

Case Study in Exceptional Achievement: Food Poverty

Tackling food poverty and food inequality

Why food poverty? The nature and importance

- BHFP began to focus on food poverty in 2012 amid concerns about unemployment, low wages, high housing costs and increasing food prices.
- We were also concerned about the increasing number of food banks in the city and worried about levels of household food insecurity reported through frontline workers at BHFP food poverty awareness training sessions.
- In 2015, BHFP and the Local Strategic Partnership ran a food poverty round table, chaired by national expert Martin Caraher. This brought together decision makers from across the city – from food banks and holiday hunger clubs to the Chamber of Commerce and directors of social care and public health – to look at how to reduce the impact of food poverty on the health and wellbeing of local people, and mitigate against the likely impact on future health and social care budgets of doing nothing about this issue.
- Food poverty then became a galvanising focus for the city via the 2015-18 Food Poverty Action Plan. Overall, there was progress on 78 out of an ambitious 84 actions (93%). There is a full progress report at bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-action-plan/. Whilst we could not fully prevent food poverty, by looking ahead and working together we were more prepared for the difficult climate that ensued, particularly the impact of welfare reform.

- A key early focus was developing – and explaining through a widely-shared infographic – a citywide approach that moved the discussion beyond food bank use. We knew from a question BHCC added to the annual city tracker survey¹ that one in five people in the city disagreed they would have enough money to meet their basic living costs, including food, with much higher levels (around one in three) seen in certain groups, including people with disabilities or long-term health conditions. We focused on addressing upstream solutions to household food insecurity.



1 <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/Food%20poverty%2C%20diet%20and%20health%20topic%20summary%202019.pdf>

Our Gold actions 2018-2020 – reporting back

This is just a snapshot of action on food poverty. See also the *'Story since silver'* and our *2018-23 Food Strategy Action Plan*. As well as actions specific to food poverty, this plan was fully 'food poverty proofed', i.e. looked at through the lens of food inequality – for all actions.

Strengthening the voice of the Emergency Food Network (EFN) and linking food banks to other services

The EFN was started by BHFP in 2012 with just five food banks. It became vital to link emergency food providers with each other, and with BHCC and other advice services. The EFN previously met three times a year, with an active Google discussion group. In 2019, it had risen to 21 organisations and during the Covid-19 pandemic rocketed to 50, plus 10 meal providers. EFN meetings in the months following March 2020 took place online fortnightly, providing a vital source of up-to-date information and support.

Consultation with EFN members had already shown the desire for a stronger voice on food issues locally and nationally, and opportunities for joint promotion.

Whilst Covid-19 brought EFN to wider attention, other successes included:

- Joint promotion e.g. BFHP's extremely popular Christmas 'How to Donate to a Food Bank' blog
- Working together on food sharing, joint sourcing, and joint referrals mechanisms
- A joined up approach to integrating with advice services
- Lobbying locally and nationally e.g. *Written response* to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) committee inquiry on Covid-19 and Food Supply



The EFN integrates food banks with advice services, enabling joined up referrals, joint lobbying and food swaps

The Brighton & Hove Response to Covid-19

When Covid-19 hit in 2020, the Emergency Food Network (EFN) became the vehicle for an astonishing citywide emergency food response to the pandemic lockdown.

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) launched a **fundraising appeal under the banner ‘Hungry at Home’** to buy emergency food and essentials in bulk to pass on to food projects. Between March and August 2020, a total of **£352,960** was raised, of which 42% came from Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC), 24% from DEFRA Government funding, 18% from residents donating to a **crowdfund campaign** and the rest from local housing associations and national and local grant-making bodies.



Food parcels being taken from the BHFP central hub for onward distribution to food banks.

BHFP set up a **central food processing hub** where wholesale purchased food and surplus food was organised and distributed by a team of volunteers to food banks and meal projects. Food purchased included locally-sourced fruit, veg and milk bought direct from producers via a newly established social enterprise, *the Food Factory*.

This central hub supported a citywide network of **50 neighbourhood food hubs** made up of existing food banks and shared-meal settings, plus new temporary food hubs based out of a range of community venues. Most operated as a home delivery service with local volunteers taking food from the hubs the ‘last mile’ to people’s doors. These included specialist BAME, homeless support and older people’s projects, and a specialist provision for families with children under five provided by BHCC’s children’s centre service. The value of this ‘hyper-local’ support was that the volunteers delivering the food were local people trusted by those receiving the food and other support such as befriending and collection of medicines could be arranged.

BHFP also set up a series of **web pages** signposting to support for those in need; and local food shops and veg boxes offering delivery services.



“ *The way that Brighton & Hove Food Partnership called all the Brighton & Hove food providers together through the Emergency Food Network enabled me to see how we could work together. As the lead of a project that normally provides hot meals to low-income families in school holidays, speaking to other food providers in the city I was able to redesign my service to one that met the immediate need. It was massively reassuring to know that I was now part of a team, I wasn’t on my own. In sharing information around the evolving situation in Brighton & Hove, issuing the most up-to-date guidelines on for example food handling, providing guidance, moral support and a single point of contact in the midst of much national confusion, I am convinced that our struggling families have benefited from being in a city that has collaborated in the way that it has.”*

– Vanessa from low-income holiday lunch and activity club *Chomp*. Over 24 weeks, Chomp distributed 1,227 boxes packed with locally grown veg and activity kits to families in need.

CASE STUDY IN EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT: FOOD POVERTY

“ Everyone in the food bank is very friendly and never made me uncomfortable to use it. Using a food bank is sadness, but I was made comfortable by the people in there. They also customised my parcel according to my choice.”

– Recipient of food parcel, July 2020

BHCC provided **grant funding** to BHFP to coordinate emergency food distribution and co-lead the council’s own response – including ensuring integration with their helpline. Hove Park School provided a base for the BHFP central food processing hub and Greater Brighton Metropolitan College and local businesses, including Loud Shirt Brewery and Zedify, provided a team of drivers and vehicles.

The network approach meant that BHFP was able to provide the volunteer-led hubs with a range of information and support as well as the food.

Meal provision formed an important part of the city’s Covid-19 response, with for example lunch clubs moving to home delivery services and new services forming. During the pandemic there was a **75% increase in weekly meals served**.

Overall the community response, which also brought in an unrecorded volume of support between neighbours and through the network of Covid-19 mutual aid groups, was unprecedented.

“ Thank you also for your support in being able to achieve what we did in our area. I do not know what we could have done or how we could have supported our community without you supporting us!”

– Old Boat Community Centre Food Hub



Brighton Table Tennis Club was one of the new temporary food hubs.

Food Partnership

We’ve raised £51,571 to purchase essential food, packaging and toiletries for vulnerable & isolated people in Brighton & Hove during the coronavirus crisis.

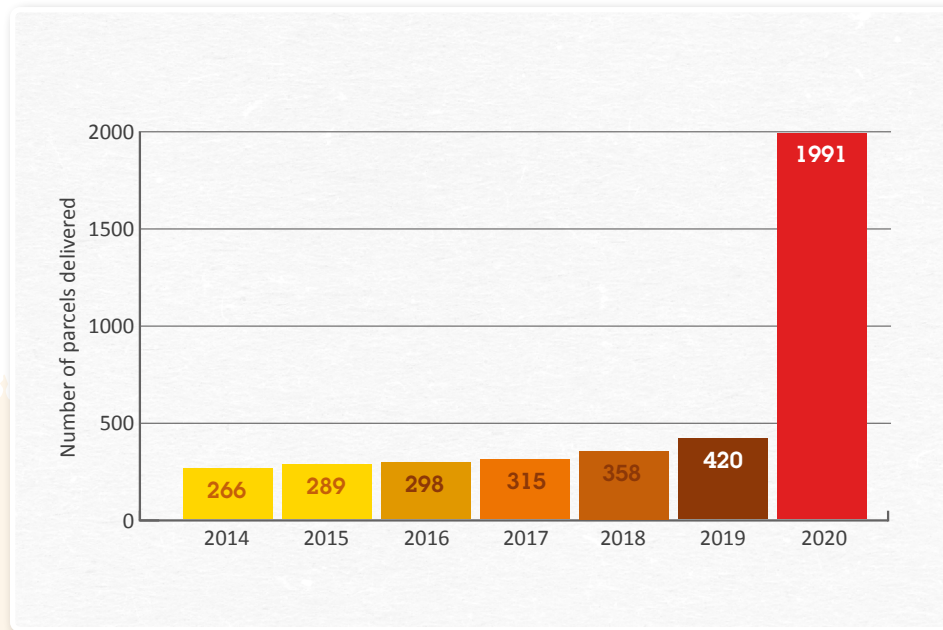
What is crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is a new type of fundraising where you can raise funds for your own personal cause, even if you’re not a registered charity.

The page owner is responsible for the distribution of funds raised.

In the week of 27th April 2020 in Brighton & Hove, projects across the city gave out **3,000 emergency food parcels, supporting 4,800+ people** (including at least **996 children**) and served **3,966 meals**. Prior to Covid-19 the total of food parcels per week was 420.

In the week of 18th May 2020, **548 people gave 3,270 hours** of time to help their neighbours. If they had been paid the Real Living Wage Foundation rate of £9.30 an hour this time would be worth **£30,411**.



The rise in emergency food use between 2014 and 2020 – Based on BHFP annual survey of food banks 2020; data obtained July each year.

For more detail see the [Sustainable Food Places case study](#)

“ It has been an opportunity to reach out and support the more vulnerable sector of our community who might not usually access our services.”

– EFN member, July 2020



Emergency food requests in Brighton & Hove are at historically high levels

Older people and food: enabling food access and preventing undernutrition

Following a joint presentation by BHFP and BHCC Public Health, the Brighton & Hove Health & Wellbeing Board committed to taking a focused look at malnutrition in 2018.

A new 'Ageing Well' preventative approach to older people's commissioning followed in 2019, with food at its heart. Food issues and loneliness often go hand in hand and both were addressed, with a focus on activities, befriending and healthy eating. There is now an older people's food and nutrition worker, and a partnership board which includes BHFP.

The focus on food access shifted still further during Covid-19, with Ageing Well Partners leading the response for older people, including a reconfigured helpline, a directory and a shopping service.

Other activity included:

- Training in preventing and treating malnutrition provided to 211 members of staff in Brighton & Hove care homes.
- Specialist dementia cookery and gardening sessions developed (adapted to an 'at home' programme during Covid-19 lockdown).
- *'Eating well to stay healthy as you age'* guide to understanding and addressing malnutrition and dehydration developed with Ageing Well Partners, the Clinical Commissioning Group, hospital dietitians and a focus group of older people living with long-term health conditions. By September 2020, we had distributed 3,000 copies, with plans in place for a reprint in time for Malnutrition Awareness Week in October.



BHFP cookery session for people with dementia and their carers



Dementia-friendly gardening project



AGEING
WELL

Childhood food poverty: Healthy Start campaign

Linked to the [Veg Cities campaign](#), the aim of this partnership campaign in 2019-20 was to increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers which help low-income families buy fruit and veg. Successes include:

- 1,500 posters displayed in buses, libraries, food banks, community centres, GP surgeries and pharmacies, and awareness raised via a social media campaign, coverage in the [local paper](#) and [BHFP blogs](#).
- 23 bite-size 'Families and food poverty' training sessions reached 278 frontline workers and volunteers in food banks; domestic violence, poverty, and drug and alcohol charities; and midwives and hospital dietitians. The average score for usefulness was nine out of 10.
- Pledges to embed Healthy Start included adding stickers to children's 'red books' to remind midwives and health visitors of the vouchers.
- Publicising that health professional signatures were no longer required during Covid-19
- Application packs added to Covid-19 emergency food parcels for families with young children.

- Support to national campaigning, including an online webinar sharing good practice on promoting Healthy Start (with seven areas subsequently requesting our training slides to adapt) and signing an open letter to Jo Churchill MP. Brighton MP Caroline Lucas asked a written question in Parliament and tweeted her support for the campaign for an online application process.
- Ongoing efforts via the partnership group, which includes BHFP, Public Health, children's centres, Chomp, health visitors and midwives.

National statistics show Brighton & Hove now has a 7% higher uptake of the vouchers than the Southeast average.²

“All of it was useful. I was unaware of the details of the scheme and eligibility criteria previously.”

– Frontline worker feedback on bite-size training.



Credit: Vic Borrill

Campaign launch



Citywide poster campaign in buses, doctors surgeries etc.



² Sept 2020 figures: B&Hove 49%, South East 42%

Becoming the city that cooks and eats together



Credit: Emma Croman

Shared meals have been an important focus for our city since BHFP research in 2015 demonstrated the benefits of shared meals such as lunch clubs in tackling loneliness and acting as a source for advice and support.

During Covid-19 many had to turn 'eating together' on its head as the switch to delivered meals was made. An extraordinary number of meals were taken to people's households by volunteers.

This had advantages, with service such as HIV lunch group Lunch Positive 'finding' new clients; and others such as Food and Friendship reporting easier access for those with mobility issues who had previously struggled to get out to meals.

A number of new shared meal projects established during Covid-19, including provision in East Brighton and Coldean, two deprived areas of the city. Local food businesses came together to provide meals to rough sleepers housed in hotels and to staff working in the Covid-19 wards at the local hospital.

Emerging from this work is an ongoing project to provide 'ready meals' prepared by local food businesses, with food parcels funded on a 'pay it forward' model by customers from those businesses.



COMMUNITY KITCHEN



The award-winning BHFP Community Kitchen, which opened in May 2018 following a successful crowdfunding campaign, funds its community activities through paid places on masterclasses with high profile local restaurant chefs, evening & weekend classes and private parties and events, alongside grants and donations.

Classes include:

- Cooking on a Budget
- Vegetarian/vegan workshops
- Dementia cookery
- Cooking for university
- Cookery for people with learning difficulties
- Workshops for staff and volunteers working with homeless and vulnerably-housed people
- Baby weaning
- School holiday cookery for kids
- 'Expert patient' classes for people with long-term health conditions.
- Mood-boosting cookery for young people



Credit: Emma Croman

Community cookery lesson

Covid-19 meant rethinking 'eating together' and classes ceased temporarily before many of them moved online. Sessions resumed under Covid-19 secure guidelines from September 2020 with additional classes running online.

In only its second year, and despite Covid-19, The Community Kitchen reached 1,755 people and served over 4,000 shared meals.



Credit: Emma Croman

The Community kitchen won a Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors South East Award for its conversion from office space

Surplus Food Network (SFN)



The Surplus Food Network is an alliance of six community organisations tackling food waste by working with suppliers to distribute surplus. It played a key role in the Covid-19 response. Other successes include:

- Increased redistribution, including establishment of a joint, *online donations portal* and three community fridges. **In 2019, 1,006 tonnes of food were collected that would otherwise have gone to waste, estimated to amount to 3,824 tonnes of carbon saved, equivalent to 1,416 homes' energy use in one year.**
- Collective promotion including joint branding, a joint film and campaigns such as **#growanextrarow** campaign to encourage people to grow food for Real Junk Food Project Brighton.
- Joint funding, e.g. European Interreg 2 Seas Flavour, looking at the role of the surplus food sector in providing training and skills for people far from the labour market, sharing good practice and considering what products can be made from surplus in order to extend its shelf life or value.
- Events, e.g. 'Turning Trash to Treasure: rethinking food waste', attended by 100 city caterers, retailers, food producers, suppliers and manufacturers, and the managers of cafes, hotels and pubs; and a joint volunteer celebration event, attended by 60 people.

- *Real Junk Food Project's* new 'pay as you feel' food hub, in an area of the city with limited fresh food access, and their successful crowdfunding campaign to establish a high-profile, new city centre cafe.

The total volunteer hours for surplus food projects between 1st January 2018 and 31st December 2019 was 94,526. Using the Living Wage Foundation Rate of £9 an hour this equates to £850,734 over the year!

Covid-19 saw an increase in volunteering not accounted for in these figures.

For more information on the city's Surplus Food Network see bhfood.org.uk/surplus-food-network/.

What else has addressed food insecurity?

- Expansion of Chomp holiday clubs, now in nine different areas, providing nutritious meals and activities for families eligible for free school meals.
- Poverty Proofing the School Day audits were carried out in 90% of schools in the city to gather information on food poverty, schools and families.
- BHFP worked with BHCC's Brexit planning team to share information about the potential impact of food price increases or food supply issues, and the potential role of SFN in distributing food if there are food shortages or an increase in demand for emergency food post Brexit.

- Partnership working between BHCC's public health team, BHFP & a University of Brighton Masters student placement to update the Joint Strategic Needs assessment (JSNA) on food poverty and nutrition.
- Work continued to understand, measure and monitor food poverty – through the annual city tracker survey, annual emergency food network survey, and a survey of people experiencing food insecurity during the Covid-19 period.
- Development of a broader and longer-term outcomes measurement framework for a citywide approach to food which incorporates food poverty as a key indicator.
- Good practice shared with other areas nationally by BHFP through engagement via Food Power and Sustainable Food Places and involvement in the DEFRA food vulnerability stakeholder group.



FareShare Sussex has a new electric van, is trialling bicycle deliveries, and has extended its depot to include a new on-site community kitchen.