Bath and North East Somerset
Food Poverty Action Plan - 2021

Goals

1. Everyone living in BANES can reliably afford and access suitable food to meet their needs for energy, nutrition, and social & cultural connection, with dignity and without resort to emergency food aid.
2. In partnership with broader strategies, the growing, production, packaging, transport, marketing and consumption of that affordable and accessible food will contribute to a thriving local economy and a flourishing biosphere.

Principles

- The **right to food** is respected. "The right to food is a human tight. It protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The right to food is not about charity, but about ensuring that all people have the capacity to feed themselves in dignity". (www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/what-is-the-right-to-food/
- Food poverty is recognised as an acute form of poverty and **preventive measures** must, therefore, be taken to tackle poverty at source
- Every **council** decision takes into effect its **impact on food poverty**
- The council **uses all the levers at its disposal to maximum effect** to reduce food poverty. These include but are not exclusive to Welfare Support, Commissioning and Procurement, Planning and S106 funding.
- Strategies to reduce food poverty must be **sustainable in the longer term** and embedded in core practice across all agencies .

Contents

The Action plan is colour coded to indicate the level of impact each proposed action is designed to make:

(Short-term) Actions addressing crisis and emergency (food) provision	(Medium term) Actions addressing structural causes of (food) insecurity	(Long term) Actions contributing to the creation of a sustainable and accessible (food) culture in BANES

Abbreviations used in this document:

DWP - Department for Work and Pensions

IMG – Income Maximisation Group

AFN - Affordable Food Network

FB – Feeding Britain

PH – Public Health

WS – Welfare Support

FSM – Free School Meals

Systems, Structures and Governance

- In this context 'sustainable' solutions are preventative measures that largely negate the need for crisis intervention. They address inequalities and are informed by and responsive to comprehensive local data. They are embedded in core practice across agencies and integrated into a whole systems approach to the provision of affordable, healthy and socially & culturally acceptable food for all. Any solutions to food insecurity which are achieved though narrowly-targeted and/or short-term funding are, by definition, not sustainable.

- When identified solutions are beyond the scope and power of Local Authority, national Government must be lobbied for broader policy and legislative change. This includes but is not restricted to the right to food; income from work and social security that is adequate to meet fundamental needs of life; provision of genuinely affordable housing; fair and equitable processes to access welfare support; associated food trade, production, pricing, labelling and promotion.

Aims	Actions	Lead Agency/ Org
Create the framework for working collaboratively with local stakeholders and communities, to identify and embed local sustainable solutions to address poverty that results in household food insecurity.	Convene and manage a Steering Group and associated task groups for key themes/areas of work	PH
	Conduct a Covid-19 debrief, harvest the learning from how community food provision evolved during the crisis.	PH
	Report regularly on progress to Cabinet Member lead, Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel and Full Council as required	PH
Encourage advocacy via community organisations -targeting national policy	Formalise partnership arrangement with Feeding Britain (FB)	PH

change by lobbying national government for change.	Work collaboratively with FB partnership to develop local project ideas, explore funding opportunities and contribute to national learning, advocacy and lobby for change	**PH**
	Connect closely with the Sustain / Food Power network - draw on and contribute to sharing of good practice across the national network	**PH**
Secure adequate/additional resource and capacity to enable a long-term sustainable approach to this issue locally	Identify resource for strategic and operational leadership on broader poverty eradication and food strategies for BANES	**Lead members**
	Work in partnership with existing networks, structures and organisations to develop sustainable solutions to co-ordination of food poverty work beyond 2021	**PH**
	Connect with the BANES Covid Recovery plan and the Corporate Strategy http://intranet/bath-and-north-east-somerset-corporate-strategy-framework and encourage the adoption of Community Wealth Building practice https://cles.org.uk/what-is-community-wealth-building	
	Make a case for a refresh of the B&NES Food Strategy and the identification of resource to rekindle the Sustainable Food Cities (now Places) programme.	**PH**
Consistently use language in internal and public communications that promotes dignity, choice and personal agency	Create and circulate guidance to all members of the Steering Group and working groups on suitable language and terms (**)	**PH**
Coordinate associated funding streams. e.g. from central government, Feeding Britain or local fund-raising	Create effective distribution structures with clear identification of eligibility and monitoring requirements	**WS / SJF /BANES Finance leads**

(**) This action point is also included in the Data and Communication section

Maximising Income

- BANES will take a money-first approach to supporting people and households with low and /or insecure income
- The financial provision of the local welfare support safety net is collaboratively provided by BANES Council Welfare Support (WS) team and St John Foundation individual hardship funds
- An 'Income Maximisation' group (IMG) will largely oversee this aspect of the Action plan and membership will include representation from DWP, Welfare Support, St Johns Foundation, Citizens Advice, local 3rd sector organisations offering financial guidance and those addressing needs of specific vulnerable groups e/g Age UK

Aims	Actions	Lead Agency/ Org
Ensure the local welfare safety net is clearly defined, promoted, accessible and flexible to varied need and provides sufficient support to those in hardship to reduce reliance on crisis food banks	Remove the blanket cap on local welfare support provision and create robust guidance to assess limits to provision on a case-by-case basis	WS
	Collate jointly agreed information on available welfare support services and how to access them.	IMG
	Make this widely known across agencies /charities/schools/public and framed to encourage people to present earlier and to reduce stigma.	IMG
	Develop stronger joint working and collaboration across support agencies including data sharing and co-located working where needed, in line with learning from the Community Wellbeing Hub model	IMG
	Support campaigns to raise awareness of doorstep/online lenders, illegal money lenders and financial scams and direct people to legitimate sources of financial support	IMG

	Promote best practice in financial literacy and money management skills and support locally	IMG
Increase knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise the key drivers of food insecurity, to enable timely access to self-help, early help and preventative services	Create a training resource and promote its use by all agencies working on maximising income to improve confidence to recognise, assess and offer support around food insecurity as a routine part of their work.	PH / IMG
	Improve identification of people in, or at risk of, rent and council tax arrears at an earlier stage and put in preventative measures	WS and Curo
	Collation of information and promotion of employment support services available in BANES and how to access them	IMG
Champion the living wage across contractors and local employers including social care, retail and hospitality to contribute to ensuring people can earn a fair income	Identify current living wage employers in B&NES and work with them to identify and share benefits for both business and employees	IMG
	Identify strategic leadership within the BANES Council to work with the Living Wage Foundation to implement their Local Authority toolkit. https://www.livingwage.org.uk/local-authority-toolkit-0	Lead Councillors
Maximise the use of local authority powers and other local levers in tackling food poverty	Promote Healthy Start voucher and vitamin scheme and facilitate roll out of digital application process to improve uptake from 2019 levels of 39%	
	Promote Free School Meal take up and improve from 2019 levels of 79%	

Dignity and Inclusion (Hear My Voice)

- All actions to address household food insecurity in BANES must be fully informed by the life experience of people who are living, or have lived, with poverty and household food insecurity themselves.
- The barriers to having their voice heard and respected are many and it is understood that a longer-term, relationship-based approach will be more dignified and lead to more meaningful involvement.
- Whatever we do to address household food insecurity in BANES, we must ensure that the practice of 'solving' it with the equally problematic food 'waste' or surplus streams is only ever a temporary and pragmatic step in the process of designing a truly sustainable food system, that does not rely on perpetuating co-dependency of two wholly undesirable situations.

Aims	Actions	Lead Agency/ Org
Involve people with life experience of food insecurity in the strategic work of the group and development of local solutions	Undertake local qualitative and qualitative research, led by University of Bath, to seek out and listen to people with life experience of food insecurity and their suggested solutions.	**University of Bath**
	Identify existing networks of trust in B&NES who can find and support people with life experience of food insecurity to be meaningfully involved in developing the local strategy, actions and evaluation	**AFN**
	Create a series of modes of engagement to enable participation	**AFN / University of Bath**
	Create effective channels of communication to bring the voices of people with life experience to the decision makers and policy maker of B&NES, regional bodies and national government.	**PH / University of Bath**
	Support, train and encourage people who want to develop their community advocacy skills and impact	**AFN**

Empower local communities to develop their own solutions where need is identified	Work with Compassionate Communities and the development of local hubs, using best evidence-based practice in community resilience building, to keep food as a key focus for the network.	**AFN**
	Actively promote Nourish Scotland's Dignity in Practice Toolkit and training resources to inform and guide service delivery	**AFN**

Food for All

- The overall aim of this aspect of the Action Plan is, ultimately, the eradication of need for emergency or crisis food provision and the creation of a food environment in all parts of BANES that can reliably provide nutritious, affordable, socially acceptable and culturally suitable food within easy reach of every community and neighbourhood.

- It is acknowledged that household food insecurity is equitably solved in the longer term, not by the provision of free or affordable food from donated or surplus sources, but through fair and reliable income, solid informal social support networks and the resources to buffer adverse life experiences. As a pragmatic use of available resources in the short to medium term, donated and surplus food sources will be utilised and coordinated alongside a guaranteed connection to financial, social and health care support to address root causes of poverty, social isolation and trauma.

- There is clear synergy here with one of the four pillars of the St John Foundation's goal of 'all children under 12 in BANES will have access to nutritious food every day'.

- The Food Foundation's 'Children's Future Food Inquiry' drew evidence from workshops with over 300 children and young people aged 11-16 across the UK. Of the 13 groups who participated, one was in Radstock and the evidence from those BANES children contributed to this important research.

- The 'Affordable Food Network' group (AFN) will largely oversee this aspect of the Action Plan and membership includes representation from foodbanks, food clubs and pantries, community cafes, surplus food redistribution services and people with responsibility for food related benefits like Free School Meals and Healthy Start.

Aims	Actions	Lead Agency/ Org
Provide wrap-around support alongside all provision of food support in the community	Provide clear links for accessing financial guidance and advice at all points of public contact	IMG / AFN
	Build strong and reciprocal working relationships with the Community Wellbeing Hub	AFN

	Provide accessible opportunities to build confidence and skills to budget for, store, cook and grow healthy food	
	Facilitate the provision of fresh, locally grown fruit and veg via the CropDrop project	
All households with children in BANES have reliable access to enough nutritious food every day	Identify families at greater risk of food insecurity by reason of low or insecure income, single parenthood, families with three of more children, and families with complex needs	**PH / AFN**
	Review the complex system of children's food support through the eyes of those families and create clear communications resources that promote all the elements together (e.g. universal and means-tested free school meals, Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins, free prescriptions and dentistry, free fruit and veg in schools, ,voluntary sector community food support projects)	**PH**
	Create detail for an action plan to **Increase uptake of Free School** Meals (to include the needs of rural areas, poverty-proofing schools[1] and reducing stigma, data collection, school holiday provision, lobbying for universal eligibility if on UC)	**PH / Education - Business Support and inclusion**
	Create detail of an action plan to **Increase uptake of Healthy Start vouchers** (to include the local promotion of digital roll-out, retailer engagement, lobbying for automatic enrolment)	**PH / Early Help Partnership**
All households without children in BANES, who are experiencing or are at risk of food insecurity are identified and provided with appropriate support to meet their food needs	Identify and build connection with agencies, teams and organisations who already work alongside the following groups of people who may be at higher risk of household food insecurity: • Elderly • Homeless or insecurely housed	**AFN**

[1] http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk/

	• Disabled • People with poor mental health • People with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	
	Create a more detailed action plan to address identified food security needs in these groups	
The food retail environment in BANES prioritises nutritious food that is affordable and accessible to all	Refresh and extend mapping of food retail provision and concentration of hot takeaway food outlets, particularly near to schools and areas where more people live with lower income	
	Ensure mapping illustrates the challenges for rural areas with small pockets of low income and food insecurity	
	Work with the planning teams and PH to determine how best to use this data to influence future planning policy and practice around food outlets	
	Explore local procurement of free school fruit and veg Create a feasibility plan to request BANES come out of national procurement and manage this scheme locally to facilitate a stronger relationship between schools and local horticulture and food growing enterprise	**PH**
Determining access to affordable and nutritious food is a routine element of all health and social care assessments	Gather information on how food insecurity is currently identified in these areas: • Hospital discharge • Connecting families • Safeguarding • Supported housing and homelessness • GPs – particularly with complex need and chronic conditions • Early Help • People with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)	**PH**
	Create an awareness-raising resource that demonstrates the value to all services of having a focus on food and identifying food insecurity	**PH**

	Create a more detailed action plan to guide the sharing of this resource to all health and social care providers in BANES	

Data and Communications

Food insecurity is not yet routinely or robustly measured nationally or at Local Authority level, yet accurate and updated local data are crucial to identify need, inform the scale and scope of needed interventions and to measure progress.

Aims	Actions	Lead Agency/ Org
Embed systematic ongoing data collection, reporting and monitoring of food insecurity to maintain the profile of the issue and to measure progress in addressing it locally	Carry out a needs assessment to better understand the scale of the issue locally, who is affected and where there may be gaps in services and/or support	PH
	Create and keep updated a WIKI page on Food Insecurity for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable access to data	PH
	Develop local University links to explore development of local research to support our understanding of need locally.	PH
	Ensure inclusion of food insecurity questions in annual Voicebox survey to residents	PH
	Explore ways of developing this data set through systematic data collection across front line services	PH / Steering group members
Keep the issues of food insecurity alive for the public and associated professionals & volunteers through a managed programme of communications	Develop a comms plan to support co-ordination of campaigns, information dissemination and awareness raising across agencies and to the public	PH / Steering group members
	Review the name of the Steering Group and working groups to clearly communicate the outcomes the groups would like to see	

Consistently use language in internal and public communications that promotes dignity, choice and personal agency	Create and circulate guidance to all members of the Steering Group and working groups on suitable language and terms	PH