

Feeding Liverpool briefing Notes: June 2020



1. Introduction

One of the aims of Feeding Liverpool is to 'draw on experiences from the ground to contribute to and influence policy debates locally and nationally'. We want to ensure the voices and perspectives of those working on the frontline of hunger and food insecurity in Liverpool are heard by local and national decision makers.

29 representatives from 23 organisations in Liverpool responded to Feeding Liverpool's snap survey. This four-question survey asked about:

1. The representatives' perception of the challenges and concerns faced by those their organisation supports
2. The challenges and concerns of the organisation at this time
3. The organisation's short-term priorities (0- 3 months)
4. The organisation's longer-term priorities (4+ months)

This survey was open from Tuesday 2nd June until Monday 8th June.

Respondents included organisations providing emergency food provision (e.g. foodbanks), affordable food initiatives (e.g. community markets, food pantries, and community shops), community-based organisations (e.g. community centres and youth organisations) and housing associations.

Responses have been anonymised unless permission has been given for an organisation to be identifiable. We have tried to represent the views and voices of the respondents accurately – to ensure they are heard directly by decision makers - therefore the views presented here are not necessarily those of the Feeding Liverpool steering group. Where a view was offered by only one respondent this has been indicated in the briefing note. All other responses were articulated by more than one respondent.

Responses to each of the four questions from the snap-survey are presented as stand-alone briefing notes below.¹

¹ These briefing notes have been produced by Dr Naomi Maynard – Lead Project Development Worker of Together Liverpool and Feeding Liverpool Network Coordinator
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Briefing Note 1

What are the challenges and concerns of those experiencing hunger and food insecurity in Liverpool?

As identified by supporting organisations



Financial

- Un/under employment, reduction in income including 'furloughed' workers not receiving the 20% top up, increased competition for available jobs resulting in employers decreasing wages
- Delays in receiving Universal Credit
- Debt: one respondent noted the dangers of informal lending
- Digital exclusion including financial digital exclusion, one respondent noted an example of older people who are fearful about leaving their home but do not have access to cash or online banking to pay for home deliveries.

Social

- Social isolation: including separation from wider family or from those in hospital
- Education: impact of children being away from school, safety of children returning to school
- Fear: including around asking for help, one respondent gave the example of those struggling to care for children
- Grief, one respondent highlighted the challenges of mourning during this time
- Space: Households with little or no access to private outdoor space, lack of private space to work or play

Health

- Deteriorating mental health- especially for children and young people over summer holidays, groups who are continuing to shield / fearful to leave home, single parents, single people, those working multiple, insecure jobs
- Reduced access to fresh, affordable food
- One respondent raised concerns about Vitamin -D deficiency, particularly in young children but also in the shielded and vulnerable population

Overall

- Reduction in household food supply- due to reduction in available income, increasing demand on household food supply due to children being at home
- Fuel poverty
- Reduction in access to services including charities offering support – this was highlighted particularly for asylum seekers
- One respondent noted concerns over institutional racism and sexism

"Fear - experienced across all our beneficiary groups including children, families and pensioners. They are facing difficult decisions such as: do they now go out after 12 weeks of shielding, finding safe childcare, as they have to return to work. Where is the money coming from? Many of the families in the area have lost their jobs and/or have been waiting for benefit claims to be processed. This means some people have had no income for months, which has forced them into debt as they needed money to feed their families and pay bills"

Representative from Kensington Fields Community Association

Briefing Note 2

What are the challenges and concerns of organisations supporting those experiencing hunger and food insecurity in Liverpool?



Capacity

- Demand for services (including food parcels / food provision) has increased
- Organisations have a reduced work force / long-term volunteer base (some CV-19 volunteers now returning to work)
- Concerns over sustaining increased food provision over the long-term

Financial

- Loss of income from events / fundraisers / core activities / building hire
- Reduced income lead to concerns over job security of staff
- Difficulties maintaining rent on community premises
- Increased demand from specific groups (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers) without increased financial support
- Lack of long-term funding for ongoing support - need for sustainable, long-term funding solutions for charities / small community organisations

Re-opening

- Planning for the "new normal" - what does this look like and when it is safe to restart our core activities?
- Desire (and financial need) to re-open core activities
- Safety of staff, volunteers and service users – could organisations share guidance and best practice solutions?

Overall

- Pressures on food supplies across the affordable food network
- Increased dependency on free food parcels – need to move towards longer term sustainable support
- Loss / reduction in donated food avenues (e.g. supermarket collections, school donation points etc.)
- Difficult to maintain participatory/consultation channels at the moment (e.g. due to some service users being digitally excluded, unable to meet face to face)
- Increase in number and type of organisations providing food provision promoting concerns over sustainability and one respondent emphasised the increasing need for a coordinated approach

"Many of our experienced volunteers are over 70 or have underlying conditions. We have had to close our 5 food markets, and our volunteer programme. Some staff have had to be furloughed. We have to distance from each other and recipients of food aid. We have been working outside while the weather is generally mild. Supply of certain items can be a problem and sourcing enough of each item. Funding is always an issue to develop the structure of the charity and for food aid. There has been an increase in number of recipients of food aid. Asylum seekers not moving on - coming to Liverpool and not being dispersed elsewhere. We've noticed a change in demographic - more homeless people, mainly men for whom a usual food parcel may not be appropriate. More people waiting for Universal Credit payments, victims of domestic violence and more local families coming to the food bank sessions. Other charities not operating as usual so people are needier than ever."

Representative from Micah Liverpool

Briefing Note 3

What are the short-term priorities (0-3 months) of organisations supporting those experiencing hunger and food insecurity in Liverpool?



Responding to immediate need

- Maintain current levels of support
- Secure short-term funding to enable this
- Provide nutritious food – using available funding and support to encourage healthy varied diets (including meat, fruit, veg)
- Develop and promote tailored debt advice to address short-term complexities and concerns

Re-opening

- Develop confidence so people feel they can leave their homes
- Prepare to restart core activities in socially distanced ways
- Start the transition away from a free food parcel model towards encouraging affordable food initiatives (e.g. pantries, community markets, community shops)
- Continue home delivery options where needed (need to address financial inclusion challenges) but also encourage people out of their homes to purchase affordable food

Food partnerships

- Continue to develop local food partnerships / community food networks: build on relationships developed since CV-19

Children and Young people

- Plan and deliver holiday hunger provision during the summer holidays
- Develop further digital inclusion: one respondent noted the need to ensure tablets/stable internet connections are available for schoolwork

Overall

- Prepare for a second wave or local lock downs and ensure procedures are in place to act swiftly
- Secure short-term funding and start looking for longer term funding beyond September 2020
- Provide more-than-food support e.g. activity packs, seed growing initiatives
- One respondent emphasised the need to allow staff time to rest and recharge
- Begin to understand the impact of CV-19 pandemic on Liverpool and local communities through collection of suitable data, a coordinated approach may be needed

Briefing Note 4

What are the long-term priorities (4+ months) of organisations supporting those experiencing hunger and food insecurity in Liverpool?



Re-opening

- Bring staff back from furlough
- Resume core services where possible

Food

- Support for organisations looking to transition from emergency food relief to longer term, sustainable affordable food provision
- Promote and develop nutritious food education services
- Restore some levels of social interactions at sustainable food models (a dual approach to food insecurity that considers social isolation)
- One respondent noted the need for continued campaigning to raise the amount of Health Start Vouchers and widen their accessibility, raise awareness, joint working with health networks is needed

Overall

- Evaluate what has been learnt since March 2020: ensure lessons are acted upon and positive new practices are sustained
- Empowerment: how can service users be more empowered?
- Build on community connections / partnerships formed during CV-19
- Ensure smooth transitions for pupils returning to school, alleviating fears around safety and adjusting to new routines
- Support for the digitally excluded / reduction in digital exclusion
- Sustain and where needed develop effective debt management and support services – increasing pre CV19 provision if needed.
- Secure long-term funding