emergency food parcels (which we can delivered) to people that for example are living in emergency accommodation, experiencing financial difficulties or unable to access a supermarket.

Our food larder is open to the community 5 days a week. Anyone can access the larder without a voucher or additional information. We hope that this reduces stigma around accessing food banks/ larders.

The Sunshine Centre (community group and food larder)

Raising awareness

Identifying and supporting pockets of unmet need within the county by analysing referrals and taking steps to address gaps in awareness, referrals and provision of support.

Citizens Advice

West Oxfordshire District Council pledges to raise awareness of all the community food services available locally to support people in need of emergency food provision and continue to signpost residents to finance, debt and broader wellbeing services. We aim to create a deeper understanding of food poverty and its effects within communities by offering GFO food poverty training to all staff.

West Oxfordshire District Council

Good Food Oxford will continue to update and promote the Food Access map to ensure that those in need of free or subsidised food, or those looking to reduce food waste know where to find it near to them. We will measure the reach and effectiveness by monitoring the number of times the map is accessed.

Good Food Oxford

Widening access to advice and support through Citizens Advice's countywide Benefits in Place pilot.

Citizens Advice

Building resilience

Coordination, co-operation, and knowledge sharing

We pledge to decrease our food wasting and share our food with others when it is possible.

Cooking what is available at home and be creative with our Iraqi cuisine.

Iraq women Art and War (IWAU)

Good Food Oxford will train 30 volunteer cooking tutors across Oxfordshire (6 in each District). who in turn will support local people to engage in cooking and learn new skills using GFO Cooking Framework and Cooking Toolkit. 24 of these will be trained by September 2021 with a further 6 to be trained once we have identified a facilitator and venue. The effectiveness and reach of this intervention will be monitored through attendance at the sessions and testimonials.

Good Food Oxford

We pledge to continue to cooperate with other local groups, including the Oxford City Farm and the Oxford Food Hub to source food and reduce food waste. We also pledge to increase our cooperation and reach out to other local organisations who are combating food poverty in the area.

Florence Park Community Centre

Good Food Oxford pledges to convene regular meetings of the Community Food Networks to enable the voices of community food services to be heard by councils, enable sharing of best practice, improve efficient use of resources and collective problem solving. We will measure the reach and effectiveness of these meetings by monitoring numbers attending and actions being achieved.

Good Food Oxford

Ensuring dignity

We are committed to building food resilience in the local community by offering free cooking for health and wellbeing courses for a variety of groups. We will ensure our courses are adapted to the unique needs of certain groups unique needs (e.g., Parents or Vulnerably Housed) to ensure increased autonomy and dignity throughout.

OX4 Food Crew

We are committed to building food resilience in our local community and being responsive to emergent needs, both long and short term. We will use community led research to ensure we are being responsive and adapting our working in collaboration with the local community.

OX4 Food Crew

We aim to support local residents currently accessing food banks to transition into use of the Community Larder; upholding their dignity and choice by offering discretionary (free) larder memberships for a fixed period before they progress to a paid membership when they're ready and able. We'll do this by collaborating with the local food bank, ensuring good communication and signposting, and listening to food bank users and larder members about their needs. We will monitor the number of discretionary memberships offered and accepted, and how many of those progress to becoming paid members.

The Berin Centre (community larder)

Nutritional value

We are also adding to our meal delivery a commitment to include simple home recipes to help educate our meal recipients on what they can easily achieve themselves (this will be implemented in the next couple of weeks). We will send these out each week and after a period of 6 weeks will ask for feedback from recipients as to effectiveness and suitability.

Florence Park Community Centre

Good Food Oxford pledges to promote increases in vegetable consumption through our Switch Up your Lunch campaign. We will monitor the effectiveness of our campaign by gathering pledges from those who wish to Switch Up their Lunch.

Good Food Oxford

Bringing local Abingdon groups together to improve people's health and wellbeing

We pledge to enable the distribution of recipe kits (food & instructions) to a local school (196 pupils, 27% FSM, 35% on pupil premium). This will provide a meal and a learning opportunity through an educational activity. Teachers may use the activity as a talking point/lesson base after half term. Subjective assessments of learning could be collated to establish effectiveness.

Healthy Abingdon (community group)

Good Food Oxford will support the rollout of Play:Full Holiday Activities programme to ensure that all children can enjoy holiday enrichment activities and healthy food. We will make Play:Full resources available to all holiday activity providers who want to make their activities Play:Full. We will establish the effectiveness and reach by reporting numbers of children attending Play:Full activities in each district.

Good Food Oxford

We pledge to share out surplus food from local supermarkets and businesses so that it is used rather than thrown away, and work with allotment holders and gardeners to share surplus locally grown fruit and veg. This will give those in food poverty access to fresh produce (as this is not available via our local Food Bank) and reduce food waste in our community. We will measure

effectiveness by recording number of new visitors (so we have a total of fridge users) and weight of surplus food shared out.

Sustainable Wantage

We pledge to work with parents to ensure those who are eligible for free school meals have access to healthy, hot food each day. Build trusting relationships with families.

Barton Park Primary School

Raising awareness

We aim to work with Local Authority to embed more food production within the public realm. We will do this through networking with public and private landowners.

Edge (food production education, CPD, and design of food gardens)

We pledge to empower and encourage families to cook and eat together. We will monitor the number of families joining our Branch Out and Cook course and using our cooking bags with ingredients and recipes.

The Branch Trust

We pledge to develop our outreach to the local community by creating a new role within Oxford Food Hub (to start summer 2021). We aim to use this opportunity to educate people about food waste whilst also improving the support we give to our existing charities. We will review and report on the outcomes of this project and report to the CFN at regular intervals.

Oxford Food Hub

We aim to raise awareness of healthy tooth friendly foods and drink by promoting and increasing the local uptake of Healthy Start vouchers. We will include specific information and signposting to all professionals, who work with children and families, who we train over the next 12 months. We will create a CDS branded video highlighting tooth friendly food and drink and how families can support this with the Healthy Start Vouchers. The video will be hosted on our YouTube channel and shared with our partners, stakeholders and via our social media platforms. We will be able to report back the number of professionals who will have been signposted to in training. WE will be able to offer data on how many views our video has and also gain engagement data from partners and SM.

Community Dental Services

Preventing food poverty

Signposting

Our plan aims to reduce levels of both long-term food poverty (“household food insecurity”) and of crisis or ‘emergency’ food poverty including food bank use. There is a focus on tackling the underlying causes of food poverty – not just picking up the pieces. In addition, we are using landfill supermarket waste to help with food poverty. We will measure effectiveness and reach through research and record current climate.

Banbury mosque (Green Dome Trust)

We aim to develop the possibilities for signposting clients for additional support in in order to achieve independence in the long term. The opportunity to discuss in greater detail the individual needs of clients and ways of helping them to a better quality of life will be explored, by volunteers specifically identified for this task. Support for the volunteers, and recognition of specific expertise in this area will be an important part of this process. Feedback from clients will also be useful in progressing this, and time to carry out feedback surveys needs to be built into the Foodbank process. A biannual survey of clients to receive feedback will be instigated.

Abingdon Foodbank

I will give advice, raising awareness and choice to accessing community food resources

I will update our service directory of community food resources on a weekly basis and review on a 6-monthly basis, to improve signposting effecting to community food resources.

Emma Fuller/ Lead Social Prescriber Oxford City Social Prescribing Service (PCN collaboration)

We pledge to increase the number of community larder members as well as continuing to support our current members, both with food and additional wrap around services.

The measurements we will take to establish effectiveness and reach we will monitor membership numbers, number of wrap around services that the community larder hosts e.g. Cafe, CA, debt counselling, second hand school uniform sales etc.

Cotteslowe Community Larder

We pledge to take steps to offer our clients basic supplies on a regular basis to supplement their weekly household needs (primarily food) and to signpost further support from other agencies and the local community. We monitor by ensuring regular contact with clients and recording needs and changes in situation. Because we are such a small organisation, we are able to have more personal contact with our clients.

Springwater Good Neighbour Foodbank

Coordination, co-operation, and knowledge sharing:

West Oxfordshire District Council supports the development of a Food Strategy for the county/city/district in partnership with Good Food Oxford. In developing the strategy, we will collaborate with statutory agencies, charities, local businesses, other stakeholders and people with lived experience of food poverty. The strategy will address emergency measures, building resilience and reducing food poverty in our local area. We aim to bring a first draft of a Food Strategy to Council by January 2022 in line with our partners across the County

West Oxfordshire District Council

Oxford City Council pledge to continue to provide support to anyone in Oxford who is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing food insecurity or food poverty. Using a multi-agency approach, including work through our locality hubs, we will continue to advise, direct and offer practical support to those in need. As part of this support we will work with Good Food Oxford, the County and other District Councils to help develop a County-wide food strategy which will also take account of Oxford's rich diversity, cultural heritage and inequalities.'

Oxford City Council

As we provide emergency food parcels, we work closely with the referring agencies working with their client group. We provide a flexible service and together try to prevent long term dependency on foodbanks. We will enter into negotiation with referring agency after the receipt of 5 food parcels.

The Community Emergency Foodbank

We aim to broaden and make our food support more sustainable through achieving funding for an additional fridge and freezer that can be utilised by the local community as well as ourselves, and to offer recipe and cooking advice to our families that we support with food parcels. We pledge to make several funding applications/bids and appeals to local grants / businesses to achieve the £1200 required. We will commence funding applications in May 2021 and aim to have achieved our fundraising goal by September 2021. Raise £1200 funding, purchase additional fridge and freezer, work with local food enterprise coordinator, distribute The Good Food Cooking Toolkit resource and develop support.

Cornerstone, Charlbury (sharing project and food support)

Good Food Oxford pledges to monitor, utilise and promote the pledges made as part of the Food Poverty Action Plan. To measure the success of the pledges and Food Poverty Action Plan we will review in Community Food Network meetings and celebrate and promote successes.

Good Food Oxford

Work with families to raise awareness of local food initiatives that could benefit them.

Barton Park Primary School

Communicating evidence to local decision makers in order to influence and address underlying causes of food poverty in the county.

Citizens Advice

Good Food Oxford will develop a Food Strategy for Oxfordshire, in collaboration with a range of partners including local businesses, community groups and councils. Food Poverty will be a central theme considered in the context of a sustainable food system that ensures that everyone in Oxfordshire can access healthy and sustainable food that is Good for People, Good for Communities and Good for the Planet. We will measure the reach and effectiveness by monitoring actions delivered in line with the strategic priorities.

Good Food Oxford

Good Food Oxford aims to support new growing projects across the County. We will do this by supporting schools, community groups and community food networks in identifying spaces, accessing resources, tools and seeds. We will keep data on the number of projects and the number of people that benefit from their implementation.

Good Food Oxford

Ensuring dignity

Whilst recognising dignity and autonomy, we aim to ensure that people requiring emergency food aid and using our social supermarket are able to receive food that is of good nutritional value. We pledge to develop a system that allows us to record the percentage of fresh produce, tinned fruit and veg, beans and pulses that are distributed on a monthly basis. Categories will be established by May and our first quarterly review of data will be published August.

Banbury Town Business & Residential Community Project C.I.C

We continue to promote dignified access to food, by hosting a series of 'pay as you feel' or donations-based community meals, which are accessible to all. We will further support food resilience in the local community by hosting these events in collaboration with local diversity led social enterprises, as well as use them as a way of celebrating the diverse food cultures and groups in our local area.

OX4 Food Crew

We pledge to support and advise on health and well-being, provide information on value for money and promoting healthy lifestyle. We will measure effect and reach through promotion and feedback, follow up advice.

Carterton Community Foodbank

We aim to support our community out of food poverty through access to nutritionally valuable and financially accessible fresh food. We will offer dignity through choice and the option to be part of the team. By the end of 2021 the community Larder aims to be run solely by member/volunteers.

The Chippy Larder

We pledge to increase the number of Community Larders and Community Food Members supporting vulnerable individuals and families. The measurements we will take to establish reach/effectiveness: Numbers of CFMs, Larders and members / attendance records.

SOFEA

Increase the total quantity of surplus food, diverted from landfill and provided through Oxfordshire's VCS food system. We will measure the total tonnes of food distributed each week.

SOFEA

We pledge to help reduce food poverty by offering surplus food at no cost. We will monitor effectiveness and reach by surveying visitors to the Fridge.

Abingdon Community Fridge

We pledge to set up a Community Larder in Wantage to increase access to affordable food, making this an open offer and a sustainability choice rather than 'charity'. We will measure effectiveness by gathering number of larder members and having conversations with / feedback from larder members.

Sustainable Wantage

Our aim is to continue to reduce food waste by ensuring all appropriate donations are redistributed to the community. We will improve people's cooking skills and nutrition through the creation of recipes which will be shared via our social media programme. We will continue to provide compassionate and practical support to people in crisis.

Witney & West Oxfordshire Foodbank

We pledge to provide food at any cost no-one should go hungry.

Banbury mosque (Green Dome Trust)

We pledge to continue our Free Friday Meal delivery service to those in our Over 60's lunch club and those in need in the OX4 area, whilst the crisis around COVID continues and beyond if needed (our Face-to-Face weekly Lunch club will resume in place at the Community Centre when appropriate) and to work to making it easier for new people to discover our service.

Florence Park Community Centre

Ensuring dignity & nutritional value

Our vision is to convert public spaces into food production areas and to train others on how to produce their own food efficiently and easily. We pledge to Offer free training to others on how to grow food. We aim to measure effectiveness and reach by reaching out via GFO, Universities, Food Bank, Oxfordshire Homeless.

Edge (food production education, CPD, and design of food gardens)

Nutritional value

We pledge to encourage those coming to us for food to eat more healthily.

Community Cupboard (Oxford City)

We believe in giving marginalised groups and disadvantaged young people greater wellbeing. We do this through empowering, bespoke cookery classes and wellness activities. We pledge to improve the lives of 8 local residents by providing cookery classes on a budget using food bank ingredients and seasonal vegetables. We will run a series of 3 and more cookery classes to families living in Wantage and surrounding villages. We will facilitate by providing a chef and making recipes. We will provide take home recipe cards and ingredients to make at home. We will photograph, collect testimonials and put on social media and website.

Maymessy CIC (empowering cookery school)

We aim to reduce food poverty in our Oxfordshire by promoting and raising awareness of healthy start vitamins at our health visitor reviews with families of children under the age of 5 years across Oxfordshire. We will do this over the coming year. We will measure the outcome by recording the number of healthy start vitamins we give to families across Oxfordshire.

Health Visiting Service

I pledge to decrease food waste and maximum use of food and to promote health and food on the plate. I will guide how we can reuse food.

Gabi Galvanese

Rose Hill Junior Youth Club pledges to minimise “holiday hunger” and food poverty by providing healthy nutritious meals and food activity boxes to 30 families living in Rose Hill and Littlemore during the August 2021 and October 2021 school holidays. We will engage these families through our strong partnership links to RH Primary School, John Henry Newman Academy and Family Solutions and introduce them to simple new recipes, vegetables from our allotment and a range of delicious fruit desserts. We have established connections with social media and our partner organisations to ensure effective marketing and take up of this project. In addition, we will monitor and record the number of families signed up for the meals and boxes, get feedback from them on the types of food provided, ease of use of the activity packs, type of meals provided.

Rose Hill Junior Youth Club (youth club and foodbank)

We aim to address acute food poverty among asylum seekers and refugees by distributing about 40 weekly food parcels, reaching around 100 people including family members. These are people who are not allowed to work or to access Universal Credit, so they are in real poverty. We provide both non-perishable items and fresh vegetables and fruit. The clients who access the food bank are also supported by our advice service who periodically assess their need to continue receiving food.

Asylum Welcome (refugee and asylum seeker support, including foodbank)

Raising awareness

Under inspection frameworks, Ofsted inspect how children and learners keep themselves healthy, including through healthy eating. In response to this and to end food poverty in Oxfordshire we will give consistent messages through our communications and will promote local and national funding available. With the aim to improve healthier foods and tackle food insecurity we will work in collaboration with Early Years, Childcare and Educational settings.

The Early Years Team, Children and Families Service Children, Education and Families Directorate Oxfordshire County Council

Providing information and advice on the issues that are causing financial hardship by offering benefit checks to people in food poverty and identifying any additional support available.

Citizens Advice

The community of Northmoor has a collective of individuals prepared to donate grown produce, fruit harvest. I pledge to raise awareness of Good Food Oxford’s Food Poverty Action Plan and ensure that we reduce waste of unwanted vegetables and fruit. I will make sure residents are aware of the Food Poverty Action Plan and agree to participate.

Maureen Sears councillor, Northmoor Parish Council

I pledge to improve our signposting service to prevent food poverty. I aim to ask patients if they have access to affordable food

Emma Fuller/ Lead Social Prescriber. Oxford City Social Prescribing Service (PCN collaboration)

Appendix 1: Examples of community-led local support services in Oxfordshire

Oxford Mutual Aid

Oxford Mutual Aid formed in response to the Covid-19 crisis. They “are a grassroots community support group and action network. Our team have significant experience working with at-risk communities and have long standing relationships with local charities and food banks.

This crisis has overwhelmed local infrastructure. As charities and social services scale down their operations, we are focusing on seeking out all those vulnerable people who are struggling to access support. No referral is required – we are available to anyone in need but many people are referred to us by GPs, social workers, and other agencies.

Our volunteer base includes healthcare professionals, teachers, trade union organisers, local business people, and crisis hotline operators. Together, we have extensive experience across a broad range of areas. We are working with Oxford City Council, the NHS, the Gatehouse, SOFEA, Asylum Welcome, Ark-T, Refugee Resource, the Oxford Homeless Project, Oxford Together, Good Food Oxford, and many other organisations.”

Oxford Mutual Aid focuses on those struggling to access support elsewhere. Currently, key figures from May 2021 are:

- 323 emergency food parcels a month, going to 619 adults, 278 children, 65 babies.
- Regular food and supply parcels to 311 households, going to 469 adults, 290 children, and 54 babies.
- 650 Kitchen Collective meals a week to over 200 households

Mutual aid is about solidarity, not charity. Oxford Mutual Aid grew from a network of experienced LGBTQ and trade union organisers, together with members of local community support groups and various left-wing organisations.

“We will work with anyone and are happy to share our expertise and resources.”

Oxford Community Action

Oxford Community Action (Oxford City) was established to ensure the voices of BAME communities are heard and acted upon. Since the start of the pandemic, they have expanded their reach to support 520 families with weekly food parcels from a wide range of communities including Afghani, East Timorese, Iranian, Iraqi, Nepali, Nigerian Palestinian, Somali, and Sudanese communities. The aim of Oxford Community Action is to **support** new and emerging BAME alongside more established **BAME communities** to **tackle** and overcome **barriers** created by structural inequalities (e.g. labour market and ethnic health inequalities) that prevent BAME individuals and communities from reaching their full potential and **enjoying equal representation and participation** as active citizens within UK institutions and wider civil society.

Oxford Community Action promotes **community development, social inclusion, and social justice** for diverse, multi-ethnic BAME communities are aligned to the key community development principles of:

- **Local leadership** – The communities play the leadership role in their own development.
- **Collaborative approach** – Builds on collaboration and co-operation between communities, local and national government, third sector
- **Sustainable balance** – Addresses economic, social, environmental, and cultural considerations.
- **Respect for local values** – Communities values are understood and respected.
- **Diversity, equality, and inclusion** – All community’s members, regardless of gender, age, ability, race, ethnicity, culture, language, sexual orientation, or social and economic status are empowered and engaged in the community development process and are able to access its social and economic benefits.
- **Common vision** – Community members work together to define a common vision for the future.
- **Community assets approach** – Projects, initiatives, and community development is built on existing community capacity and assets.
- **Community volunteers/champions** – Values, respects, nurtures, and encourages community volunteers/champions.

Some examples of projects that support the local community:

- Direct fundraising and support for marginalised and hard to reach groups towards them with raw food supplies in response to Covid-19.
- Translation and distribution of leaflets detailing important information which help individuals and families navigate lockdowns.
- Help to identify funding pots for community-led projects.
- Research into BAME communities’ access to Men’s Health Services in the NHS

Carterton Community Foodbank

Carterton Community Foodbank was established in 2014 by a team of volunteers in partnership with Victory Christian Fellowship Church and with support from local councillors, the local Co-Op, and Lloyds Bank. The foodbank has provided emergency food support, a friendly listening ear, advice on nutrition, budgeting and cooking when asked, as well as signposting a range of other support services to 50 families on a regular basis and 100 families intermittently. People who use the foodbank include elderly, vulnerable, and homeless, as well as a significant number of veterans and military families. People are referred by a mix of agencies including Citizens Advice, social services, and local military charities.

The foodbank has endured a significant amount of instability in its location – moving from the Town Hall to the family centre, and eventually into the homes of dedicated volunteers determined not to let a loss of premises disrupt support to those in need. What they urgently need now is a stable home:

“My vision is to find a permanent home that will be a hub, not just for access to the foodbank but other organisations to help with homelessness and a school uniform exchange.” (Lynn Little, Founder and Lead).

SYRCOX – Syrian Community in Oxfordshire

“Our food service helps people in need to not feel that they are alone and provide a quality food parcel based on their needs every week.”

SYRCOX provide **regular support to over 200 households** from the Syrian community across Oxfordshire. As well the **Food Parcel Project** – emergency food parcels prepared and delivered by volunteer members of the community – SYRCOX supports community members to return to a safe normality with group walks and socially distanced BBQs and events. Receiving a parcel that had been prepared by the community, with **consideration for cultural dietary preferences**, delivered by a familiar community member, in a **shared language** has been a huge comfort to many, **reducing isolation, enabling sharing of important information and providing a sense of connectedness.**

“We are supporting people to build the connectivity around the community. We also show that the community can play the main role to support people during any crisis.”

Cherwell Collective

Cherwell Collective was established early in the COVID-19 pandemic in response to the many families and individuals in the Cherwell district who were facing hardship and uncertainty.

“Our groups share common goals and guiding principles: To empower our community, to increase well-being, to support the vulnerable, and to reduce waste and environmental impact in daily lives.”

The Collective is organised around three main projects:

Cherwell Larder

Cherwell Larder is a non-means-tested service providing food and other essentials to the local community. Volunteers and delivery drivers are also larder users, building solidarity and sustainability of the larder long-term. 1000 people have used the larder, most of whom are children. Cherwell Larder service the medically vulnerable and shielding, people passionate about reducing food waste, those facing financial hardships due to COVID-19, families, and single older adults.

Climatarian Kitchen

“We provide cooking courses, meal kits and ready meals made from surplus food. Meal kits include flexible recipes to build confidence in cooking with food surplus/long life foods.

We accept donations on a “give what you can” basis, but we do also include suggested prices on our menus. Our carbon costing system integrates education into every dining experience. Carbon prices are £1/ car-mile carbon footprint equivalent, which is in keeping with our guiding principle of keeping it green and keeping it clean”.

Harvest @ Home

Planting a vegetable garden or caring for an allotment can seem scary, but Harvest @ Home aims to provide the equipment and skills necessary for people to plant, care for, and harvest their very own produce at home.

Harvest @ Home helped over 400 people grow their own food during 2020 and hope to double that impact this year. They also have a series of Greenspace Gardens and community plots they

manage throughout the district available for people to be involved in growing food for the community.

Asylum Welcome

Asylum Welcome offers refugee and asylum seeker support, including via a food bank.

“We aim to address acute food poverty among asylum seekers and refugees by distributing about 40 weekly food parcels, reaching around 100 people including family members. These are people who are not allowed to work or to access Universal Credit, so they are in real poverty. We provide both non-perishable items and fresh vegetables and fruit. The clients who access the food bank are also supported by our advice service who periodically assess their need to continue receiving food.”

Oxford Food Hub

Oxford Food Hub is at the centre of surplus food redistribution in Oxfordshire, providing food to over 150 charities. In 2020, Oxford Food Hub supplied over 600 tonnes of produce, to local charities and community groups.

“Our dedicated group of volunteers collect surplus food from wholesalers, supermarkets and other organisations and distribute this food to charities and community organisation. We don’t support individuals directly, but have a number of partner organisations who do. Everyone wins- we reduce food waste going to landfill and provide tasty fresh produce to those in need in Oxfordshire. We do not charge charities or suppliers for our work and are supported entirely by our donors.”

Oxford Food Hub’s aims to:

Reduce food waste

Encourage recycling and use of surplus

Our links with different charities enable us to rescue a wide range of foods: chefs in different community groups can use diverse ingredients such as plantain, okra, mooli, samphire, pickled ginger – as well as the humble Brussels sprout!

Work with others to tackle food poverty in Oxfordshire and surrounding areas through support and services

In 2020, during the Coronavirus crisis we saw unprecedented demand and supported some 1.5 million meals. We used support from the community, FareShare and many other donors to support community groups, food banks and many other organisations working to support those in need

Provide education and training in nutrition, food, and environmental issues

We work with a range of partners including Waste 2 Taste, Oxford Open Door, Wolvercote Young People’s Club, Cutteslowe Community Centre and Good Food Oxford to support cooking skills and education programmes accessible to all our local communities.

SOFEA

SOFEA provide education, employability, and wellbeing programmes to tackle the causes of disadvantage, reduce the immediate effects of disadvantage by relieving food insecurity, have an environmental impact through reducing food waste.

Across their **17 food larders in Oxfordshire**, SOFEA have over **1,700 members**. The larder stock surplus food supplied via FareShare UK. Larder members pay £3.50/ week and receive a basket of goods worth approximately £15. SOFEA's ambition is to support people who are able to live more independently – “a **hand up not a handout**” as a **long-term sustainable approach** to food insecurity. Larder members have access to additional support including links to other support agencies, access to refurbished laptops and computing courses, nutritional wellbeing packs, and links to wellbeing programme such as Move-It Programme tackling long term health problems including long COVID, obesity, and diabetes.

Abingdon Food Bank

Abingdon Food Bank provide three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred to them in crisis. They are part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK

“We don't think anyone in our community should have to face going hungry.”

In the last year Abingdon Food Bank have provided 950 three-day parcels. The people Abingdon Food Bank support include people like

Holly, who having always worked and never claimed benefits, was bringing up her four-year-old daughter, Phoebe alone. She was determined to give her the best possible start in life, but when Phoebe suddenly fell ill, Holly was forced to turn to a foodbank for help.

And Richard, who worked in the police force for six years, followed by 12-years in the Royal Military Police, had always considered himself fit and healthy. However, this all changed when a chest infection quickly developed into a heart condition and he suffered from two major strokes followed by 19 mini strokes, leaving him unable to work.

OX4 Food Crew

OX4 Food Crew (OX4FC) was initially founded by Ark-T, Flo's - the Place in the Park and Wate2Taste in response to the rising levels of food inequality in OX4, which were exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. Founded in April 2020, the initial organisations quickly responded to local needs by delivering nutritious cooked meals to people experiencing food insecurity in the local area. These include, single parents, people with long term health conditions/disabilities, elderly and people who are vulnerably housed. A total of 15,112 meals have been cooked and delivered to date.

Based on research and feedback conducted with the local community through surveys, telephone interviews and focus groups with our volunteers and recipients we are now beginning to expand and develop the partnership to move beyond the emergency pandemic driven response, to include services which help to build community food resilience. So far, these include free cooking

for health and wellbeing courses for parents as well as 'Pay as you feel' community meals. We have also expanded our partnership to include working with other diversity led and grassroots organisations based in OX4 including: Oxford Community Action, Damascus Rose Kitchen and No Vice Ice CIC. As a coalition of organisations, our aim is to work with our local communities to co-investigate and design flexible community led support and innovations that will help build food resilience in the local area, alongside ongoing emergency food support.

“You have saved me so much, Thank you. Things have been so difficult for me and my family since my hours were reduced to 6 a week. You made my week, month. Just to see the happiness again on my kids face. You are angels.”

(Service user)

“Thank you for all your loving support, you have made what has been a very difficult Year, a little bit more bearable. Thank you very much for all the great work you have done. With love”

“I have been really fortunate to be receiving lunches from Waste2Taste over the past few months. I wanted to say how delicious & nutritious the meals have been and its been amazing for me to not have to think about or prepare meals twice a week as I'm very sick and don't have energy to plan meals or prepare them”

“I widely appreciated all of your produce, fantastic good news for me! I look forward for it. All the tastes have been great. I am not a vegetarian but I wonderfully appreciate your food. Is a very good resource to be able to go to and I hope you get stronger and bigger and carry on for a very long time. Thank you very much”

The above organisations and pledges are just the tip of the iceberg. Many of them treat symptoms rather than core causes, but all are united in their aim of eradicating food poverty while simultaneously ensuring that those encountering it are provided with nutritionally sound, culturally appropriate food with dignity.

Appendix 2: Examples from councils across the UK

Food insecurity is a hot topic for councils nationally. There are a plethora of ways in which councils are working to reduce food insecurity for residents. Below are just a few of the creative ways councils are ensuring access to healthy food:

Emergency provision

Liverpool City Council have an **'urgent needs' cash payment** for people in need of food and other basic necessities (LCC, no date). Furthermore, Liverpool City Region leaders are backing the Right to Food campaign, calling on the Government to make access to food a legal right (LCR, 2021).

Barking and Dagenham Council have an Individual Assistance Payment (IAP) scheme intended to **alleviate hardship** and support residents to overcome the challenges faced at times of shortfall in income. IAP is designed to be one off support to **enable self-sufficiency** (Barking and Dagenham, 2020). The scheme offers discretionary **cash payments** of up to £500. By February 2021 there had been 549 applications for IAP upheld, with only 12 to people who had previously applied, suggesting the scheme is being used by people in need. Referrals can come from multiple pathways, but are dealt with at one central point (Sustain webinar, 2021).

Building resilience

Newham Council have an **Eat for Free programme** that extends free school meals entitlement from students in infant years and students with parents eligible for particular benefits to all primary age pupils regardless of family income (NC, 2021).

Preventing food poverty

Hammersmith and Fulham Council have introduced a pilot scheme of **universal free school meals** for all secondary age pupils using **funding negotiated with property developers**. The funds raised have also, in collaboration with a local charity and holiday food schemes, allowed for provision of **universal free breakfast provision in primary schools** (H&F, 2019).

Suffolk County Council have pledged to complete their Food Poverty Action Plan by end of 2021 in a bid to **tackle child hunger** and **support families that are struggling** to make ends meet (EADT, 2020)

Lambeth Council are leading on a **Food Poverty and Insecurity Action Plan** for 2021-2024. They aim to ensure that no one in the community will go hungry. To highlight the council's commitment and that of its partners, the action plan outlines a first step of opening new **food hubs**, in key locations, that will redistribute surplus food. The action plan builds on work done by local voluntary and community organisations to **tackle food poverty** in the borough (Lambeth Council, 2021).

Islington Council are part of a **food poverty alliance** and has a Food Poverty Action Plan 2019-2022 that aims to ensure that, by 2022, **everyone in Islington eats at least one healthy meal per day** (Islington Council, 2021)

Torbay Council are **tackling child food poverty** by issuing **food vouchers for school holidays**. They acknowledged that some children facing food poverty would not benefit from the support of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme or would not qualify for benefit related Free School Meals so have made their focus **'all children in food poverty'** (Torbay Council, 2021).

Southwark Council have developed a **Food Security Action Plan** based following a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment carried out to establish the extent of food insecurity in the borough (Southwark Council, 2019; Southwark JSNA, 2019). Southwark Council worked with The Southwark Food Action Alliance (60 local organisations) to develop the plan.

Appendix 3: Food is a human right

The UK is signed up to international treaties that include provisions for the protection of the right to food, including the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** and the **Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities**. Whilst signing these treaties is a commitment to improving people's right to food in the UK, it is evident more needs to be done to **guarantee people's right to food is upheld**. The UK's domestic law with regards to Human Rights and Equality does not yet allows people to make a legal challenge if their right to food is violated (Sustain, 2021).



The introduction of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 have improved the dignified treatment of people in the UK, and can be linked to fair food provision, but these they don't go far enough in ensuring everyone's right to food is upheld.

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out fundamental rights and freedoms, to which everyone UK is entitled (EHRC, 2018).

The Human Rights Act is broken down into a series of articles. Article 2 is the right to life, which states that **public authorities should consider people's right to life when making decisions that could put people in danger or that might affect life expectancy**. In Oxfordshire deaths from cancer, circulatory disease, respiratory disease, and stroke are all higher in the least affluent areas of the county (JNSA, 2021). There are significant differences in the life expectancy across Oxfordshire with men living in the most affluent areas living on average seven years longer than men from the most deprived areas, for women this gap is about five years (JSNA, 2019). These figures illustrate the impact poverty has on life expectancy and suggest that public authorities need to better meet their duties under the Human Rights Act through making decisions that address this significant inequality.

Article 3 is the right to freedom from torture and inhuman or **degrading treatment** and is underpinned by the principle of **dignity**. In establishing whether a person has been subjected to degrading treatment it is necessary to consider the duration of the treatment, its physical or mental effects and the sex, age, vulnerability, and health of the victim. Food insecurity can be present in people's lives for years, it has a known impact on people's mental and physical health, and disproportionately affects **disabled people, people with poor physical and mental health, and people with low-income**. Whilst emergency food providers make great efforts to ensure the dignity of the people using their services, can it truly be said that needing emergency food provision is a dignified state of being?

The Equality Act 2010 aims to protect everyone in the UK from four main types of discrimination: direct, indirect, harassment, and victimisation. **Particularly relevant to food is indirect discrimination**, which is when an organisation adopts a rule, policy, or way of doing things that has a more negative impact on a person with a protected characteristic than one without. For example, benefit cuts implemented under austerity measures disproportionately impacted disabled people, women, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds (Cooper & Whyte, 2017). These are the same people who are regularly seen accessing emergency food provision (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017). Law, policy, and procedure has not gone far enough in protecting the most vulnerable people and more needs to be done to ensure **fair and non-discriminatory access to food** and the means necessary to acquire it.

Upholding people's right to food is not solely about affording dignity to individuals who are in need, it is about creating a fairer, more productive, and healthier society, one we can all take pride in. This change can start in Oxfordshire through our local authority adopting policies and taking proactive steps to reduce food insecurity and acting as a catalyst to other local authorities and central government to do the same.

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