

Definition of nourishing: (of food) providing the substances necessary for health and bodily growth.

Nourishing Gloucester

A food strategy for all

Foreword



Food should be a joy; cooking one of the great expressions of human creativity. And yet our food system is broken. The food we eat is destroying both our bodies and the planet. The food we eat is the biggest cause of non-communicable disease and by far the biggest cause of biodiversity collapse, the destruction of aquatic life, deforestation, the pollution and scarcity of fresh water, and, after energy, the second biggest cause of climate change.

Even more shocking, in one of the world's richest countries, too many people are struggling to put food on the table. Post-pandemic, and in the face of a cost-of-living crisis, food insecurity continues to increase in our towns and cities, harming the lives and prospects of those affected, particularly children.

For most of my adult life I have had connections with food; from my first job as a commis chef to, a few years ago, being invited by the government to write a National Food Strategy.

Along the way I have been a food columnist, established Leon Restaurants, and co-founded two not-for-profit organisations, Sustainable Restaurants Association and Chefs in Schools, each attempting to improve parts of the system.

What I have learned is that there is no 'quick fix' solution to addressing many of these issues. In the National Food Strategy, we argued that while government intervention was necessary, it was not sufficient. Changing the system requires driven, talented people at a local level working in the community to improve things. The government cannot send in the army to improve food education or imprison hospital caterers for serving poor food. Every plate of nutritious delicious food that was ever served to another human, was made by someone in the community who cared.

That is why it is fantastic to read this local plan for Gloucester. A multi-faceted plan for public sector bodies to work in partnership with the commercial sector and alongside local trusted community groups, to make a positive and lasting impact on food insecurity in Gloucester.

Where you lead, I hope many will follow.

Henry Dimbleby

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Executive Summary

Food is an essential for life; it is not an option. It plays a vital role in the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

And yet, every day in Gloucester, people worry about not having enough food, struggle to access affordable healthy and nutritious food, and often miss one or more meal(s) a day... In 21st century Gloucester, this is unacceptable.

The primary aim of this strategy is to ensure that in future everyone in Gloucester has access to nutritious food and no one goes hungry, whilst also acknowledging that there are broader issues affecting our neighbourhoods which are closely interlinked with food insecurity. If we are to create sustainable long-term solutions, we must better understand and address the root causes of both food insecurity and the social, health and wellbeing inequalities that exist in some of our communities.

‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of themselves and their family, including food...’

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25

In 2019, as people across the world struggled to cope with the enormity of **COVID-19** and its impact on their daily lives, the strength of community spirit in Gloucester, and the willingness of people to help and support their neighbours, shone through like a beacon of hope.

During this most traumatic of times community organisations worked together in their neighbourhoods and across the city to ensure the delivery of essential food - and so much more besides - for individuals and families in need. Supported by an army of volunteers, their rapid response in a period of extreme adversity is proof positive that these organisations, with their grass roots knowledge and strong, trusted, local connections, are best placed to deliver services both quickly and effectively within their communities.

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” Coretta Scott King.

The **Cost-of-living crisis**, which has followed immediately on the back of an ongoing global pandemic means that households are now facing the triple threat of increasing energy bills, food costs, and rents.

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Double digit inflation on food prices, especially on staple foods, is putting severe pressure on many people's already over-stretched budgets, which in turn is creating a growing demand within communities for access to emergency food support and affordable food.

We have consulted with many organisations and individuals across the city and recognise that other health and wellbeing issues need to be addressed in many of our neighbourhoods, some of them closely interlinked with food insecurity. We will aim to connect with these broader challenges at every step of our journey to ensure delivery of an integrated solution; these challenges range from giving people the best start in life through to healthy lifestyles, social isolation, and loneliness.

This strategic plan, which aims to take a **sustainable and holistic approach**, sets out our recommendations to tackle the food insecurity and social, health and wellbeing inequalities that exist in some of our communities in Gloucester. We will do this by: -

- Developing and maintaining capacity and sustainability within our communities.
- Building upon, strengthening, and supporting the current network of trusted community-based organisations.
- Working with community partners and others to tackle food insecurity by ensuring access to affordable nutritious food.
- Collaborating with our health and wellbeing and other public sector partners, to identify and deliver coordinated and holistic solutions.
- Fulfilling a constructive role as active members of Feeding Gloucestershire and supporting their Vision and Mission.
- Using food as a 'golden thread' through which to offer people opportunities to meet and chat, take part in activities, and access a broad range of key support services.

Whilst there is strong evidence of the growing existence of food insecurity in Gloucester, we must be mindful that the provision of free food brings with it the **risk of building a dependency culture**; we must strive to avoid this by ensuring ready access to low-cost nutritious food within our communities.

There is no simple solution to resolving the issue of food insecurity, or the broader health and wellbeing challenges we face in Gloucester. By leading on the introduction of the **ambitious recommendations** within this strategy and by working in close collaboration with our community partners and public sector colleagues, we can achieve our aims and address many of the inequalities that exist in some of our communities to bring the food **security** sought by many Gloucester residents.

Appendix 14 comprises an **Action Plan** which sets out how we will deliver the recommendations proposed in this strategy.

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The Wider (UK) Perspective

Food insecurity across the UK

According to the [Family Resources Survey](#), published in March 2022, around 11% of households in the UK experienced some level of food insecurity during 2020 – 2021, with 5 per cent experiencing marginal, 3 per cent low, and 3 per cent experiencing very low food security. Food insecurity has been strongly associated with poor diet quality, which can lead to Type 2 diabetes, mental health issues, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and some types of cancer.

In 2020, [The Food Foundation](#) estimated that households falling within the bottom 10% income bracket would need to spend 74% of their household income on food were they to follow official healthy eating advice. Those at the highest risk of food insecurity were:

- Black and mixed ethnicity households with children, and
- Households with either an adult or child with a long-term health problem or disability.

For children, undernutrition can cause permanent widespread damage to growth, development, and wellbeing; poor diet quality increases the risks of stunted growth, iodine deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia.

In September 2022, [The Food Foundation](#) and [National Energy Action](#) issued a joint briefing with the following headline statement: -

“As the cost-of-living crisis worsens, many more households are struggling to heat and power their homes and put a warm, nutritious meal on the table. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that, despite parents doing everything they can to protect them from food insecurity and fuel poverty, both issues are having immediate and ongoing impacts on children’s physical and mental health.”

In **Appendix 1** their full briefing describes in more detail the impact of food insecurity and fuel poverty on babies, children, adolescents, lone parent households and those with under 5’s, and parents.

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The effects of inflation on poorer households

In recent years, the UK economy has been buffeted by an extended period of instability caused by: –

- The ongoing effects of Brexit.
- The economic and social impact of COVID-19.
- The war in Ukraine causing huge rises in energy prices.
- A cost-of-living crisis with double digit inflation, especially on staple foods.

According to [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) data for the 12 months to October 2022, the cost of the lowest price groceries increased across the UK by 16.2% across all types of food and drink. Some staple foods have seen even more dramatic rises in this same period, as shown in **Appendix 2**.

Overall inflation was 11.1% in the same period. A [Cost of Living: Vulnerable Households Report](#) recognised that the causes of current inflation are complex, and include rising costs linked to the pandemic, and other economic factors, plus the conflict in Ukraine which has dramatically increased energy prices and, as a consequence, supply chain distribution costs.

The report concludes that the cost-of-living crisis will affect all households, but that the impact is likely to be greatest on low-income families, with research by the Economic Observatory suggesting: "***The cost-of-living crisis is disproportionately affecting poorer households....***"

The need to 'level up' on health

The government's [Levelling Up White Paper](#) highlights that the UK has larger geographical differences than many other developed countries on multiple measures, including health, and identifies that disadvantaged areas have the highest levels of community need.

The bar chart in **Appendix 3** from the Levelling Up White Paper highlights the impact this has on both Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy in England. COVID-19 has made this worse, with hospital admission and mortality rates higher among more disadvantaged groups. The pandemic has also seen disparities in access to healthcare widen in those, with waiting lists in England having increased by 55% in the most deprived 20% of areas, compared to 36% in the most affluent 20%.

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The Gloucester Perspective

Food insecurity in Gloucester

Appendix 4 lists just some of the current issues around food insecurity in Gloucester, ranging from the increasing demand for emergency food support to the growing ‘takeaway’ culture which is perceived as providing cheaper and quicker access to food, and the broader health and wellbeing challenges affecting some of our communities.

Evidence of the extent of food insecurity in the UK has been researched and mapped at local authority level by [University of Sheffield](#) who found that in January 2021, in Gloucester, a city with a population of circa 130,000: -

- **10.95% of adults suffered from hunger** - *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.*
- **14.59% of adults struggled to access food** - *defined as at least one of the following: -*
 - *Sought help accessing food.*
 - *Skipped or shrank a meal.*
 - *Not having enough food.*
- **13.06% of adults worried about not having enough food** – *defined as very worried or fairly worried about getting food.*

This data supports the need to achieve food security for everyone in Gloucester and move beyond a focus on Food Banks and other temporary or short-period solutions such as the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme.

Recent Gloucester Food Bank data shown in **Appendix 5** illustrates the growing demand for emergency food support, with year-on-year increases of more than 50% in all measures.

Food provision by ward

The map included as **Appendix 6** identifies, *by ward*, all venues offering free or subsidised meals or food – there is somewhere open every day somewhere across the city, although usually during the day rather than in the evenings; this map also helps to identify potential food deserts where currently no provision exists but is needed.

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Community collaboration: Gloucester's Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

The [Gloucester HAF programme](#), funded by the Department for Education, offers a range of activities for children and their families including family play days, football camps, music workshops, arts, and craft, with many providing nutritious food, sometimes for the whole family.

A HAF pilot, under the guise of the Holiday Kitchen, was first delivered in Gloucester in 2020 when the impact of COVID-19 on families was considerable, ranging from economic instability to lack of opportunities to connect with family and friends during lockdowns, and resulted in many experiencing mental health issues. HAF offered people the opportunity to come together over food, connect with their local communities, and access much needed support in challenging times.

Since its initial pilot, the project - which is now led by [The Venture: White City](#) – has been a collaboration of 20 community and other organisations in Gloucester, each well-known and trusted in their neighbourhoods and having shown during COVID-19 their ability to respond more quickly, more effectively, and in a more targeted way than external service providers.

The Gloucester HAF Programme was by all measures a stunning success, both in terms of the families supported and the effective organisation of high-quality diverse fun activities at 17 separate locations across the city, all underpinned by the provision of healthy and nutritious food. The community organisations responsible for the delivery of HAF responded to the needs of local communities, listening to the challenges of local neighbourhoods to support households with school children.

The graphics in **Appendix 7** provide a high-level summary of what the HAF Programme delivered in Gloucester over the 4-week summer periods of 2021 and 2022.

HAF continues to generate thousands of connections between local people, community partners and activity opportunities, and helps to maintain the trust that exists between neighbourhoods and their community organisations.

HAF using food as the 'golden thread'

Mindful of the stigma surrounding free school meals and free food in general, promotion of the Gloucester HAF Programme encouraged families to come along to a local space, take part in activities, meet other people to chat and enjoy conversations, and then stay for lunch. The food was available for all family members, not just children, to ensure that the whole family could enjoy a meal. By providing recipe bags with

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nutritious ingredients, and videos of easy-to-follow recipes, it offered families an opportunity to learn to cook and try different foods together at home.

This offer was made available to all families regardless of their circumstances as local community organisations were aware that many families who are not eligible for free school meals still suffer from food insecurity. In this way food was used as the ‘golden thread’ through which to connect people.

The Future of HAF

In October 2021, the government announced a further investment of over £200 million per year over the next three financial years for the HAF Programme following its successful roll out across England in 2021.

Community Collaboration during COVID-19

During COVID-19 Tuffley Court Community Association developed a partnership with Fare Share Southwest who agreed to supply between 10 and 20 pallets of cupboard item foods each week - if TCCA could organise transport, storage, and distribution. Local firm Downton’s (now EV Cargo) agreed to transport the pallets and helped with storage, and with support from around twenty volunteers the food was shared with over 30 community organisations across Gloucestershire for almost 2 years.

Feeding Gloucestershire

Formally launched in September 2022, [Feeding Gloucestershire](#) (FG) is a regional partner of [Feeding Britain](#) and describes its primary aim as *‘creating a network of organisations across the county that are working collectively to identify the issues causing food poverty and develop solutions for a better fairer food system’*.

FG wants to work in partnership with Gloucester City Council, the five other local authorities in Gloucestershire, the county council, and others to *“enhance the countywide conversation around food, including its availability, quality, sustainability, and origin, and be a vehicle to capture insight into the complexities of Gloucestershire’s food landscape, to share and encourage best practice, and opportunities – including funding at grassroots level.”*

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We will collaborate with FG throughout the delivery of our strategy in Gloucester to ensure that we learn from the experiences of other organisations, including our public sector colleagues; share ideas and avoid duplication of effort; and identify any potential funding opportunities FG may be able to access for the benefit of the city. **Appendix 8** shows the Operational Structure of FG.

Areas of Gloucester most at risk to the impact of inflation

A [Cost of Living: Vulnerable Households Report](#), published by Inform Gloucestershire in 2022, and using data from the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI), concludes that the following Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's) in Gloucester could be particularly vulnerable to both cost of living and deprivation, with people living here potentially facing higher economic pressures: -

Barton and Tredworth 2

Barton and Tredworth 4

Barton and Tredworth 5

Matson and Robinswood 1

Westgate 5

Appendix 9 is a Case Study by **Fair Shares**, a community organisation based in the Barton and Tredworth area of Gloucester, providing food in their communities, and its impact on individuals and families.

Local health inequalities

According to the 2019 [Index of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\)](#) Gloucester ranks as 138th out of the 317 districts in England, with nine areas of the city in the 10% most deprived nationally. The NHS framework for tackling health inequalities, [Core20Plus5](#) focuses effort on areas within the top 20% most deprived nationally, which brings in a further 12 areas of Gloucester. Lower ranking numbers equate to greater disadvantage. **Appendix 10** provides a list and map of the wards in Gloucester within the 10% and 20% most deprived in England and shows how the Indices of Deprivation in Gloucester for 2019 compares with 2015.

As can be seen from this data, Podsmead 1 Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) has been ranked as the most generally deprived in the county. Podsmead also experiences health inequalities, with significantly lower **Healthy Life Expectancy** for residents when compared to the average for England, and lower than the average for the county. The bar chart in **Appendix 11** from the Office of National Statistics (2009 – 2013) shows the healthy life expectancy at birth for females and males in Podsmead 1 and 2, compared to the average for the county and England.

This pattern is replicated in other disadvantaged areas of the city.

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The [Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy](#) (GHWB) sets the direction and priorities for improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing in the county. There are several strategic 'hooks' within the strategy relevant to the ambitions of Nourishing Gloucester; these include potential interdependencies with work underway to deliver against the following priorities: -

- Best start in life
- Healthy Lifestyles (Healthy Weight)
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Physical activity
- Mental health and wellbeing.

The GHWB strategy is supported by the [Building Back Better Strategy \(2022 – 2026\)](#) of Gloucestershire County Council which outlines their Levelling Up ambition to support communities in the county that fall within the 10% most disadvantaged in England.

The Link between Obesity and Food Insecurity

Tackling food insecurity is fundamental to delivering a whole systems approach to obesity prevention and alleviating the risk of health inequalities. Obesity has long been recognised as a good proxy for where families are struggling; children with obesity are at increased risk of serious health issues including asthma, sleep apnoea and type 2 diabetes, low self-esteem, poor mental health, bullying and stigmatisation, and life-long weight issues.

Paradoxically, there is some evidence of a link between food insecurity and obesity, and we know that levels of childhood obesity in Gloucestershire increased during the pandemic.

For children with severe obesity there is strong evidence of significantly lower physical, social, and school functioning of children.

Data from the [National Child Measurement Programme \(NCMP\) 2020/21](#) highlighted that all Gloucestershire districts saw an increase in the percentage of Reception children with obesity, with obesity rates of 15.6% for children in Gloucester, which is higher than the England average of 14.4% and the highest in the county.

In terms of adults, an [Inform Gloucestershire](#) report on healthy weight shows that the percentage with excess weight in Gloucester was significantly higher than the England average, and a separate [Inform Gloucestershire](#) report, on healthy eating, shows that (a) the availability of fast-food outlets in Gloucester is above the England average at 106 per 100,000 against an England average of 88 and (b) Gloucester has the lowest proportion of population in the county meeting the recommended '5 a day' portions of fruit and vegetables.

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Our recommendations

Our recommendations to tackle food insecurity in Gloucester break down into three delivery timescales: -

Immediate and on-going recommendations

Collaborate with community organisations and other providers to coordinate and support efforts to improve access to affordable healthy and nutritious food for those affected by food insecurity.

By **immediate and on-going** we mean actions that can be introduced now and over the next 12 months with little or no cost implications, and where each action will help to reduce food insecurity on an on-going basis.

Short to medium term recommendations

Collaborate with community organisations and other providers to develop a sustainable programme to reduce food insecurity and reliance on food banks.

By **short to medium term**, we mean actions that can be introduced within the next 1 to 3 years, may have some modest cost implications, and where each action will have a significant, positive, and on-going impact on the reduction of food insecurity.

Longer term recommendations

Collaborate with community organisations and other providers to develop a sustainable programme to eradicate food poverty permanently and remove reliance on food banks.

By **Longer Term** we mean actions that may take 3 to 5 years to be introduced, could have significant cost implications, and where each action will have a significant, positive, and on-going impact on the reduction of food insecurity.

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Immediate and on-going recommendations

Sign-posting access to affordable food in local communities

Identifying and mapping current provision and filling any gaps

- Identifying and mapping when and where people can currently eat for free or at subsidised cost in Gloucester, (*currently under development*) and sharing this within communities, following these examples: -
 - [Coventry City Council - Social Supermarkets and Food Banks Map.](#)
 - [Feeding Liverpool – Community Food Spaces Map.](#)
- Identifying gaps in what is currently available and collaborating with planners, retailers, caterers, supermarkets, farmers and producers, manufacturers, and others, to improve physical access to affordable healthy food and eliminate food deserts.
- Identifying and mapping the wide variety of shopping in the Barton Street area which offers food for many of the nationalities represented in Gloucester, sharing, and celebrating this with communities.

Surplus Food

- Understanding and mapping surplus food supply chains to identify: -
 - Who controls it.
 - The bottlenecks in the current system.
 - What surplus food is not being picked up and how this can be addressed.
- Researching the potential for development of city-wide relationships with supermarkets to achieve greater benefit by: -
 - Seeking more nutritious food from them.
 - Challenging their current performance against their Corporate Social Responsibility credentials.
 - Getting supermarkets to recognising that by accepting their surplus food, with associated packaging, community organisations are resolving a problem for supermarkets and transferring that problem onto their own organisations.
- Ensuring that community organisations recognise the need for surplus food to be stored carefully to avoid infestations, and that cardboard needs to be disposed of regularly to reduce the risk of fire.
- Consulting with **Gloucestershire County Council** to map their tenant farmers, some of whom may be a source of surplus food.

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Enhancing the current availability of food

- Seeking access to surplus locally grown produce, using organisations such as [The Gleaning Network](#) who help to set up networks of independent and self-supporting gleaning hubs, each run by a community organisation, to identify and 'rescue' leftover harvest from farms for redistribution to those in need; and who offer tool kits and grants to assist in their set up.
- Introducing community organisations to people they would not normally meet, such as local farmers, to develop relationships.
- Encouraging self-help through the creation of social supermarkets or pantries that offer a **Hand Up not a Handout** on a 'pay what you can afford' or weekly membership basis - allowing people to retain their dignity and avoid stigma.

Promoting alternative routes to food

- Encouraging people to sign up to food sharing Apps such as: -
 - [OLIO](#) which connects neighbours with each other and with local businesses so surplus food can be shared, not thrown away.
 - [Too Good to Go](#) which enables individuals to track down unsold food from business which would otherwise go to waste.
 - [Neighbourly](#) to connect with Lidl, Aldi, M & S, Sainsburys.
- Promoting Household Voucher schemes and government initiatives such as [Healthy Start Vouchers](#), to achieve maximum take-up.

Supporting the maintenance and development of sustainable communities

Support and collaboration

- Recognising and supporting community organisations through a process of continuous engagement, ensuring their representation in the decision-making process.
- Recognising the strengths of the current delivery networks and building on these, encouraging community organisations to collaborate to identify and reflect on the bigger issues affecting their neighbourhoods, promoting, and encouraging community led solutions.
- Offering advice and guidance to communities on how to set up: -
 - a social supermarket or pantry.
 - a community kitchen that meets food standards.
 - food projects.
 - a Community Interest Company or a Cooperative.

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- Recognising the social value of the provision of food as the 'golden thread' to build connections by developing spaces and services that start with food and offer a 'wrap around support' e.g., debt advice, mental health support, health advice, GP, combatting social isolation by bringing people together, offering good affordable nutritious food, and the opportunity to eat and chat with someone.
- Seeking solutions to the provision of affordable fresh and/or good quality food from a local retail food store within each community, especially for those without transport.

'Lived Experience' Consultation

- A city council representative regularly attending gatherings held by community organisation delivery partners where food is provided, to meet informally with those who have 'lived experience' of food insecurity to find out what works and what doesn't work.

Information sharing and learning

- Asset mapping skills, resources, kitchens, community gardens, and allotments within Gloucester communities and sharing food and asset map data with community organisation and **Feeding Gloucestershire** for them to add to and maintain a county wide map and database of current provision, accessible via their website.
- Engaging with and learning from food initiatives in other cities such as [Brighton and Hove Food Partnership](#) and sharing lessons learned.
- Replicating the Long Table concept in other communities across the city.
- Supporting the creation of pictorial recipe cards which use measures such as 'cupful' or 'spoonful' rather than ounces or grams.
- Developing a checklist of what makes a 'good' food project e.g., community owned, value for money, offers good nutrition, and is inclusive.
- Educating people around how to cost-effectively cook a meal at home, for example: -
 - By using a slow cooker or pressure cooker to keep electricity costs down.
 - By using a microwave to cook a meal rather than to heat up a 'ready meal.'

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Developing links and working with other sectors, including

Health and wellbeing

- **Prevention, Wellbeing, and Communities at Gloucestershire County Council** – on ways of collaborating to: -
 - Improve health and wellbeing through improved access to good quality affordable food and reduced food insecurity, for example, linking with Children and Young People’s Weight Management Service and Gloucestershire Integrated Healthy Lifestyles Service – see [First 1001 Days Project](#).
 - Encourage healthy eating and promoting [The Eat Well Guide](#) - the nationally adopted model for achieving good nutrition, whilst also educating people that it is much cheaper to **make** than **buy** a meal for a family.
 - Develop a pictorial version of the above like the version devised by [Kingsholm Primary School](#).
 - Determine the availability online of alternative versions of The Eat Well Guide in different languages and offering guidance on nutritious food more aligned to food that meets the tastes of other cultures or nationalities.
 - Support achievement of the [Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy](#) strategic priorities of Healthy Lifestyles (Healthy Weight); Physical Activity; Loneliness and Social Isolation; Mental Health and Wellbeing; and Best start in life.
- [Gloucester City Integrated Locality Partnership](#) - to align with their priorities and plans to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.
- Schools, Home Start, and Youth Centres - to encourage referrals to community kitchens, as happens at The Long Table, Matson.

Education

- **Gloucestershire County Council Education:** -
 - To encourage access to school kitchens, school meals provision, and the provision of food education in schools.
 - To encourage easier access to school allotments e.g., at weekends, for both education and community benefit.
 - To ensure Adult Education embed food awareness into courses they run, including within basic skills courses such as literacy and numeracy - for example Multiply – plus IT skills and more targeted courses around employability.

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Access to vulnerable groups

- **Social Housing Landlords** – To help identify vulnerable tenants, both individuals and families.
- **Children and Family Hubs** – To ensure their access to available food provision.
- **Gloucestershire County Council Health and Social Care, and Schools** – To help identify vulnerable adults and children.

Cross-collaboration between and within public bodies: -

- To make better use of existing assets such as school and community kitchens.
- To encourage public sector organisations to recognise and support the use of school facilities such as kitchens as a wider community asset rather than seeing those facilities as being solely for use by schools.
- To help turn negatives issues into positives, such as: -
 - Positioning community raised beds and planters or growing spaces onto paved areas prone to illegal parking.
 - Resolving complaints about overgrown gardens by creating shared garden spaces which help to connect people.

Exploit opportunities to align strategies

- **Gloucester City Council Social Value Policy** – to seek community benefit by ensuring business engagement in the provision of surplus food.
- **Gloucester City Council's Cost of Living Support Hub and Warm Spaces Initiative** – to link with food provision.
- **Gloucester City Council Planning** – to identify ways to discourage approval of more fast-food stores in the city e.g., in proximity to schools.
- **Gloucester City Council Allotments (Neighbourhood Management Services)** to: -
 - Transfer management of allotments to local community organisations who can encourage their use as community spaces.
 - Encourage the creation of new Community allotments such as the [City Farm Allotment](#) run by Fair Shares.
 - Amend allotment tenancy agreements to require the sharing of surplus food with social supermarkets, pantries, or community kitchens.

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Championing change

Lobbying

- **Lobbying Feeding Gloucestershire to:**
 - Commission research to identify the underlying reasons for and barriers to accessing food.
 - Support the policy proposals of [A People's Food Policy](#) in relation to: -
 - Fully integrating healthy food and sustainable farming into the national curriculum for schools.
 - Supporting community food growing projects.
 - Expanding and improving food education programmes in schools to teach the next generation.
 - Explore the potential for development of a Food Insecurity data capture and analysis system in partnership with a local research organisation such as [Campden BRI](#).
 - Develop and support campaigns to raise awareness about the need to reduce surplus food.
 - Lobby central government to: -
 - Support the following recommendations of the [National Food Strategy](#): -
 - Ongoing funding for the Holiday Activities and Food programme.
 - Expansion of the Healthy Start scheme.
 - Automatic enrolment to Free School meals initiative.
 - Launch of a new “Eat and Learn” initiative for schools - bringing food education back into school, including regular ‘cook and eat’ lunchtimes for school pupils; helping children see food as more than fuel by engaging them through accreditation schemes such as [Food for Life](#) by the Soil Association to improve food and food education in schools; consulting with local schools already undertaking initiatives such as this, for example Widden and Elmbridge Primary Schools – see Case Study in **Appendix 12**.
 - Offer Gloucester as an area to trial the “Community Eatwell” programme recommended in the [National Food Strategy](#) and which would give GPs the option to prescribe fruit and vegetables – along with food-related education and social support – to patients suffering the effects of poor diet or food insecurity.
 - Increase the funding and reach of Free School Meals or introduce a Universal Free School Meals approach in Gloucester, which already exists in some areas; examples include:
 - [London Borough of Islington](#) – providing universal free school meals to children.
 - [Sheffield City Council](#) who have, introduced an automatic enrolment scheme for free school meals.

Definition of nourishing: (of food) providing the substances necessary for health and bodily growth.

- Remove or reduce the delay in individuals receiving their benefit payments when first going from work onto benefits.
- Encouraging **Feeding Gloucestershire** to lobby central government, local MP, and Gloucestershire County Council Education & Learning to gain access to school kitchens which lie dormant every evening throughout the year, and all-day during school holidays.
- Supporting **Feeding Gloucestershire**, [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Southwest Limited](#) (FWAG), and [Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership](#) in their ambition for Gloucestershire to become a **Sustainable Food County** through participation in the Soil Association programme [Sustainable Food Places](#). which focuses on six key issues: -
 - Promoting healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food to the public.
 - Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and poor food access.
 - Building community food knowledge e.g., cooking, and growing skills – see The Long Table Case Study in **Appendix 13**.
 - Promoting a vibrant and sustainable food economy.
 - Transforming catering and food procurement.
 - Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system.

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Short to medium term recommendations (1 – 3 Years)

Developing sustainable solutions

Social supermarkets and food pantries

- Consulting with and learning from the experience of other councils such as: -
 - The [Tower Hamlets Food Hub](#), which empowers over 60 Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to provide direct food deliveries to vulnerable residents and created a key logistical centre which collates and distributes food items to support local food banks and other food aid organisations.
 - Barnsley Council, who aim to ‘give people a hand up rather than a handout’ and have established a [community food hub](#) to provide access to high quality ingredients for people who may be experiencing food insecurity.
- Working with communities to set up Affordable Food Clubs similar to [The Poet’s Pantry in Podsmead](#) or the [West Cheltenham Community Pantry](#), offering good quality fresh, frozen, chilled, and long life food, including fruit and vegetables through social supermarkets/Food Pantries, operating on a membership scheme basis offering donated and in-date surplus food to members who pay a modest weekly fee and providing approximately £15 worth of non-perishable and fresh food plus household items.
- Consulting with and learning from the experience of other councils such as the introduction by [Kirklees Council](#) of a **mobile** food pantry that increases access to affordable, healthy and nutritious food, including culturally appropriate food for refugees.

“The Poets Pantry project has been very successful. It started out as part of the evolution of work done with public health in Podsmead. It was inevitable that the effect of the pandemic would accelerate the need to develop support to help combat food poverty. It worked because we were able to offer a range of items that were not readily available in our locality, at a cost that was affordable, that helped to reduce surplus food. This approach did not stigmatise those who used the pantry and helped prevent or at least reduce food poverty. The relationships established ensured support without judgement and access to other levels of help.”

Les Jevins @ Podsmead Big Local

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Community allotments

- Identifying and engaging with individuals who want to grow fresh food for their communities, such as [Granton Community Gardeners](#) who create and cultivate community gardens or allotments, host community meals and events, support anyone in the area who wants to grow food and think creatively about how best to make sure everyone in the area is fed well.
- Working with [The Conservation Volunteers \(TCV\)](#) who will support community organisations to:
 - Develop food growing amongst communities who have limited experience and knowledge in community food growing.
 - Develop a network of food growing Champions to promote the benefits of food growing and assist others in developing skills.
 - Deliver free training and resources to communities to help their growing experience.
 - Enable groups to meet and share their growing ideas, tips, learning and achievements.
 - Invite growers to our growing events.
 - Assist groups to apply for grants and funding to develop their projects.
- Collaborating with Feeding Gloucestershire in achievement of the Soil Association's [Sustainable Food Places Awards](#).

Reducing surplus food

- Consulting with **Gloucestershire County Council** to identify the potential to source surplus food from their tenant farmers in the county.
- Developing connections with local businesses, farmers, supermarkets, bakeries, greengrocers, butchers, restaurateurs, market traders and stall holders to seek regular surplus food donations for distribution at Affordable Food Clubs e.g., through **Gloucestershire Gateway Trust** and **Gloucester Services**, seeking surplus food donations from their suppliers.
- By **Gloucester City Council** having conversations with local cafés, and restaurants regarding the provision of their surplus food to communities, supported by a 'Nourishing Gloucester' accreditation scheme for businesses who sign up.
- Developing and maintaining links with local organisations such as BITC, and Round Table to source surplus food.
- Consulting with and learning from the surplus food reduction experience of other councils such as the [London Borough of Merton's Community Fridge Network](#).
- In partnership with the [Real Farming Trust's Ready Healthy Eat](#) project, organising a workshop of key stakeholders across Gloucester, to understand, explore, and plan for improvements in surplus food supply chains.

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Re-creating a consortium of community organisations

- Building upon the relationships developed across neighbourhoods during COVID-19 lockdown, the HAF Programme, and wider partnerships such as the [GEM Project](#).
- Developing a coordinated approach, sharing best practice, and collaborating with each other.
- Using shared facilities and resources (people and produce) wherever possible.
- Building capacity and sustainability within communities through this collaborative approach.

'Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.' Helen Keller

Championing change

Food and education

- Collaborating with communities to provide access to food education through community cookery clubs – basic ‘how to cook’ in small classes, and recipe packs with ingredients and easy recipe cards.
- Encouraging the use of community and school facilities to develop Children’s Kitchens to operate within nurseries and children’s centres in areas with high levels of food insecurity, working with families with children aged between two and five, on themes such as cooking, growing produce, recycling, and surplus food; see [The Children’s Kitchen Final Evaluation Report](#).
- Ensuring that community organisations recognise the importance of Food Safety Standards and the need for awareness of allergens and supporting them to achieve the required standards.

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Longer term recommendations (3 – 5 Years)

Developing sustainable solutions

- Developing a centralised storage facility and Dark Kitchen, potentially in a warehouse, run by an existing or new Charitable Community Benefit Society, Community Interest Company, or Cooperative.
- Working alongside and in partnership with community organisations to ensure continuity and maintain local connections.
- **The storage facility** to function as an alternative supply chain, as a central point for surplus food deliveries and collections, and for distribution to community hubs for the storage and delivery of fresh and ambient food.
- **The Dark Kitchen** to produce and distribute ready meals and recipe boxes to community hubs.
 - Targeting primary schools for the provision of free school meals, taking over contracts from current outsourced businesses such as Apetito, as they fall due for renewal.
 - Funded by Gloucestershire County Council.
- Both the storage facility and Dark Kitchen developing into a city-wide offering, and ultimately achieving critical mass by extending into: -
 - Secondary schools.
 - A ‘meals on wheels’ offering to individuals in their homes.
 - The food element of Care Packages funded by the Social Care sector.

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Governance

We will develop the following Governance Structure: -

Steering group

It is recommended that a Steering group is established, comprising key stakeholders from across the city and including representation from community organisations directly involved in service delivery to those experiencing food insecurity.

Risk

A risk register will be developed, shared with the Steering Group and elsewhere as appropriate, and regularly monitored. The Risk Register will help us to identify, monitor, and mitigate potential risks in key areas such as Strategic, Financial, Reputational, Operational, and Fraud.

Monitoring and evaluation

A robust and effective monitoring and evaluation framework will be established by which to assess performance against this plan, including Benchmarking. There is a range of data sources available by which to benchmark Gloucester in terms of Food Insecurity; these include: -

- DWP's annual Family Resources Survey.
- Food Insecurity Research by University of Sheffield.
- Comparison with local data sources from across Gloucestershire as measured by each of the six local authorities.
- Other proxy measures could include Free School Meal eligibility, Healthy Start Voucher uptake, and Universal Credit claims.

We will collaborate with public health bodies to ensure relevant sharing of data and to create a joint framework for monitoring and evaluating the impacts on food insecurity, including regular dialogue with affected communities and vulnerable groups.

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Acknowledgements

Our grateful thanks go to the following for their support and help in developing this Strategy: -

Elmbridge Primary School	Matson Robinswood and White City Community Partnership
Fair Shares	Podsmead Big Local
Feeding Britain	Prevention, Wellbeing and Communities, Gloucestershire County Council
Feeding Gloucestershire	Read with Me
GL Communities	Real Farming Trust
Gloucester City Homes	Roots Coffee and Community Social Enterprise and CIC
Gloucester Community Building Collective	St. Catharine's Church, Gloucester
Gloucester Feed the Hungry CIC	The Grace Network
Gloucester Food Bank	The Long Table
Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS)	The Venture: White City
Gloucestershire Gateway Trust	Together in Matson
Grange Baptist Church	Tuffley Court Community Association
Kingsholm Church of England Primary School	Westmorland Family
Matson Baptist Church	Windrush Community

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Appendix 1

The impact of food insecurity and fuel poverty on children and parents

“As the cost-of-living crisis worsens, many more households are struggling to heat and power their homes and put a warm, nutritious meal on the table. There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that, despite parents doing everything they can to protect them from food insecurity and fuel poverty, both issues are having immediate and ongoing impacts on children’s physical and mental health.”

Babies living in colder temperatures require more calories for growth and, without this additional nourishment, they are more likely to have lower than average weight gain and dietary deficiency as young children.

Children living in households experiencing food insecurity and fuel poverty have higher rates of asthma, as well as other severe respiratory problems.

Children who are unable to access a healthy diet also have an increased risk of obesity or medical issues like headaches, stomach-aches, and backaches, as well as having difficulties sleeping.

Children growing up hungry are also twice as likely to be anxious compared to their peers who get enough to eat.

Adolescents growing up cold and hungry face stigmatisation, social isolation, and feelings of helplessness, which can negatively impact on educational attainment and social mobility.

Teenagers that are going hungry and live in a cold home are more likely to suffer severe depression or attempt suicide.

Lone parent households and households where the age of the youngest member is under 5 are at the highest risk of experiencing fuel poverty. Households where the age of the youngest member is 11-15 live in the deepest fuel poverty.

Parents living in fuel poverty are much more likely to develop depression compared to parents who live in a warm home.

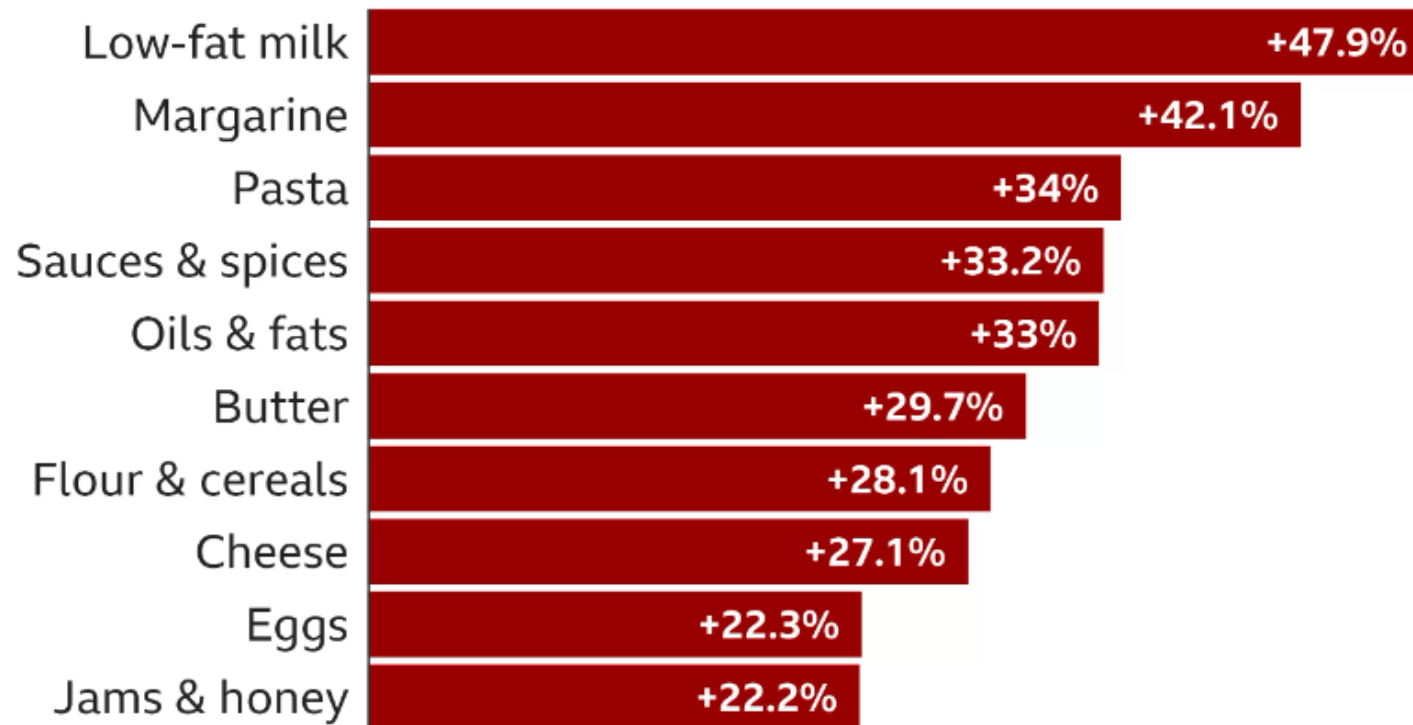
Adults who are trying to cope with food insecurity and economic hardship may be extremely stressed; this can affect the way they interact with and are able to care for their children.

Source: The Food Foundation and National Energy Action Joint Briefing: September 2022

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Appendix 2

Inflation on Staple Food – October 2021 to October 2022



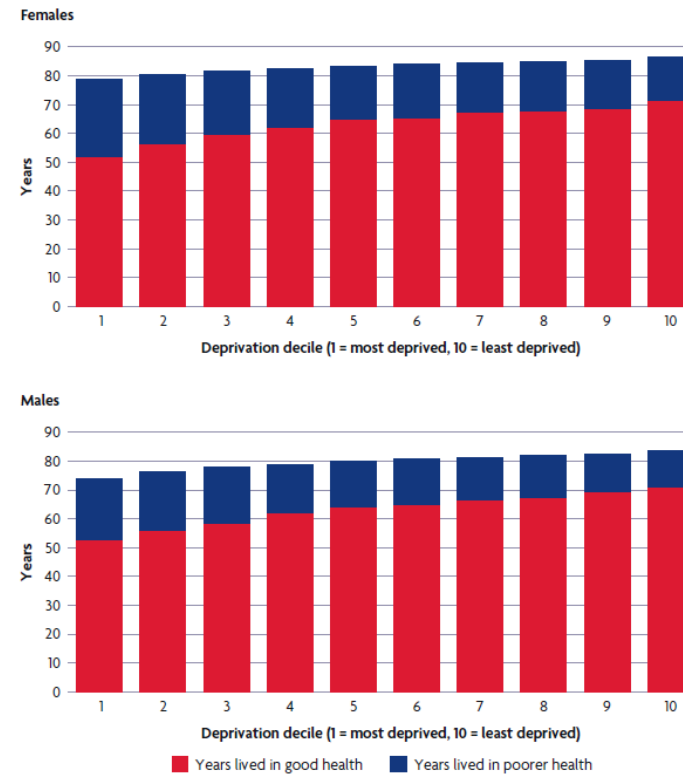
Source: Office for National Statistics

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Appendix 3

Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy in England

Figure 3.5 Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy, England neighbourhoods by deprivation decile, 2017-2019⁴²¹



Source: [Levelling Up White Paper](#)

Appendix 4

Food Insecurity in Gloucester - Current issues

- The increasing demand for emergency food support is not sustainable.
- The current emergency and subsidised food support is fragmented and patchy and lacks coordination.
- There is need for an alternative supply chain for delivery of emergency food support beyond the local Food Bank.
- Those most disadvantaged are worst affected by the current double digit increases in food costs, especially in staple foods.
- Each ward within the city is unique, with its own ethnic and cultural mix and different food needs.
- Access to food that meets cultural tastes is limited and tends to be concentrated around the Barton and Tredworth area.
- Language difficulties bring additional barriers in some communities.
- Lack of both gardening knowledge and commitment to ownership of allotments, meaning a lack of continuity.
- Supplies of surplus food from supermarkets and Fare Share Southwest are welcome but often lack nutrition.
- Increasing frustration of VCS organisations who face competing priorities with limited resources and funding, especially for food projects.
- Those reliant upon limited public transport offering or without their own transport struggle to access affordable good quality fresh food.
- Negative attitudes towards food by some parents - “my child doesn’t like...” when in fact children can be the more adventurous.
- Access to free food can create a lack of motivation to make changes in life, remove personal accountability, and create dependency.
- Community support post-HAF and post-COVID-19 has waned as people return to work following furlough.
- Gloucester is an urban area surrounded by countryside, much of which is farming; this potential opportunity is under-used.
- There are major challenges around individuals and families cooking at home; these include: -
 - Lack of knowledge of what is meant by nutritious food - and how to cook it - with resulting lack of confidence and motivation.
 - Lack of food storage e.g., freezer, means inability to cook in bulk and freeze.
 - Lack of suitable equipment, sometimes as basic as saucepans and cutlery.
 - Lack of a family role model (parent/grandparent).
 - Lack of familiarity with some foods and ingredients, and lack of local shops selling them, either at reasonable cost or at all.
 - Lack of time, especially for those with two jobs and/or single parent families.
- A growing ‘takeaway’ culture which is perceived as providing cheaper and quicker access to food.
- The culture of cooking and then eating together has been lost in some families.
- Food Banks are often considered the last line of defence against hunger and food insecurity and their use can bring with it a stigma and a lack of self-esteem for being given something for nothing.
- The broader health and wellbeing challenges affecting some of our communities are inter-related with issues of food insecurity.

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Appendix 5

Emergency Food Support – October 2021 to October 2022

Source: Gloucester Food Bank			
	October 2021	October 2022	% Increase
No. of Referrals by household	343	534	56%
Food distributed (tonnes)	6.2 tonnes	10 tonnes	61%
No. of meals	14,000	23,000	64%
No. of people fed	680	1175	73%

Areas of Gloucester most affected
Barton & Tredworth
Kingsholm & Wotton
Matson & Robinswood
Moreland
Westgate

Areas of Gloucester where demand is increasing most
Coney Hill
Quedgeley Severn Vale

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Appendix 6

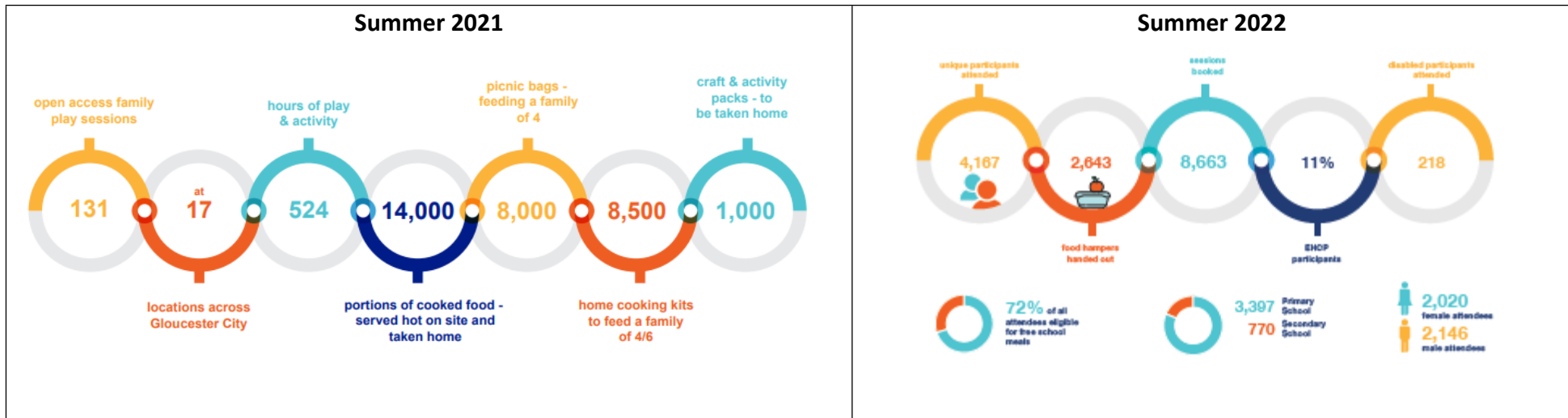
Current Food Provision by Ward

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Appendix 7

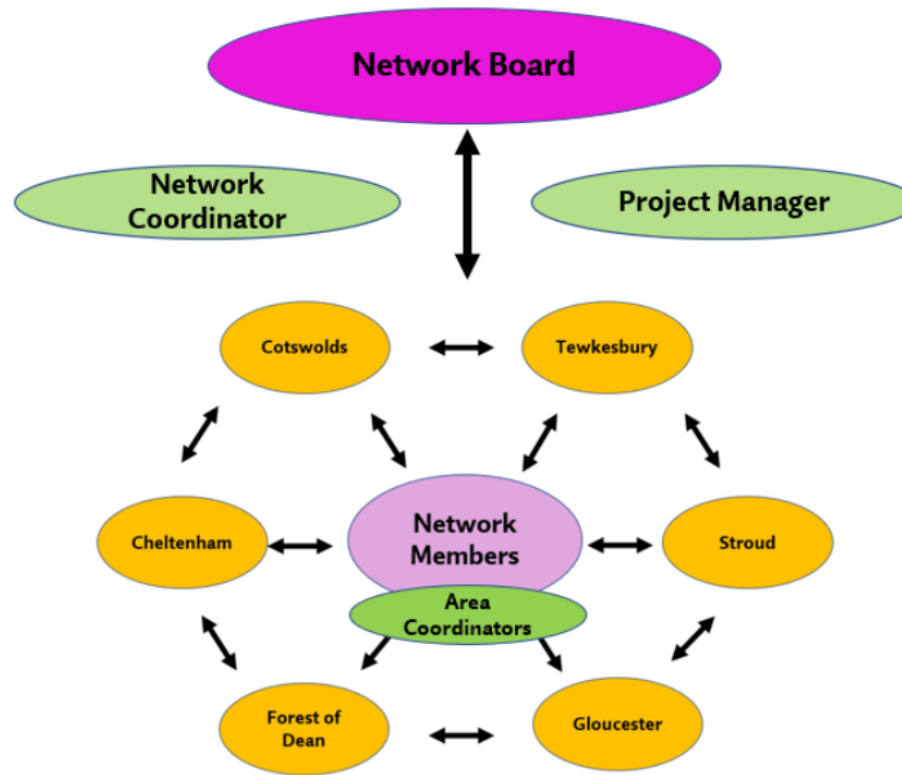
HAF Gloucester Programme Statistics 2021 - 2022



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Appendix 8

Feeding Gloucestershire Operational Structure



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Appendix 9

Case Study: Fair Shares, Gloucester

Each week for almost 2 years Fair Shares has been receiving a delivery of fresh vegetables and fruit from a fine food company who work directly with growers. The amount and quality of the food is excellent, in most cases surpassing that of local supermarkets. They share the food with struggling families in the local community either through several community cafes or by inviting families known to be struggling to come and pick up enough for their needs. They also use a small amount to support their own lunch group, often making a delicious fruit salad to serve following a cooked main meal. Recently they have seen the number of people attending the lunch group increase and there are now often around 30 people attending each week.

Each week around 8-10 families and 3-4 other community kitchens come to collect. One person collects for her family of 4 children, and for her friend who also has 4 children. She said *“the fruit and vegetables are amazing, I can collect enough for both our families, which means I can save some money and put a bit more on the electricity. Thank you.”*

Another person who comes regularly collects on behalf of a group of older people who live at a local supported housing association and said, *“the residents make soup each week which they then share and eat together.”*



Someone who collects on behalf of Emmaus residents, all of whom have previously been homeless, said *“I never really ate vegetables when I was growing up and as a result, I suffered a vitamin deficiency. With encouragement from my support worker, I now eat a much healthier diet which is having a positive impact on my health”*.



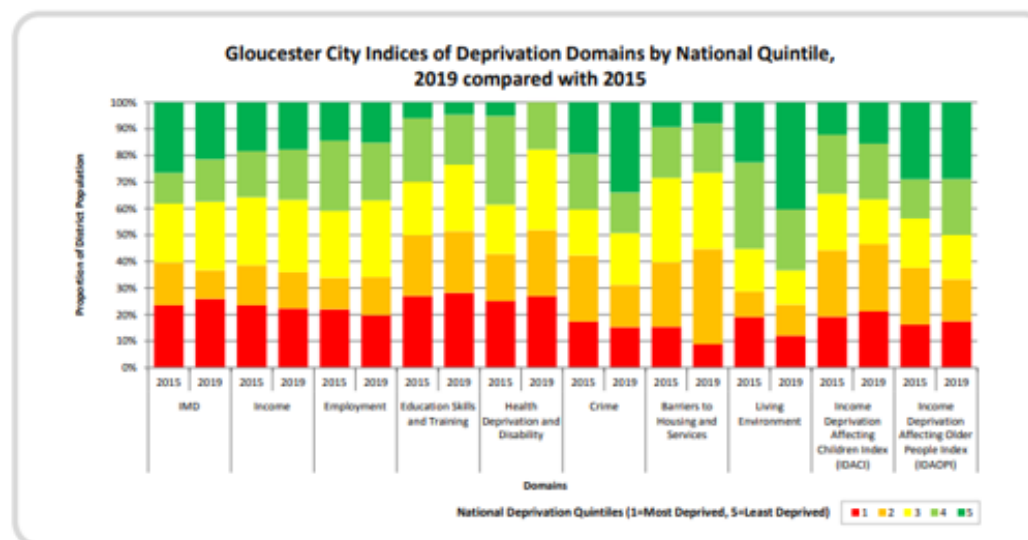
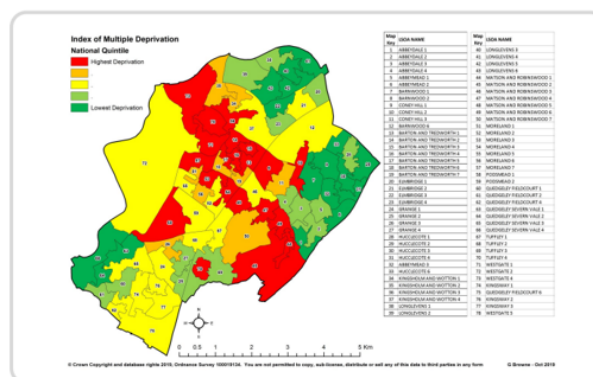
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Appendix 10

Gloucester wards within the 10% and 20% most deprived in England

GLOUCESTER WARDS IN 10% MOST DEPRIVED NATIONALLY	NATIONAL RANKING OUT OF 32,844	GLOUCESTER WARDS IN 20% MOST DEPRIVED NATIONALLY	NATIONAL RANKING OUT OF 32,844
PODSMEAD 1	621	MATSON AND ROBINSWOOD 6	3508
MATSON AND ROBINSWOOD 1	735	MATSON AND ROBINSWOOD 4	3800
WESTGATE 1	1183	BARTON AND TREDWORTH 2	4101
KINGSHOLM AND WOTTON 3	1456	MORELAND 7	4897
WESTGATE 5	1579	CONEY HILL 2	5091
MORELAND 4	2221	WESTGATE 4	5109
TUFFLEY 4	2801	BARTON AND TREDWORTH 5	5136
MATSON AND ROBINSWOOD 5	2948	MORELAND 3	5238
BARTON AND TREDWORTH 4	3126	BARTON AND TREDWORTH 3	5660
		MATSON AND ROBINSWOOD 2	5681
		BARTON AND TREDWORTH 1	5747
		CONEY HILL 1	6076

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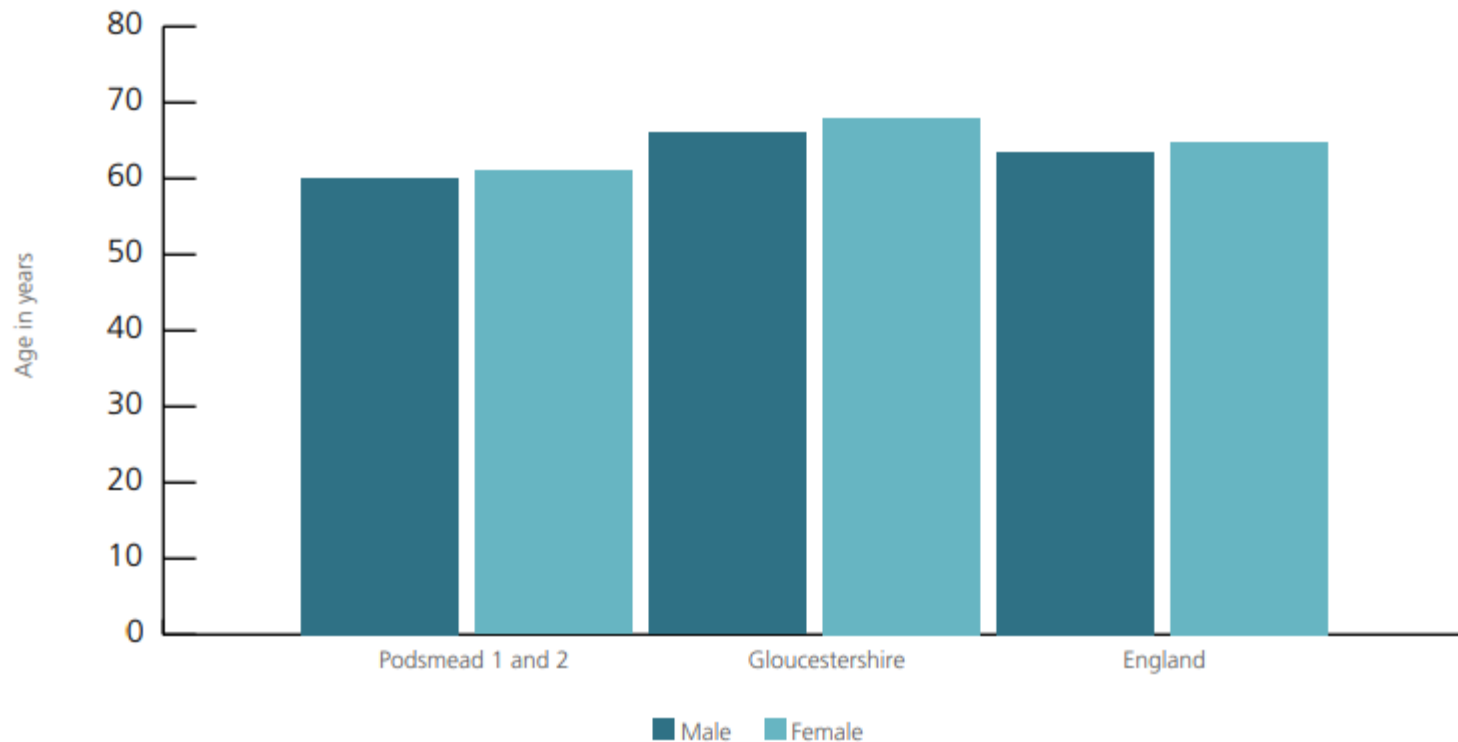


Source: [Index of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\) 2019](#)

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Appendix 11

Healthy life expectancy at birth for females and males in Podsmead 1 and 2, compared to the average for the county and England



Source: Office of National Statistics (2009 – 2013)

N.B. This pattern is replicated in other disadvantaged areas of the city.

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Appendix 12

Case Study: Enrichment and Community Food Programme at Elmbridge Primary School, Gloucester

This project uses good quality fresh fruit and vegetables donated to Fair Shares by a large farm producer and supplier, which would otherwise go to waste.

“Here at Elmbridge Primary School, we have been educating the children about the importance of healthy eating and wellbeing, using surplus food that we pick up each week from Fair Shares.

We are providing all the children with healthy snacks and introducing them to new fruit and vegetables that they may not have had tried before. We understand that not all children have access to healthy snacks or the means to be able to source their own, so with this programme we can reach a wider sector within our school.

*“I love tasting new things
and learning the names of
things I haven’t seen
before”*



“This is giving me courage to try new food”

Here you can see a group of our Year 3 and Year 4 children enjoying some mange tout.

Definition of nourishing: (of food) providing the substances necessary for health and bodily growth.

We are also running an after-school Cookery Club and additional cooking via our enrichment programme. Using the food donated the children can take part in a number of lessons which will help encourage a healthier lifestyle. We are teaching them ways to use up the food in their cupboards by using food donated to us that would otherwise have been wasted. The children thoroughly enjoy these sessions and have a great understanding of the benefits these will bring.”



“It will benefit us in life because we will know how to cook for ourselves.”

“The lessons teach us new skills and how to cook independently and safely”

In addition to the enrichment and cookery lessons provided for the children, we are also supporting our families who may need extra help due to the rise in the cost of living, with weekly collections of fresh produce made available for all families in need. We advertise this extra support via our school newsletter and make weekly calls to families, inviting them into school every week to collect the produce on offer. This also gives us an opportunity to offer any further help and advice discreetly and confidentially.

Di Howard @ Elmbridge Primary School

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Appendix 13

Case Study - The Long Table, Matson

The Long Table, Matson, runs a weekly **Slow Cooker Group** and attracts eight to ten people at each session. Each week the group try new recipes and learn how to prepare the ingredients and cook a nutritious family meal using a **very low-cost** Slow Cooker.

Emma Wilson, who manages The Long Table in Matson and runs the sessions, is also producing a recipe book for those attending to take home with them.

Emma said *"It's great to see how someone's confidence grows when they learn a new skill, and of course slow cookers are so cost effective to use, costing about 18p for 8 hours, which is a real bonus right now."*

'Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.' Proverb



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Anonymous quotes from people experiencing food insecurity in Gloucester will be ‘peppered’ throughout final version	
<p><i>"I receive shopping vouchers at the hotel. This has been very important to my family because when we first arrived in the UK and while we were waiting for our money from the Home Office, we were able to go to Asda and buy fresh fruit and some food for the children that we were not able to get at the hotel.</i></p> <p><i>The hotel gives us food, but sometimes the children will not eat it and I find this a great worry, so we buy vegetables such as carrots and other things that do not need cooking."</i></p>	<p><i>"I get food every Friday from GARAS which helps me to pay my bills. I have 3 children and when we arrived in Gloucester, I needed to buy school uniforms and some kitchen items.</i></p> <p><i>I mostly spend my money on food. The food at GARAS is so useful and my children look forward to seeing what I have as sometimes there are different things that we have not tried before. There are often vegetables that are great."</i></p>
<p><i>"I am a single Mum with two girls. My income has dropped considerably, and I have fallen behind on my rent.</i></p> <p><i>One of my daughters is at school while the other is still at home. I am finding myself going without food to ensure my daughter takes a healthy lunchbox to school. I have never found myself in such a difficult situation before and have never had to reach out for help until now."</i></p>	<p><i>"I'm a mum of five kids and live with my husband who works. I struggle with my mental health but before COVID-19 I always managed to stay on top of things. Recently, with the cost of everything going up week by week, it's hard to make ends meet.</i></p> <p><i>We went to the food bank a few times, but it made me feel like we had nothing, and left me feeling really low.</i></p> <p><i>I go to a local community group and when I was there, I heard about how I could collect some fresh fruit and vegetables every week from them. I now try to go each week to pick some up for our family and, because it's a community project, it doesn't make me feel the same.</i></p> <p><i>It's making a massive difference to us - it's awful thinking you have nothing, everyone needs someone they can go to for help."</i></p>
<p><i>"I feel guilty getting food, it's embarrassing to walk in and see the food laid out in bags in the hall. I have pride issues with this. Also, my kids wouldn't eat the food on offer, and I didn't want to waste it."</i></p>	<p><i>"Vouchers take the strain off, you can buy what the family will eat, and don't feel labelled or stigmatised. Even the supermarket staff don't judge you, as the voucher doesn't identify anything."</i></p>