



Food Power Action Plan Sandwell 2019

Foreword from Tom Watson, MP

Member of Parliament for West Bromwich East
and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party.

We all need to eat!

Freedom from hunger and access to safe and nutritious food is a basic human right. It is unacceptable that despite the UK enjoying the fifth largest economy in the world, 1 in 5 children are living in households without a guarantee of food. Four million families struggle to afford enough food at all for an adequate diet [1].

In Sandwell some of our residents have hardly enough money to live on and experience multiple inequalities [2], such as low pay, lack of jobs, gaps in skills and ill health. I know from my constituents that Sandwell is a borough with the desire to make life better for all. It has great people and great projects.

I am delighted with the approach of the Jubilee Food Network who together are identifying and celebrating these assets. The Network helps inspire people living with food insecurity to find new solutions, and to improve access to good food for everyone in Sandwell. Even the name 'Food Power' inspires hope and action, moving our focus to practical answers.

It is this emphasis on solutions that struck me when I first met representatives from the network in 2017. As part of the End Hunger 2017 campaign, they presented me with a stack of paper plates, on which were written suggestions about what the government could do to end hunger. In just two years since then, the network has grown to include more than 60 members and organisations and has spent the last twelve months developing this Food Power Action Plan.

The range of organisations involved is impressive, from local schools, faith groups, charities and statutory bodies. The mapping and analysis of provision across three tiers: crisis, care and community, helps us to refocus our energies on delivering prevention. The Food Plan reminds us of the importance of eating together in our communities. Our need for a sense of community remains significant. It is the strength of our communities that will help us overcome whatever issues The Network may identify over the coming months.

I look forward to seeing how this Plan delivers change in the year ahead and I am thankful to each individual and organisation who are working hard to help us eat well in Sandwell.



Tom Watson

Who we are...

The Jubilee Food Network:

A multi-agency network of 60+ local organisations and individual members who are committed to improving access to good food for everyone in Sandwell.



Where to begin?

Food poverty issues and food systems are complex and it was difficult to know where to start. Using an assets-based approach, we began by recognising our strengths: a rich history of Public Health innovation, some great local examples of food provision and good working relationships between statutory and voluntary sector partners.

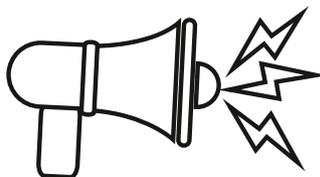
Using these strengths we developed a core partnership between Public Health, Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations, Ideal For All and Sandwell Churches' Link.

Our values:



Partnership

No single agency can tackle food poverty issues alone, but together, we can make changes.



Power

'Nothing about us without us': the voice of those most affected by food poverty must be heard.

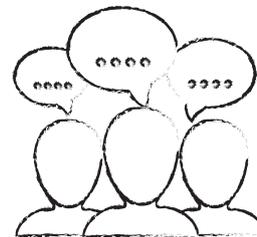


Prevention

We want to move beyond food charity to ensure families can feed themselves.

What we have done...

How this plan was developed:



We looked...

...at national and local data to identify local issues, assess the scale of the issues and try to establish a baseline measure to monitor food poverty. Data included:

- *Uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers and free school meals
- *Applications to Sandwell MBC Local Welfare Provision fund
- *Indices of multiple deprivation 2015 [3].
- *Redacted data from food banks in 4 of Sandwell's 6 towns over 2017/18.
- *Public Health data used to compile Sandwell Food System 'Strategy Map'.
- *Public Health England Sandwell health profiles [4]
- *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018/19 programme [5]
- *Overview of data on www.sandwelltrends.info [6]
- *data used to compile other Food Power plans around the UK

We mapped...

Using a three-tiered approach, we mapped food provision across our borough using a 'Crisis, Care & Community' model.



- *Crisis: emergency food provision (e.g. food banks and Local Welfare Provision vouchers)
- *Care: targeted services (e.g. free schools meals, holiday hunger clubs)
- *Community: universal services that are open to all (e.g. community lunches, school breakfast clubs).

We listened...

We wanted to understand what 'good food' meant to people in Sandwell. We were somewhat nervous to use the term 'good' in case it implied any unhelpful judgement about 'good' vs 'bad' food, so we used the following questions to help explore meanings:

1. Where can we eat good food in Sandwell?
2. What stops us eating well in Sandwell?
3. What does 'good food' mean to you?
4. How could we eat better in Sandwell?

We designed these questions to help us find out where we are now (Q1 & Q2) where we want to get to (Q3) and how we can get there (Q4). We aimed to ask people from across all six towns and in a range of settings (crisis, care & community)

Where we are now...

By collating and analysing the data, mapping and food conversations, we were better able to understand our starting point. We developed a 'snapshot' of the current situation:



What the data said...

- *Around the UK, one fifth of the population live in poverty. 1.5 million are destitute, unable to afford basic essentials [7]
- *Of 326 local authorities, Sandwell is ranked 13th most deprived [8] NB This means that it is fair to conclude that most food and poverty issues experienced nationally will be harder-felt in Sandwell.
- *Across all measures, people in Sandwell experience significant health inequalities when compared to national average [9].
- *25% of primary and secondary school children in Sandwell are eligible for Free School Meals [10] but a significant proportion do not claim. Uptake of Healthy Start vouchers is 71% [11] so there is work to be done to encourage uptake of FSM & HS.
- * The top 3 reasons for food bank referrals in 2017/18 were:
 - low income
 - benefit delays
 - benefit changes/cuts [12]
- * There are 17 food banks in Sandwell, providing approx. 20,000 food parcels in 2017/18 [12]
- *There is an ever-growing community meal provision in breakfast & lunch clubs, holiday clubs and two soup kitchens.

What Jubilee Food Network members said...

Using our four questions, we surveyed 63 JFN members via e-mail and received 47 responses. We collated these using 'word cloud' tools to analyse patterns (example above) [13].

The top three responses to each question were identified as follows:

1. Where can we eat good food in Sandwell?
 - *At home
 - *From wide range of international community restaurants/shops
 - *Community cafes
2. What stops us eating well in Sandwell?
 - *Too many fast food outlets
 - *Low income
 - *Lack of confidence/skills
3. What does 'good food' mean to you?
 - *Home-made/from scratch
 - *Shared with others
 - *Nutritious
4. How could we eat better in Sandwell?
 - *More affordable fruit & veg
 - *Healthier food retailers
 - *Make better use of surplus food

What Sandwell residents said...

Using the same methodology, we talked to the following groups of local residents:

- * Mytime Active Healthy Lifestyle group participants in Tipton, Wednesbury & Cradley Heath.
- * Food bank volunteers and users in two towns.
- * Ideal For All group participants, including young people from Westminster school
- * Guests at a Food and Faith afternoon tea event for Oldbury & Rowley faith groups
- * Social media followers on Twitter & Facebook. We received 720 responses and again, the top three responses to each question were identified.

- Q1.
 - *At home
 - *Pubs/restaurants
 - *Markets
- Q2.
 - *Not enough money
 - *Too many fast food outlets
 - *Healthy food more expensive
- Q3.
 - *Tasty & healthy
 - *Not going hungry
 - *Freshly-cooked
- Q4.
 - *Healthier food shops/outlets
 - *More advice & information
 - *Cooking lessons

Where we want to be...

Using what people told us, we developed three main aims to work towards the vision: everyone in Sandwell has access to good food.



1. Eating well is a priority in Sandwell

1.1 Local residents and decision-makers are more aware of food issues and the impact of food poverty.

1.2 SMBC and partners take ownership of agreed actions and progress is monitored.

1.3 Good practice is shared across organisations and local authorities to keep learning.

1.4 Mapping of local food provision is maintained, kept up-to-date and shared widely with advice and service providers.

1.5 The Food Power Action Plan is joined-up with wider social inclusion planning and strategy.

2. Everyone has what they need to eat well

2.1 Provide a wide range of opportunities for individuals and families to learn about nutrition, growing, shopping and cooking.

2.2 Improve access to more affordable, healthier foods by engaging with local businesses and supporting community initiatives.

2.3 Support families to maximise their income using advice and debt management services delivered in accessible settings.

2.4 Challenge the 'poverty premium' where people on low incomes often pay over the odds for essential services (e.g.fuel).

2.5 Promote opportunities for people to eat well together in community.

3. No-one in Sandwell has to go hungry.

3.1 Promote better uptake of Healthy Start vouchers and Free School Meals.

3.2 Develop a comprehensive, borough-wide response to holiday hunger.

3.3 Understand the specific needs of particular groups to remove barriers to accessing good food (eg people with disabilities, homeless people, elderly people, newly-arrived people, people without recourse to public funds, people on very low income).

3.4 Maintain the safety net of crisis food provision.

3.5 Develop local measures to measure and monitor food poverty.

How we can get there...

Planning for action.

Once we had a clearer understanding of our current situation (starting point) and a shared vision of where we want to get to (destination) we came to view this action plan as a route map to help us navigate a journey of change.

We are optimistic and confident that within the plan, there are concrete actions that we can take which WILL improve access to good food for everyone in Sandwell.

However, we need to note some of the limitations of the plan and some of the likely obstacles ahead.

Challenges:

*Some of the factors that have a huge impact on food poverty within Sandwell lie outside of our control (e.g. central government welfare policy) and decisions cannot be made locally. To address such issues, we commit to supporting the wider lobbying action of movements such as the Trussell Trust, Sustain and the wider Food Power network. Additionally, we also fully support End Hunger UK's 'Menu for Ending Hunger in the UK' [14] which sets out the following nine recommendations:

- 1) A dedicated minister to mobilise action on household food security in co-ordination with devolved governments.
- 2) An annual government-led measurement, and ongoing monitoring of household food insecurity, across the UK.
- 3) A commitment to increase the voucher value and uptake of the UK's Healthy Start scheme.
- 4) A commitment to safeguarding child nutrition, every day of the year.
- 5) A commitment to reduce the unjust Poverty Premium for people of low incomes.
- 6) A commitment to incentivise employers to pay the 'real' Living Wage and to provide decent work.
- 7) A commitment to make sure welfare reform does not leave people hungry.
- 8) A review of sanctions to ensure that they do not cause undue harm or destitution.
- 9) A commitment to ensuring that there is effective financial assistance in times of crisis.

* We acknowledge that this plan is very much a starting point and we welcome contributions and suggestions to improve it. We are committed to ensuring that this is a live document, regularly updated and reviewed, and will be hosting it on-line at www.sandwellchurcheslink.org.uk so that it does not end up as a document gathering dust on a shelf, but is dynamic and ever-evolving.

*We need to be accountable to wider bodies to monitor progress against this plan. At the time of writing, we are in discussions about where this plan will 'sit' (e.g. reported on at the Health and Well-being Board? Within Public Health? To a specific cabinet member?). We have written into the plan an action to regularly report on progress to the most appropriate person/forum, and to review the suitability of those arrangements on a regular basis to ensure that there is a consistent scrutiny and accountability.

* We need to be able to measure any change and progress against a baseline. We are currently developing data monitoring with food banks, though we acknowledge that is only one limited measure of food issues in our borough. We have therefore written in to the plan as an action that we will continue work to develop a range of baseline measures, in line with local and national developments as they arise.

*Without dedicated capacity, it will be difficult (if not impossible) to co-ordinate and monitor action. The financial support we received from Food Power to establish the alliance and develop this plan ends in March 2019. We believe this is only the starting point so we are committed to securing additional funds to enable continued co-ordination of Food Power work in Sandwell.

Aim 1: Eating well is a priority in Sandwell

Goal	Action	By whom	Timescale
1.1 Local residents and decision-makers are more aware of food issues and the impact of food poverty.	1.1a Hold a Food Power week for Sandwell residents to raise wider awareness of Food Power	iSandwell, SMBC Communities & Food Power alliance	w/c 29th April 2019
	1.1b Maintain regular social media activity on Food Power accounts	Nicole Robins & Food Power alliance	Food Power policy hack event 17th May 2019
	1.1c Share learning from food poverty measuring & monitoring with all relevant strategic boards to ensure food issues are considered at policy level	See 1.2b	Ongoing
1.2 SMBC and partners take ownership of agreed actions and progress is monitored.	1.2a Food Power issues to be included in a Cabinet Member's portfolio	To be identified	By June 2019
	1.2b Establish reporting mechanism to relevant strategic lead/Board	To be identified	By June 2019
	1.2c Report back annually to SCL conference	SCL & Food Power alliance	March 2020
1.3 Good practice is shared across organisations and local authorities to keep learning.	1.3a Work with other local authorities on Sustainable Food as part of the Co-Operative Councils consortium to share learning at workshops & conferences	SMBC Public Health, Communities & Food Power Alliance	By October 2019
	1.3b Share learning with national FP network, SFC & JFN members	Food Power alliance	Ongoing - monthly newsletters
	1.3c Share learning from Smethwick CAN's Food Hub across borough	Smethwick CAN, SCL & JFN	Ongoing
1.4 Mapping of local food provision is maintained, kept up-to-date and shared widely with advice and service providers.	1.4a Support JFN members to self-populate mapping tools	SCL & JFN members	Quarterly requests for information
	1.4b Use SCVO's fortnightly bulletins to extend data	SCVO team	Liaise with SCL on quarterly basis
	1.4c Upload mapping data to partner websites eg SCVO, SCL, i4A & SMBC	Food Power core team	Quarterly reviews
1.5 The Food Power Action Plan is joined-up with wider social inclusion planning and strategy.	1.5 All learning to be shared with authors of linked strategies (SMBC Anti-Poverty, JSNA, Public Health Food Systems)	Food Power core team with: Heather Chinner Angela Blair	Scheduled board meetings

Aim 2: Everyone has what they need to eat well

Goal	Action	By whom	Timescale
2.1 Provide a wide range of opportunities for individuals and families to learn about nutrition, growing, shopping and cooking.	2.1a Develop Sustainable Food Cities work in Sandwell	Ideal For All & Jubilee Food Network	Review June 2019
	2.1b Promote the extensive good practice across JFN via monthly newsletter	Laura Nott/SCL	Monthly basis
	2.1c Liaise with Public Health colleagues on strategy map	Food Power alliance & Public Health	By June 2019
2.2 Improve access to more affordable, healthier foods by engaging with local businesses and supporting community initiatives.	2.2a Support & promote Eat Out, Eat Well awards	Food Power alliance & Jubilee Food Network	Ongoing
	2.2b JFN will promote & celebrate innovative projects (eg Your Local Pantry, Barlow Rd Community Garden, Common Ground Community Orchard)	Jubilee Food network & SCVO bulletin. Liaison with SMBC Communications Team.	Monthly newsletters
	2.2c Link crisis food provision with wider food services to enhance the nutrition & quality	Linking JFN members & food banks.	Food bank provider network event July 2019.
2.3 Support families to maximise their income using advice and debt management services delivered in accessible settings.	2.3a Promote Better Off Sandwell website, Welfare Rights Service, Advice Providers Network, Citizen's Advice, Just Finance Foundation, GM2LF Big Local and others	Jubilee Food network	Monthly newsletters
	2.3b Attend Financial Wellbeing Board to share strategy	Laura Nott/SCL	Monthly meetings
	2.3c Forge stronger links between service providers & food provision eg debt management at food bank sessions	JFN members & financial services providers eg Six Towns Credit Union, Just Finance Foundation etc	Quarterly reviews
2.4 Challenge the 'poverty premium' where people on low incomes often pay over the odds for essential services (e.g.fuel)	2.4 Raise awareness of useful initiatives/policy (e.g.Financial Conduct authority will cap max interest rates on pay-weekly credit) via JFN newsletter, social media & SCVO bulletin (to almost 3000 subscribers)	Food power alliance	Quarterly 'food focus' in SCVO bulletin Monthly JFN newsletters Ongoing social media activity
2.5 Promote opportunities for people to eat well together in community	2.5a Share & promote member events/activities across networks	As 2.4	As 2.4
	2.5b Support national campaigns eg Big Lunch, Mayor's Weekend, Great Get Together	As 2.4	As 2.4

Aim 3: No-one in Sandwell has to go hungry

Goal	Action	By whom	Timescale
3.1 Promote better uptake of Healthy Start vouchers and Free School Meals.	3.1a Raise awareness of Healthy Start voucher scheme & link with Business Improvement District to increase number of participating businesses	Food Power alliance	Promote on a quarterly basis
	3.1b Work to reduce stigma & other barriers to uptake of HS & FSM with social media campaigns	Food Power alliance	Bi-monthly social media campaigns/fun events
	3.1c Link with Children's Centres, Early Help Partnership, Community Learning Clusters to plan joint promotions	Food Power alliance & Children's Services/Education	Annual promotion activity]
3.2 Develop a comprehensive, borough-wide response to holiday hunger.	3.2a Current live bid with Sandwell & Wolverhampton to DfE Healthy Activities Fund	Bid team led by Black Country Consortium	Awaiting decision March 2019
	3.2b If HAF bid unsuccessful, continue to work on holiday provision offer	Bid team led by Black Country Consortium	Ready for 2019 school summer holidays
	3.2c Ensure learning from previous holiday provision is implemented	Liaison between JFN members & bid team.	March – June 2019
3.3 Understand the needs of particular groups to remove specific barriers to accessing good food (eg people with disabilities, homeless people, elderly people, newly-arrived people).	3.3a Ideal For All to deliver focused work on empowering people with disabilities in shaping food policy	Ideal For All & Food Power alliance	By March 2020
	3.3b Targeted invitations to faith groups who offering specialised support to join JFN & share learning.	Faith communities & Jubilee Food network	
3.4 Maintain the safety net of crisis food provision.	3.4a Early intervention & signposting to alternative services to prevent over-use	Jubilee Food Network members	Ongoing
	3.4b Support current emergency providers by hosting network events	Thank you event for food bank volunteers	September 2019
	3.4c Use networks & social media to promote donations & highlight shortages	Jubilee Food Network	Monthly basis
3.5 Develop local measures to measure and monitor food poverty and food power	3.5a Collate existing data on annual basis & work to develop new measures (eg Food Insecurity Experience Scale)	Food Power alliance	For end of March on annual basis
	3.5c Collate & celebrate good news stories & data from services promoting Food Power	Jubilee Food Network	Monthly newsletters

Next steps...

Where do we go from here?

1. Continue to extend the membership of the Jubilee Food Network to include anyone who is working to improve access to good food in Sandwell. If you would like to join the Jubilee Food Network (free membership) please e-mail lauranott@sandwellchurcheslink.org.uk.
2. Work more closely with network members to support their work and explore grouping members by function (e.g. crisis food provision, community provision, strategic oversight) or by location (e.g. across town networks).
3. Continue monthly meetings of Sandwell's Food Power Alliance (comprising representatives from SMBC Public Health, SCVO, Ideal For All and Sandwell Churches' Link) and consider adding others to the core team.
4. Continue to work with Food Power and remain a registered local Food Power alliance.
5. Report back to Sandwell Churches' Link's 2020 Annual Conference on progress against Action Plan goals.

Acknowledgements...

We are hugely grateful for the support of:

All of our current Jubilee Food Network members:

Caroline Wolhuter, Accord; Nicky Taylor, SMBC; Jayne Fearon & Jen Harrison, NSDT; Kevin Priest, BCHG; Nikki Russell, SMBC; Christina Murray & Gareth Brown, Smethwick CAN, Janet Mylchreest, SMBC/Citizen's Advice, Jan Britton, SMBC; David Primrose, TCT; Gary Bowman; Deb Slater, Black Country Women's Aid, Viv Palmer, Colin Marsh Birmingham Churches' Together; Graham Gordon, CAP Fresh Start, Robert Mountford, John Jordan, Smethwick Baptist; Marianne Monro, Friends & Neighbours, Colin Rankine, Active Christians; Rev Deb Buckley, Smethwick Old Church; Jeff Guest, BCUIM; Alicia Wingfield, Litterwatch; Emily Tite, Warley Baptist; Pastor David Marsh, Centrepoint Church; James Henderson, TCT; Sam Ewell, Companions for Hope; Lenny Allan, YMCA; Juanita Williams, Sandwell Advocacy, Veera Mohan, Crocketts Community School; Keith Turner, West Bromwich Food Bank; Salma Food Bank; Stars Kitchen; Rosie Edwards, SCL; Simon Shaw & Maddie Guerlian, Sustain; Helen Hoarle, SFFC; Great Barr Food Bank Breaking Bread Food Bank, Emily, BH Food; Fiona Allen, St John's; Robert Marlow, SMBC; Saeed Nasser, YCA; Christine Davis, Sandwell Childrens Trust; Annette Smith, Morecambe Bay Food Bank; Manny Sehmbi, SMBC; Samehra Bi, SMBC; Beverley Stevens, SMBC; Elizabeth Beard, SMBC; Manisha Patel, SCVO; Sally Taylor; Angela Sharma, SMBC, Elizabeth Farley, Black Country Methodist Circuit, Dorcas Marshal, Shiloh Apostolic Church; Tammy Jones, SMBC and Karen Palmer, Dorothy Parkes allotment.

Gill at Together Lancs/Blackburn with Darwen; and Emily from Brighton & Hove Food Partnership for helpful and inspiring alliance visits.

The teams at Food Power (especially Maddie, Simon & Ben) and Sustainable Food Cities.

Nathan at iSandwell, and Nick & Manny from SMBC Communities for their support on digital inclusion.

The Food Power alliance: Nicole Robins, SMBC; Katie Badger, SMBC; Angela Blair, SMBC Public Health; Emelye Westwood & Marilyn Robinson, Ideal For All; Stuart Ashmore, SCVO.

And special thanks to everyone who responded to our Good Food questions, including Mytime Active groups, Food & Faith attendees & young people from Westminster School.

With many thanks to you all, from Laura Nott (Director of SCL & Food Power/JFN co-ordinator)

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