



Food Poverty in Newcastle:

The voluntary and community sector view and response

December 2018



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Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide information for this report.

Introduction

This report was collated for the October 2018 meeting of the Newcastle Voluntary Sector Liaison Group. It is not meant to be a comprehensive report on the causes of food poverty or a list of resources and all local activities, but instead a description of some of the realities of food poverty and the response from some of the voluntary and community organisations active in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Food poverty can take a number of forms, not just lack of access to food, but to fresh, healthy, nutritious food; having a regular food supply; having a choice of food; and having culturally appropriate food. Food plays an important role in all cultures and the sharing of food is seen to be more than a transactional offer.

There has been a noticeable increase in food poverty in the last six years; although there have historically been issues around inequalities and food as reported in The Black Report (1980). It is hard not to draw any direct causation between food poverty and the introduction of welfare reforms, and the evidence provided by local voluntary organisations also supports this view. There have been several academic reports – Social Policy Association (2015), University of Sheffield (2015), Trussell Trust (2014), Cambridge University (2018) and numerous studies from anti-poverty organisations such as Child Poverty Action Group, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Oxfam and Save the Children.

In August 2018, The Guardian reported that two senior Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) officials had been tasked with overseeing a study to investigate whether the Government's own policies are to blame for the sharp rise in foodbanks. However, those involved have been asked to sign non-disclosure agreements. The rise in

the numbers of and the use of foodbanks has been a controversial issue, with Conservative ministers refusing to acknowledge that austerity-driven changes to welfare provision, including the introduction of Universal Credit, may be directly responsible for the significant increase in people needing emergency help.

Foodbanks themselves are often controversial amongst social activists, as they respond to poverty rather than address it. New responses (on a smaller scale), about people producing food differently (The Comfrey Project), coming together to eat it (social cafes) and eating more healthily (Food Newcastle and Food Nation) are emerging. Some organisations don't want to over-publicise their activities, as they can't cope with too many users.



Image credit: The Comfrey Project in Newcastle



Image credit: Food Nation Newcastle

People who are awaiting decisions on asylum get £37.75 a week on an Aspen card, to cover food, clothing, toiletries and transport. If they are refused asylum they have 'no recourse to public funding' and most receive nothing.

A particular group of people where there has been a noticeable increase in food poverty is asylum seekers and refugees. People who are awaiting decisions on asylum get £37.75 a week on an Aspen card, to cover food, clothing, toiletries and transport. If they are refused asylum they have 'no recourse to public funding' and most receive nothing. There is also the issue of culturally and religiously appropriate food.

One of the emerging areas of concern is around children; in the last few years, not only has there been the introduction of the school breakfast (this is across the board and not just aimed at children in need), but the loss of school meals associated with particular benefits (Universal Credit), and school meals being provided privately and at lower standards. Tyneside Citizens are currently looking at the unused credits for children who receive free school meals. In recent years there has been increased awareness about 'holiday hunger' with the absence of free school meals during school holidays and families not having sufficient income to compensate for this. There has been significant research done by Northumbria University on this issue. In 2017, a report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on hunger estimated the loss of free school meals in the holidays could mean bills for parents of £30-40 per week per child. However, some experts challenge the concept of holiday hunger, pointing out that many children are now hungry all year round.

But perhaps the most disturbing element is the normalisation and apparent acceptance that many families, individuals and households do not have enough money to eat regularly and healthily. Many of the people who use foodbanks are employed, working people; the Trussell Trust's own research backs this. Many supermarkets ask for donations for foodbanks (from customers who have purchased goods for them), public sector spaces have boxes for donations, and a number of food providers arrange for their waste/surplus food to be given to others. There are many generous people trying to respond to the problem, but there has been minimal action to address the cause.

Many of the people who use foodbanks are employed, working people.



Image credit: West End Foodbank Newcastle

The Newcastle response

There has traditionally been a link between charities and food poverty. Historically, and still today in many instances, faith groups have fed 'the poor' and provided food. In Newcastle many churches offer food, run drop-in cafes, or are associated with food parcels and foodbanks; the Gurdwara offers food; many Mosques do food parcel collections and offer a communal meal after Friday prayers, the synagogues do food parcels collections and most other faith groups also offer food.

Until around eight years ago, most food poverty in Newcastle was associated with homelessness and people falling on 'hard times'. The People's Kitchen is probably the best known organisation, established in 1985, totally volunteer-led and it supports "homeless and disadvantaged people in the Newcastle area". There are also pop-up kitchens, usually run by faith organisations, offering free food to people who need a meal.

The Newcastle West End Foodbank is the largest in the UK, and it opened in 2013. It is a charity, run in partnership with local churches. It works with the Trussell Trust and

provides 'three days nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred [to us] in crisis'. It is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by the Trussell Trust. It fed more than 40,000 people in the last year. There is a close link with NUFC supporters and collections are often made before the matches. At the end of July 2018, it made a special appeal as stocks were running so low. On Tuesdays, a two course meal is served, but there are noticeable increases in uptake when school holidays occur. The West End foodbank famously starred in *I, Daniel Blake*.

In 2018, Children North East were successful with their bid for the NE Summer Holiday Clubs Project, which for one year only will support three schools in Newcastle, with healthy food and holiday activities. Street Games were also successful and are supporting existing organisations to enhance their summer provision and are focusing on the NEAT Trust (Newcastle East Academy Trust). The pilots will feed into the Department for Education's future plans by adding to the research that Northumbria University have done on holiday hunger schemes.



Image credit: People's Kitchen



Image credit: *I, Daniel Blake*

Newcastle CVS involvement

Looking back through Newcastle CVS reports in the last few years, there have been a number of references to food poverty:

- *Frozen in the Headlines: Being poor in Newcastle (2012)* noted migrant families having to rely on food parcels, someone walking several miles to a foodbank, poor food availability in many local shops and the price of food.
- *Food for thought: Food bank provision in Newcastle (2012)*. The first of many reports on foodbanks in Newcastle. Often our most downloaded / viewed leaflet. However, a number of organisations highlighted in the leaflets have asked us to remove them as they couldn't cope with the demand.
- *The Big Squeeze: the impact of welfare reform in Newcastle (2013)* photographs of a weekly food parcel, discussed the rise of the foodbank and how it was becoming part of the welfare state. The Red Cross was supporting a nationwide food collection for foodbanks, to be distributed by FareShare. The Trussell Trust was calling for an inquiry into the tripling of foodbank usage. Foodbank numbers had doubled since the previous year.
- *A Stitch in Time: conversations with voluntary organisations working with young children and families in Newcastle (2014)* referred a number of times to foodbanks, food poverty and poor food offers / unhealthy food. In 2014, Newcastle CVS noted the rising impact of food poverty on children and young people; a number of our member organisations were including food in their activities. This was not only part of a holistic approach, but it was noticeable

attendances increased when there was a food offer.

- *Below The Waterline: conversations with voluntary and community organisations in Walker (2014)* noted poor food offers, shoplifting for food, more activities including food, food prices and the lack of healthy food.
- *Our lives: challenging attitudes to poverty in 2015* contained four local studies, one of which referred to concerns about children going hungry in the holidays if free school meals and school breakfast club weren't available.

A number of local organisations have had food growth projects as a way of promoting healthy eating and providing cheap/ free food – Edible Elswick, Greening Wingrove, Scotswood Community Natural Garden, Wor Hoose etc. Several organisations have tried to run community cafes but often these are hard to sustain without a subsidy.

There are a growing number of projects associated with reducing food waste, which are also linked to food poverty. One such project is the Magic Hat Café, which has launched a regular cafe and supermarket in Byker, redistributing surplus food from Newcastle food businesses that would otherwise be wasted. Both the cafe and supermarket are open to anyone through a 'Pay-as-you-feel' policy.

View from Changing Lives

Changing Lives delivers a range of services to people experiencing disadvantage in Newcastle, including supported accommodation, rough sleeper outreach, floating support, recovery support, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse services and the multi-disciplinary Social Impact Bond for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Food poverty is often a part of the disadvantage people face for a variety of reasons including:

- Lack of money – due to benefit sanctions or repaying debts (often deducted directly from benefits)
- Not having anywhere to cook (if rough sleeping or in insecure/temporary accommodation)
- Prioritising drugs or alcohol over food
- When more stable, food can continue to be overlooked as part of a daily routine.

Changing Lives supports people to access free food, from their subsidiary FareShare NE, foodbanks and other food providers in the city. It also helps people access benefits and with budgeting and cooking.

Case Studies - Floating Support

Changing Lives Floating Support service is commissioned by Newcastle City Council and provides support in people's homes to help them maintain their tenancy and prevent homelessness. Support is shaped by what the person needs and can include help with budgeting, debts, benefits, food and cooking, accessing health services, as well as liaison with landlords to resolve issues and prevent eviction.

Case study: GR

GR is a 64 year old man who was referred to the City Wide Floating Support Service by Chain Reaction, for support around benefits, debt and housing.

GR's entitlement to Disability Living Allowance has ceased and he's recently been deemed as not eligible for Personal Independence Payment following a medical assessment. Changing Lives are currently appealing this decision.

GR receives Universal Credit and he has large sums being deducted at source to repay a Universal Credit advance; council tax arrears are also being paid. Changing Lives has made a request to the DWP that, due to the financial hardship being caused, the amount being deducted is reduced.

Originally the housing element of Universal Credit was being paid into GR's bank account with the responsibility resting with him to ensure that the money was handed over to the landlord. GR did not understand this and he quickly built up significant rent arrears and the landlord commenced possession proceedings. Changing Lives were able to negotiate with the landlord and the court suspended the order on condition that he maintained his agreed payments. The housing element is now paid direct to the landlord.

GR has numerous debts that he tries hard to keep on top of the payments. Work has been done with GR to improve his money management skills, and a referral made to Money Matters to address the multiple debts.

During a recent key work appointment GR advised that he had no food or money until the following Monday when he would receive his next Universal Credit payment. GR showed his food cupboards and fridge

and all he had was half a loaf of bread and some butter. Back at the office a worker was able to put together an emergency food parcel from items donated to Changing Lives, these were delivered to GR the same day. GR was provided with a voucher for the East End Foodbank; the food was collected the following day. GR was very relieved to have some food in his cupboards. This issue is likely to repeat until the situation with GR's finances and debts has been resolved.

Case study: MD

MD was referred to the City Wide Floating Support Service by the police DVSA Co-ordinator. Support was requested to address issues around benefits, debts, eviction, domestic abuse and employment.

When MD first accessed the service, she and her daughter had been surviving on £20.70 a week child benefit for several months. MD had been refused Universal Credit on two occasions after failing the Habitual Residence test. A further application was made and MD was supported to attend all her interviews and appointments at the Jobcentre. MD is now in receipt of Universal Credit and the housing component is paid direct to the landlord.

At the time she entered the service MD was unable to make any payments towards the multiple debts she had built up. A referral was made to Money Matters and MD is now going through some preliminary work before applying for a Debt Relief Order.

Due to massive rent arrears MD's landlord had taken steps towards eviction. A referral was made to Shelter for MD to receive legal advice and support to attend court. The case has since been suspended on condition that payments outlined by the court are made as ordered.

When support commenced MD and her young daughter were without food and electricity. An application was made to Newcastle City Council for Crisis Support for food and credit for the electricity meter. An award was made which provided for a two week period. After that Changing Lives were able to access emergency food and toiletries from the East End Foodbank along with provisions donated to Changing Lives from FareShare, until MD was accepted as eligible to receive Universal Credit.

Case Study: RD

RD was referred to Changing Lives due to health and financial issues. He was supported to set up a Universal Credit account but the benefit advance was swallowed up by priority debts. RD was subsidised with food parcels of donated Changing Lives food. RD had specific dietary requirements due to an ongoing illness which meant he could not eat the majority of the foodbank's food.

Even when RD began receiving Universal Credit payments he struggled to budget for fresh ingredients whilst also addressing his debts. Food donations continued to be delivered for several months until RD was placed in the support group and could afford to feed himself healthily whilst also addressing his debts.

RD is now managing well without the donations but advises he may have faced further hospital treatments had the donated food not been available.

Case Study: JW

JW is a 59 year old man with an alcohol misuse problem. Changing Lives has

been supporting JW with his housing and alcohol issues for the past 10 years. JW was sanctioned due to the difficulties he faces to maintain employment which is a result of his alcohol dependency.

JW was sanctioned for six months with very little/no income. This left JW with no food, therefore Changing Lives have been supporting him by providing foodbank vouchers on a weekly basis.

Social Impact Bond (SIB) Team

The SIB team are commissioned by the City Council, using the Rough Sleeper Social Impact Bond funding, and work with people who are either long term rough sleeping or are stuck in the supported accommodation system, aiming to help people get into and sustain accommodation, and engage with relevant services. The multi-disciplinary team includes peer support, engagement workers, and mental health and addictions specialists.

Comments from the SIB team

Most of the clients the SIB team work with access foodbanks and find that they really struggle with the food they are given. If they're street homeless they have no way of preparing and cooking the food. People who are accommodated also have the same problem as due to lack of money because of sanctions, paying back fines and rent arrears they struggle to afford gas and electricity on in their homes so they cannot cook the food

Also, the food given to them is so sporadic and insufficient they struggle to make it last. The food is also so incompatible e.g. tins of chick peas, uncooked pasta with no sauce, tins of custard, tins of potatoes, bread - nothing you can actually make a meal with.

The food is often close to the sell by date and there is very little fresh fruit and vegetables.

In a lot of circumstances the people the SIB team work with don't know how to prepare food so even if they have the right food they still struggle to make a meal.

Most of the people we work with who are still homeless and rough sleeping are entirely dependent on members of the public and charities like The People's Kitchen for food. They are almost always seriously underweight.

People newly housed still have a poor ability to prioritise feeding themselves. They may have better access to food parcels and the practical support of workers but they still seem to be unfamiliar with getting food as part of a daily routine.

Individuals who are using New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) such as Spice often have little or no motivation to go out and find food, and are frequently very underweight.

Case study: CD

Due to delays in receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and the appropriate rate of Universal Credit as a disabled applicant, CD has relied on food parcels at various points to sustain himself. A challenge related to these food parcels has been in CD's limited ability to make effective use of them. His skills gap is as such that he struggles to cook quite basic meals and it has often been the case that he won't actually end up eating much of what he accesses because he has little sense of what to do with the ingredients.

View from Disability North

There has been a significant rise in food poverty from the introduction of full service Universal Credit and the lack of any increase in the amount of income benefit paid - the basic income benefit amount having not changed in over four years.

The impact of Universal Credit, whether it is for the majority of Disability North's clients who are unable to work, or families who have disabled children and are low waged or where one partner has had to stop working in order to care of a disabled child, is huge. This has led to the increased use of foodbanks and disadvantages those clients who need to access proper nutrition in order to help them manage long-term health conditions. Foodbanks have become a necessary evil and have in recent years become as difficult to administer as benefit provision. The client needs an authorised referral from a trusted third party (including the offer of a referral from the DWP!).

Transitioning from Legacy Benefits to Universal Credit means a significant drop in access to money, particularly if there are hiccups in the system. As foodbank referrals are usually set as a maximum of three referrals per person, this does not help should you have overpayments from transition, such as Housing Benefit and Child tax credits. Foodbanks tend to provide store cupboard items, so they are unable to provide a reasonable spectrum of essential nutrition which is important for everyone, but particularly for disabled people who often have specific dietary requirements. Access for ethnic or religious diets precludes many of these clients being able to access a foodbank to address their specific differences.

View from Volunteer Centre Newcastle

There has been a rise in the number of foodbanks asking for emergency donations in the West End of Newcastle; typically the biggest has a constant request for emergency food. However many of the smaller ones struggle for volunteers e.g. Walker. The issue for the foodbanks is capacity and communication – the West End Foodbank struggles to get volunteers for the donation station at Grainger Market, which would be a central drop-off point.

There is a rise of the places like Vinnie's Cafe at SVP. They originally started the free food cafe for a Tuesday - based on donations from supermarkets and supported by volunteers both individual and corporate; they now have more than seventy people attend on a quiet week. They give out emergency packs of toiletries, hygiene products and have clothing and family items. The pay as you please cafe also opens on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

FoodCycle Byker is the newest FoodCycle project, using surplus food to cook a three-course meal every Monday at Byker Community Centre. FoodCycle builds communities by combining volunteers, surplus food and spare kitchen spaces to create nutritious meals for people at risk from food poverty and social isolation. They constantly need volunteers.

Peace of Mind communities – there are urgent appeals at Eid and Christmas. They have families who are refugees or have had permission to stay revoked. Many don't access the foodbanks etc. for fear of highlighting that they are taking services they are not entitled to.

View from VOLSAG (mental health network)

Workers and volunteers had a discussion about food poverty issues at the recent VOLSAG network meeting. The following points came up:

- Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations increasingly involved in signing off foodbank vouchers
- VCS organisations increasingly handing out food informally when it is known someone is in need (or sometimes cash to get food)
- Foodbanks are not open 24/7 so there can be significant waits
- Increasingly signposting people to the People's Kitchen and other food related services
- Some people have been excluded by foodbanks as a result of their difficult behaviour - meaning they have nowhere else to go - how well are volunteers trained and supported? Sometimes they call the VCS organisations because they are struggling to cope with someone's behaviour
- Some VCS organisations hand out emergency vouchers – e.g. for carers - there is a huge amount of stigma in accepting these
- It's not just food - personal hygiene, cleaning products, clothes etc. - there are competing priorities
- People can also struggle to get transport to the foodbank and to carry the parcels back home. This can be an additional barrier (a few foodbanks will deliver but not all). Some VCS providers give lifts
- Cookery classes are very popular these days - you get to take the food home
- Organisations can get distracted by having to decide who is most in need? (deserving/undeserving poor)
- You can only have a foodbank voucher so many times - and then what?



View from Search Newcastle

Search is a charity based in the west end of Newcastle that provides services for older people. They have presented three case studies.

Mr X, a 59 year old gentleman, with a learning disability, was relocated to live independently after coming to the attention of Adult Social Care during a hospital discharge. He was referred to Chain Reaction for Life Skills support after being housed in a tower block following a short respite stay.

Mr X has had no budgeting experience or experience of living independently until the death of his mother, whom he managed to care for in later years with her guidance around bill paying. Having come to Chain Reaction with substantial debt accrued with energy arrears, he was also in the process of being allocated an "Appointeeship" to help manage his finances. In the meantime, he was on a low income of Universal Credit with a compulsion to spend money on gambling. As a result, Search had to refer him to the foodbank for a whole month until his Appointeeship came through, as he had no money left usually after the second day he was paid his Universal Credit. He had also no money for a bus pass to get him to the foodbank, after the first week when his bus pass ran out. This necessitated his Chain Reaction Community Connector collecting his food parcel for him and delivering it. His Appointeeship has now been processed and he gets his money weekly after his bills have been paid, which with Chain Reaction support he is now no longer consistently reliant on foodbanks and with budgeting support can usually have enough money to purchase food throughout the month.

Mr Y, a 68 year old gentleman, was refused continued Personal Independence Payment (PIP) at re-assessment. He has become

reliant on foodbank vouchers over the last two months, as his money doesn't last until the end of the month. Having previously managed to pay his bills and use his PIP for taxis and mobility scooter hire, the loss of his PIP leaves him short of money, as he still has to rely on taxis for some journeys which would be impossible for him to make independently on public transport due to his limited mobility. He is using his bus pass with the support of his Chain Reaction Community Connector for some journeys, but his mobility scooter was taken away when he stopped making payments. Mr Y has re-applied for Personal Independence Payment and has a date for an assessment in his home, as he would struggle financially and with his mobility to make it to the assessment centre. Until a decision is made on his PIP eligibility, Mr Y will continue to need the support of foodbanks to get him through the month.

Earlier this year a woman attended the advice 'drop in' in real distress. She is 62 years old and suffers from depression and anxiety; she is in receipt of Universal Credit (ESA). She explained due to the bad weather, and not being able to go out of the house, she had used more gas and electricity than she normally would. She had no money left and so had no food in the house or the means to buy any. She was not due another payment for a week.

Search advised she could be offered a food parcel and contacted her energy suppliers for an emergency credit which she would need to pay back at a small weekly amount. She agreed she was happy to do this.

She was issued with a food parcel voucher and Search contacted her energy supplier who credited her meters with £25.00 each with an agreement to repay £3.00 per week.

View from HealthWORKS Newcastle

HealthWORKS is a charity based in the west end of Newcastle that helps local communities improve their health and wellbeing.

'Food poverty is the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet. It is about the quality of food as well as quantity. It is not just about hunger, but also about being appropriately nourished to attain and maintain health'.

Bristol Food Policy Council 2013

The sphere of activity HealthWORKS aims to deliver is designed around the six major Marmot principles. Although the contracts undertaken are not directly aimed at the problem of food poverty, the people HealthWORKS work with are often those who experience, or who are close to experiencing, food poverty, due to rising costs and shrinking incomes.

The Early Years team works across families in a variety of capacities (Breast Feeding peer support, West Change for Life partnership, West Community Family Hub and Lemington pre-school with 40 children a day) and staff see the evidence of food poverty on a regular basis.

HealthWORKS see that rates of poverty are rising again and are highest among families with children; with single parents or families with more than three children being those struggling with the most pronounced levels of hardship. Staff report that that it isn't only those without work who are reduced to going to the local foodbank but that changes to the benefit system have meant that people in work are also struggling to get by each week. The impact of reductions in tax credits and stringent, complicated 'rules' for benefit

claimants that if breached mean sanctions, exacerbated by the steady increase in the costs of rent, fuel and energy mean that consistent debt is now part of a downward spiral of problems that move on to include food poverty.

HealthWORKS aims to secure small pots of grant funding to enable them to respond to the major issues clients raise and since 2014 their Food Skills Team have actively focussed on work connected to the food poverty cycle (i.e. real poverty).

2014 - Funded by Newcastle University and Newcastle Council delivered 'Love Food, Hate Waste' workshops for 331 local people; focussing on cooking using left-overs or foods that would be wasted from the fridge, smart food shopping (looking at supermarket own brands and reduced to clear products) and seasonally sourced fruit/vegetables.

In 2015 the Change for Life West partnership (co-ordinated by HealthWORKS) launched the 'Save More' pack from 'Love Food, Hate Waste'; full of hints and tips on saving money, portion sizes and reducing food waste, backed up by the offer of free training for workers in the area to support the roll out of the packs.

Also in 2015, HealthWORKS delivered 'Making the family budget go further' sessions in the Outer West, funded by the local Warburton's factory. Staff were bowled over by the determination to cope shown by those with very little; but HealthWORKS realised that they had probably been working with self-selected cohorts of the most resilient. Those who for whatever reason struggle to keep on coping are those most likely to be below the radar. So HealthWORKS are repeating this programme this year (thanks to funding from the Community Foundation) and working to reach those people who didn't engage last time; single men, older people, those unable to work

due to enduring mental health issues etc.

In 2016, HealthWORKS worked with the National Energy Action programme, supporting people to switch energy suppliers and work out how to reduce their energy usage consistently. In 2017, (funded by EON) HealthWORKS worked with 97 residents in the New Tyne West area on a series of practical cooking workshops showing how to reduce food bills by using frozen/dried food, smarter food storage and 'stick to' shopping lists. They also introduced hands on experience with lower energy cooking options such as halogen ovens, slow cooking crockpots, microwave ovens etc. This was in response to clients telling them that many didn't have access to proper kitchens or even an actual oven.

In 2018, another problem that HealthWORKS became aware of was evidence of holiday hunger. Families with children dependent on school dinners for their main meal of the day were left without this support in the 12 weeks of school holidays each year. As a small scale pilot they have worked with partners from Newcastle City Council to co-deliver some holiday activity in a primary school for children 8 years plus. They are delivering workshops around healthier food options /practical cooking, enabling them to prepare their own lunch.

HealthWORKS also linked up with a holiday programme for parents and children at another primary school to support work on eating well with practical cooking for parents and children so that they end up making themselves lunch. They have shied away from using the term 'holiday hunger' as people reported that they were worried about the stigma of 'not being able to provide for their bairns' in the holidays; using the generic term 'holiday programmes' instead.

Since the wider Sure Start programme was cut across Newcastle, there has not been the capacity to offer the level of summer activities they used to do but this year they have managed to secure a small amount of external funding in order to deliver their own (smaller scale) summer activities programme for families with young children out of the Lemington Centre. In the late morning children experiment with wraps and fillings, and a wide range of fruits to try, making up their own packed lunches to eat out in the garden.

The Change for Life West partnership includes the West End Foodbank who gave a presentation at the partnership event in July 2018; talking about their work and exploring how staff and volunteers from the 60 odd local agencies present could help support their ongoing work.

However, HealthWORKS learnt from the people they supported that they often came away not knowing what to do with some of the items they had been given from the foodbank or unable to actually cook them. So a very real concern was that although Foodbanks were providing food to families in real need, it shouldn't be assumed that they were able to provide families with a well-balanced and nutritious diet. Foodbanks are a crisis service and do not solve any problem other than actual immediate hunger; they cannot prevent long term poor nutrition which contributes to those with the least struggling the most to make any progress in their lives when survival is so hard.

View from Food Newcastle

The Newcastle Food Poverty Group (NFPG) was established in April 2017 by The Food Newcastle Partnership (FNP) and Active Inclusion (Newcastle City Council). It is a delivery sub group of the Newcastle Good Food Plan with the purpose of working on priorities identified under the Theme 2: 'Good Food for All – Tackling Food Poverty'. The group aims to make a measurable difference by mitigating the adverse effects of food poverty and understanding and responding to the causes of food poverty.

The Newcastle Good Food Plan was developed by The Food Newcastle Partnership and is based on six key themes in the Sustainable Food Cities Framework:

1. Diet-related ill health and access to food
2. Good food for all – tackling food poverty
3. Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects
4. Strengthen the local sustainable food economy
5. Transforming catering and food procurement
6. Environmental sustainability – reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system

Themed delivery sub-groups with multi sector representation have been set up to drive the actions forward for each theme.

The Food Newcastle Partnership is an inclusive group of cross-sector stakeholders (public, private, voluntary & community sectors) representing all parts of the food system. The Partnership is working to obtain Sustainable Food Cities Bronze Award status in 2019.

The NFPG will strengthen partnerships with stakeholders by supporting, encouraging and developing innovative local policy responses to help people experiencing or at risk of food poverty.

Current work involves:

- Supporting a coordinated approach to addressing holiday hunger, sharing learning from across the city. There is growing recognition that holiday schemes can help mitigate the potential nutritional, physical activity and learning loss that can occur during the summer holidays, and Newcastle has been chosen to take part in two Department for Education funded pilots lead by Street Games and Children North East.
- Delivery of Food Power programmes which aim to help local communities to reduce food poverty with solutions they develop and with support from other communities across the UK.
- 'Involving Experts by Experience' – exploring approaches to community participation and voice, and empower those with direct experience of food poverty to play an active role in strategic alliance development.
- We are also being supported to deliver a 'Maximising Family Income' programme, which has a specific focus on improving coordination and navigation of the local welfare safety net. We will work with partners, including Active Inclusion, to develop a visual signposting tool that looks at pathways of support based on 'relief', 'resistance' and 'resilience'.

The group has over 25 active members who meet on a quarterly basis. It has representation from:

- NHS Trust: Early Help and Family Support, 0-19 Service, Health Visitors, Midwifery, Newcastle Nutrition (Community Dietetic Department).
- Newcastle University (Human Nutrition Research Centre, School of Psychology, Open Lab, Institute of Health & Society) and Northumbria University.
- Newcastle City Council (Active Inclusion, Public Health, Sport Development, Raising Participation, Community Family Hubs, Healthy Schools School Improvement Service)
- Children North East, schools and several local VCS organisations and faith groups.

These responses indicate some of the ways in which some voluntary organisations have responded to the rise in food poverty. Much of this is provided by volunteers – donating money, donating food, working in foodbanks or their faith groups or community organisations.

However, the result is that too many children and adults will still go to bed hungry at night time, in Newcastle, in the sixth richest country in the world



About Newcastle CVS

Newcastle CVS provides an independent voice and expert support services to voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises in Newcastle and Gateshead; we are here to help.

As a member of Newcastle CVS, your organisation can benefit from free and discounted training, access to networking events and forums, our free quarterly Inform magazine, a chance to share your updates in our fortnightly e-inform bulletin and discounts on our specialist services, including Ellison Services finance (payroll and accounts), funding support and guidance on governance, policy and compliance.

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Today and for the Future.



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Newcastle CVS
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