



Summary of the Food Equality Stakeholder Meetings and Surveys

Bristol City Council is working with Feeding Bristol and other stakeholders to develop a 'Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan' (FESAP) for Bristol, which will provide a roadmap for addressing issues of food poverty, insecurity and sustainability throughout the city. Starting the project in December 2020, this brief report outlines the process that has been taken so far in the development of the FESAP, including a summary overview of the Stakeholder Meetings and Survey feedback.

1. Context

The 'Quality of Life' Survey carried out by Bristol City Council found that an average of 1 in 20 households (5%) experience severe or moderate food insecurity in Bristol (JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020/21). This equates to approximately 10,000 households across the city. As expected, this issue is particularly prevalent in areas of economic deprivation, with 1 in 8 households (12%) experiencing severe or moderate food insecurity in the most acutely affected parts of the city (Stockwood and Hartcliffe & Withywood wards). Of the 10,000 affected households in Bristol, more than 3,000 experience severe food insecurity (JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020/21). An inequality that has been especially highlighted over the last 12 months during the Covid-19 pandemic¹². While Bristolians have rallied together in response to the pandemic and the increasing need for emergency food provision; the purpose of the Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan is to think longer-term about securing a future where people in Bristol have access to affordable nutritious food and the knowledge and skills to have a healthy and sustainable diet.

Food equality is an important outcome within Bristol's *One City Plan*, which includes the goal (by 2050) that: '*Everyone in Bristol will have access to healthy, ethical and sustainably produced food*'. It is also a key theme for the *Going for Gold Sustainable Food Places* award and its legacy work through the anticipated *Bristol Good Food Plan 2030*.

¹ Since March 2020, Universal Credit claimants have more than doubled in Bristol. As we know, a key driver of food insecurity is financial hardship, and recent analysis on national food insecurity data collected by the DWP tells us that 43% of households claiming Universal Credit experience food insecurity compared to the average national household (8%). Though it is important to note that this data was collected prior to the £20 UC uplift.

(CAOP, 2021: <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/food-insecurity-now-we-have-the-data-its-time-to-act/>).

² As Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on food inequality in the city, it is important to recognise that the JSNA food insecurity data was collected in the months prior to the pandemic, and as a consequence current rates of food insecurity are likely to be higher.



2. Aims

The process of developing the Bristol Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan will aim to:

- Co-produce a shared vision of food equality for Bristol
- Identify solutions to the barriers of food equality in Bristol
- Achieve a co-ordinated, One City approach to food equality.
- Ensure good governance, transparency and inclusivity at all stages of the development and implementation

3. Methodology

It is imperative that the FESAP is created through a collaboration of key stakeholders throughout the city, including both representatives of organisations working directly and indirectly within the food sector, and members of the wider community. Originally working to a 4-month deadline (March 2021), the process of stakeholder meetings and survey follow up was chosen to help give as much opportunity for individuals, organisations and communities to provide their insight and knowledge. In between the stakeholder meetings the data was analysed and used to form and evolve the ideas and concepts that would shape the FESAP.

The Food Equality Stakeholder Group meetings included representatives from a wide range of sectors and communities (see section 7 for list of stakeholders). During each meeting, breakout group discussions were held to explore focused issues, and facilitators were used to capture feedback and ensure that everyone had an opportunity to express their views.

In the first meeting stakeholders explored what food equality means to Bristol, the barriers to food equality, and what actions we can take as a City to address these. In this session, breakout groups were mixed randomly to help share experiences and viewpoints from different sectors.

The issues discussed in the second stakeholder group meeting included feedback on the themes identified from the first meeting and survey and explored how we measure the success of the FESAP, and governance, accountability and inclusivity. The breakout sessions in this meeting, involved more focused groups with individuals working on the themes that were pertinent to their expertise, knowledge and experience.

After each meeting, a follow-up survey was circulated to the Stakeholder Group to capture any additional comments, and also to allow those who had been unable to attend the meeting to share their views.



During the first phase of the FESAP development, 100 individuals and 58 different organisations took part in either the Stakeholder group meetings or provided feedback in a survey. These individuals were either independent specialists or were representing one of the 58 Stakeholder organisations listed in section 7.

This development of the FESAP has had a strong emphasis on co-creation and evolving the processes in respect of the feedback we have received. With an extension of timeline for completion, now September 2021, we are afforded more time to develop the FESAP with wider community input. As a consequence, the second phase will involve engaging with communities throughout Bristol. This Community Consultation work is described in more detail below. Once completed, this will be followed up with a further Food Equality Stakeholder Group Meeting, giving an opportunity to discuss the output of the consultations.

Throughout this process, the FESAP will progress through both the Bristol City Council and One City decision making process, with the aim of making Food Equality both a policy and part of the Council's strategy.

4. First Stakeholder Engagement Meeting

On the 8th December 2020, Bristol City Council and Feeding Bristol held the first Food Equality Stakeholder Engagement Meeting for the FESAP project. The meeting took place on zoom, and in breakout rooms we discussed the following questions:

1. What does food inequality look and feel like in Bristol?
2. What does it look and feel like in comparison to food equality?
3. What are the barriers to food equality in Bristol?
4. How can we overcome them?
5. What projects are tackling these well? Where do we look to for solutions?

Participants were also asked to complete a Mentimeter, sharing three words they associate with food equality. Following this meeting, a survey was created asking the same questions, which was sent out on the 23rd December to a wider cohort of people and organisations than those who attended the first meeting. The data from each of the group discussions and survey responses were then aggregated and thematically analysed to create a 'shared vision of food equality' as well as highlight common barriers and possible solutions.



4.1. Feedback from the first Stakeholder meeting and Survey

4.1.1. Food inequality

Participants and respondents were asked what food inequality looks and feel like in Bristol. While there were various responses, these were the top themes that were discussed:

1. People have insufficient income
2. Poor access to appropriate, nutritious and affordable food
3. Geographical disparity between areas in Bristol (availability and cost)
4. Inequality of knowledge, skills and cooking facilities
5. Lack of choice and agency

4.1.2. Barriers to Food Equality

In the Stakeholder breakout rooms, participants were asked to identify barriers to food equality in Bristol. The barriers identified were then used to inform a checkbox question in the survey. The results from 36 survey responses show that barriers to food equality include:

1. Financial hardship (100%)
2. Lack of access – to nutritious food (83.3%), to affordable food (75%), to adequate kitchen facilities (63.9%), to culturally appropriate food (58.3%)
3. Knowledge and skills around food and cooking (75%)
4. Focus on short-term 'band-aid' solutions rather than long-term strategy (77.8%)
5. Uneven competition due to supermarkets (66.7%)
6. Disparity in food prices and access across wards in Bristol (61.1%)
7. Limited capacity to grow local food (61.1%)
8. Lack of inclusivity in decision-making processes (52.8%)
9. Poor communication of available support (50%)
10. Lack of collaboration and coordination (36.1%)
11. Language barriers (33.3%)
12. Loss of trust in decision-making (25%)



4.1.4. Overcoming barriers

Reviewing the breakout room discussions and survey responses, it became clear that there were two ways in which people were suggesting we approach addressing food inequality, which we have categorised as 'inclusive governance' and 'empowerment through infrastructure'.

Inclusive governance

Suggested actions in this category included providing clear and timely communication, coordinated responses and effective operational leadership. The governance should involve transparent and inclusive decision-making and should focus on system change.

Empowerment through infrastructure

This category included actions around improving access to land, community growing, and social food spaces. It also comprised actions relating to ensuring individuals, communities and the wider city are equipped with the necessary resources and infrastructure to achieve food equality.

5. Second Stakeholder Engagement Meeting

On the 27th January 2021, Bristol City Council and Feeding Bristol held the second Stakeholder Engagement Meeting, during which, the shared vision of food equality was presented, and participants were asked to provide feedback on the vision themes. Exploring how Bristol might be able to start to achieve this vision, participants were also asked to reflect on how we might measure the short and long-term success of these steps; how we can ensure accountability and good governance of the Strategy and Action Plan; and how we could ensure inclusivity and diversity within its governance. In the Stakeholder Meeting, participants were put into breakout rooms and asked to focus on a particular vision theme according to their sector and area of expertise. Groups were then mixed in a second breakout room to focus on issues of governance and accountability. These same questions were asked in a survey circulated on the 10th February 2021, and responses from each will be used to inform the Food Equality Action Plan.

5.1. Feedback on findings

Feedback from the breakout rooms and second survey were analysed thematically and are presented below.



5.1.1. Cross cutting themes

It must take an inclusive and transparent approach

The need for inclusivity and transparency were cross-cutting themes that emerged time and time again in the breakout room discussions and survey responses. In particular, participants and survey respondents emphasised the importance of engaging with and involving communities in its development, implementation and governance; stressing that participatory approaches would help to make it meaningful to the people of Bristol, and more successful in achieving food equality as a result. This would require a reflective, flexible and iterative approach, whereby the views of stakeholders, communities and individuals are continually sought and are fed back into the development and implementation of the Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan.

Recommendation: The approach needs to be inclusive and diverse, with representation from across Bristol.

Addressing national policies

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of a local Food Equality Strategy, particularly with regards to financial drivers of food inequality. There are certain drivers that may only be significantly influenced by central government decision-making – a good example of which is welfare policy. The scope of this Strategy and Action Plan is to identify what the city can do together to affect change. However, while we cannot locally affect central government policy, we can take a stand on such policies and related issues – as a city. For example, other localities, such as Manchester, have recently supported the ‘Right to Food’ campaign, which is calling for a change in law to make access to food a legal right in the UK through the National Food Strategy. If successful, this would mean that the Government would be responsible for ending food insecurity in the UK.

Interestingly, through breakout room discussion and survey responses, the potential for campaigning around certain issues was raised a number of times – particularly around getting food education on the school curriculum, access to land, social equity and communal eating.

Recommendation: Bristol takes a stronger stance for food justice. Beginning with food equality becoming a policy and strategy adopted by the council.

5.1.2. The vision of food equality

The majority of survey respondents stated that the themes accurately represent what Bristol's vision for food equality should be. However, one respondent stressed the need for wider community consultation to help inform and shape the vision themes - a view that was reflected in various breakout room discussions. Another respondent commented that numbering the themes implied prioritisation of themes. This is not the case, and in future we will ensure that this is clearly communicated. Survey respondents also questioned whether the vision themes were clear enough for people to understand. To address this, we will ensure that a short description of each theme is included, and that language is kept as clear as possible. This may include having short descriptors for each of the five themes such as:

- **Fair access**
Fair access to nutritious and appropriate food. This includes access to food that is appropriate for your dietary needs, is culturally appropriate, and affordable.
- **Choice**
Choice, empowerment, and a feeling of security. Everyone has the ability to make choices about their relationship with food and are free from the anxiety and stress that are present when experiencing food insecurity.
- **Skills and resources**
People and communities are equipped with knowledge, skills and facilities. Alongside knowledge and skills, people have cooking facilities and the fuel required to cook.
- **Sustainable local food system**
A resilient and sustainable local food system. The food system relies predominantly on locally grown fresh food and has a positive impact on the local environment. The needs of the City in the present are met, without compromising the needs of the City in the future.
- **Food at the heart of decision-making**
Food is at the heart of community, economy and city planning. We must put food at the heart of our decision-making – whether its developing social support models, new businesses or planning new housing developments.

Recommendation: Community consultation is needed to understand if the vision of food equality is accurate. It is important to recognise that this vision of food equality may change following this process.

5.1.3. Actions to achieve food equality in Bristol

We asked survey respondents and breakout groups to outline steps that could be taken to achieve each of the vision themes. These suggestions will be used to inform the Food Equality Action Plan:

Fair access to nutritious and appropriate food

- *Taking stock.* We need to know what infrastructure and resources are currently available to communities – such as food shops, public transport, community groups, social eating spaces and growing spaces (among many others). This needs to be mapped to understand what is currently available, which can then be used to identify gaps in provision across the city, including pressing concerns such as food deserts.
- *Understanding the need.* We need to work with local community groups to understand local barriers and needs, including what is considered appropriate food within different localities and for different groups.
- *Invest in solutions.* If we are to address access in the city, we are likely to need financial investment into community-based solutions.

Choice, empowerment, and a feeling of security

- *Listen.* We need to listen to what people and communities experiencing food inequality need, respond to this and support and empower communities to have a platform to make change.
- *Communicating support available.* A source of anxiety when experiencing food insecurity surrounds not knowing if or where you can go to get food. There needs to be a centralised way of providing information about what support is available – both financial and food offers – to people experiencing hardship. This communication platform must be accessible to different users (e.g., community languages).
- *Shift away from ‘charity’.* Towards participatory approaches to food provisioning, which include opportunities for upskilling and shared community assets.
- *Invest in solutions.* In the context of subsidised participatory food offers, facilitating choice requires investment.

People and communities are equipped with knowledge, skills and facilities

- *Inspiring educational programmes.* These would include upskilling around cooking and food growing. Start with early years in school settings; community-based programmes; and embed into existing initiatives across the city.
- *Identify lack of equipment.* What is physically preventing people in hardship from being able to cook? We need to ask people what equipment/facilities/resources they currently lack and would need, to be able



to cook. Perhaps identify a baseline for equipment/facilities every household would need to be able to cook at home.

- *Take an asset-based approach.* A number of survey respondents mentioned the importance of using the many resources that already exist in Bristol, such as community kitchens, growing projects, the hospitality sector and so on. This asset-based approach would also make use of individuals, communities and organisations that are currently working in the food sector, give them a sense of ownership of the food system, and avoid the potential pitfall of taking a top-down approach.

A resilient and sustainable local food system

- *Access to land.* Bristol City Council should offer land first to food growing groups rather than developers, and efforts should be made to make food growing more accessible, by providing access and training in food growing skills.
- *Create local routes to market.* This could be done through incentivising inclusive procurement schemes and initiatives such as those employed in other localities such as Belo Horizonte.

Food is at the heart of community, economy and city planning

- *Food equality policy.* A food equality policy for Bristol City Council will ensure that food is at the heart of decision-making at a local government level.
- *Systemic approach.* This should feed into a wider poverty strategy as issues such as health, housing, transport, energy and food are connected by poverty and inequality.
- *Food education on school curriculum.* Food education on the school curriculum should be trialled in schools in Bristol.
- *Community and green spaces.* City planning should protect and incentivise community spaces and green spaces that can be used to host food projects and growing.
- *Local employment.* Incentivise investing in the local economy through employment schemes, hiring from local communities, rather than relying on volunteers.

Recommendation: Conduct wider community consultation to inform the Action Plan.



5.1.4. Measuring success

To measure the success of the Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan, stakeholders agreed that data collection would be essential. The approach to monitoring and evaluation is still in the planning stage and we are asking that stakeholders get in touch to discuss possible methods of data collection. Suggestions so far have included:

- Collecting baseline data. This will need to include mapping the current state of food provision and access; as well as the current state of 'need'.
- Measure change on an annual basis against baseline data.
- Key Performance Indicators – contract as well as community and asset-based KPIs. Indicators could include less uptake of certain provision (e.g., food banks).
- Partner with local academics to develop monitoring and evaluation process.

5.1.5. Ensuring good governance, inclusivity and accountability

In order to ensure good governance, inclusivity and accountability throughout the FESAP process and implementation, the following recommendations were suggested by participants and respondents and will be explored in the next stage of the FESAP:

- Ensure that FESAP is adopted as part of One City and assess which city boards might already have food equality in their remit.
- Form a representative steering group including people with lived experience.
- Ensure the strategy, vision and action plan are clear and widely understood - clear language and well promoted.
- Clear timelines for achieving action plan steps - which are monitored and tracked.
- Develop a shared evaluation framework to show how partners have contributed, in real time.
- FESAP process/progress needs to be publicly communicated and transparent.

Food Equality Champions

We are currently exploring the concept of 'Food Equality Champions'. These would be advocacy and engagement roles that would ensure inclusivity and involvement of those with lived experience of food inequality/insecurity. Food Equality Champions will be paid for their time and given training opportunities to be able to effectively advocate for food equality on behalf of themselves and their communities. The Food Equality Champions would sit on the FESAP Steering Group.



6. Next Steps: Community Consultation and Engagement

In the next stage of the Food Equality Strategy and Action Plan, we are going to be conducting community conversations with the support of the Community Development Team in Bristol City Council and other stakeholders from across the city. The aim of the consultations will be firstly, to ensure that the vision of food equality is representative; and secondly, to help us understand the barriers to food equality experienced within disadvantaged localities and by different communities across the city.

We intend to prioritise the following five wards for community consultation in May and June:

- Hartcliffe & Withywood
- Lawrence Hill
- Filwood
- Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston
- Southmead

These wards ranked highly according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation³ and the Mylocalmap Tool⁴, which can be used to map food insecurity risk for a given local authority.

³ ONS. English Indices of deprivation 2019. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>)

⁴ GeoData Institute. 2021. (<https://www.mylocalmap.org.uk/iaahealth/>)



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7. Stakeholders



The following groups and organisations have been involved in the Food Equality Stakeholder Group Meetings and/or have taken part through the surveys. There are also a number of individual specialists who have also taken part in this process who are not listed below.

91 Ways to Build a Global City	Incredible Edible Bristol
Age UK Bristol	inHope
Avon Wildlife Trust - Grow Wilder	Julian Trust
Black South West Network	Knowle West Alliance
Borderlands	Learning Partnership West
Bristol Ageing Better	Malcolm X Centre
Bristol City Council – City Councillors; Public Health and Communities; Children’s Services; Families in Focus; Welfare Rights and Money Advice Support Service (WRAMAS); Procurement; Sustainability; City Libraries.	National Food Service Bristol
Bristol Food Network	North Bristol Foodbank
Bristol Food Policy Council	Playful Bristol
Bristol Food Producers	Power to Change
Bristol Food Union	Quartet
Bristol Green Capital	Sims Hill Shared Harvest
Bristol Homeless Forum	South Bristol Advice Services
Bristol Local Food Fund	South & East Bristol Foodbank
Bristol Sport Foundation	Southmead Development Trust
BS3 Community Development	Square Food Foundation
Bristol Youth and Community Action	St Nicholas of Tolentino Catholic Church
Caring in Bristol	St Werburgh’s City Farm
CHAS Bristol	St Werburgh’s Community Centre
Citizens Advice Bristol	The Children’s Kitchen
City Funds	The Community Farm
Clifton Diocese	University of Bristol
Counterslip Cares Food Bank	University of the West of England
Eastside Community Trust	Urban Agriculture Consortium (UK)
Family Action FOOD Clubs	Voscur
FareShare South West	WECIL
Feeding Bristol	Wellspring Settlement
Heart of BS13	Windmill Hill City Farm
Henbury and Brentry Community Council	
High Sheriff	