

# National Lottery Community Fund submission to the DEFRA call for evidence on developing a National Food Strategy

October 2019

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## Summary

1. We have funded and learnt from hundreds of projects and initiatives across the UK that put people and communities in the lead of local food networks and systems, including place-based approaches that led to people taking ownership of what they eat and how it’s sourced. We have found that food can act as a conduit or gateway to making further positive differences to the lives of individuals and communities. Putting people in the lead when it comes to food is an important factor in a wider systems approach that can achieve positive impacts across diet, health, family budgets and community relationships. We believe that more people having better food leads to happier and healthier people and ultimately stronger communities.
2. Dawn Austwick, CEO of the National Lottery Community Fund, and colleagues would be happy to meet with ministers or officials to discuss the areas covered in this submission or any other aspect of the work we are doing that may be of interest.

3. We would also be pleased to organise visits to projects across the country who we know are doing great work in improving food systems for communities, providing the opportunity to see these projects in action and hear from some of the people involved.

## **The National Lottery Community Fund**

4. The National Lottery Community Fund is the largest community funder in the UK - we are proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
5. Every year we distribute over £600 million to communities across the UK, making circa 12,000 grants. Over the last five financial years we have awarded £132.5m worth of funding to projects involving food, across 744 awards; from local growing and social eating projects to food redistribution programmes and cross-sector partnerships transforming local food systems.
6. Our learning from this funding shows that community-led food initiatives have multiple benefits to individuals, communities and society at-large. These benefits include:
  - Catalysing community action to build more cohesive communities (see paragraph 14)
  - Improving the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and reducing social isolation (see paragraph 15)
  - Positive environmental impacts and mitigation of climate change, such as increased sustainability and lower carbon emissions and waste output (see paragraph 16)
  - Tackling food insecurity (see paragraph 17)
  - Improving diets and nutrition, and consequently the physical health of individuals (see paragraph 18)
  - Providing volunteering opportunities and skills training for those excluded from the labour market (see paragraph 19).
7. The following sections signpost a variety of innovative projects across the UK that we have funded under each of the above themes. While separated into themes for the purposes of structuring this response, these benefits are inextricably linked to one another and do not occur in isolation. Rethinking food systems along the lines of some of the projects highlighted here has the potential to simultaneously reap these varied benefits. Given the positive impacts of these projects, we believe that they provide useful ideas and learning that could help to inform a new national food strategy that could work helpfully for all members of communities across the country.
8. Our response then goes on to explore some of the mechanisms used by our funded projects to achieve systems change, including cross-sector partnerships and network building, co-production and innovative funding approaches (see paragraphs 20-22).

## Key messages

9. Facilitating cross-sector collaboration between public, private and charitable organisations is essential for community initiatives to flourish, for example through councils providing communities with much-needed access to public green spaces, supermarkets providing surplus food, or essential transport to assist with the logistics of food distribution. Such cross-sector partnerships are vital for long-term, sustainable systems change (see paragraphs 14.1-2, 16.1-3, 16.5, 17.2, 20 & 21).
10. Projects have found that for many people, use of conventional food banks is associated with stigma and a strong sense of shame. Other approaches that are open to everyone or involve some form of small donation are perceived to overcome these barriers and are therefore able to reach those people in need who may feel too ashamed to use food banks. (See paragraphs 16.2, 17.2, 17.3.)
11. Co-production - involving beneficiaries and people with lived experience in the design and ongoing delivery of projects - often results in simple modifications that can be critical to a project's success. Tailoring projects according to local needs and building on existing local systems and partnerships, along with flexibility in the way projects and services operate is also hugely beneficial to participants and improves outcomes. (See paragraphs 17.5, 20.1, 21.)
12. Food projects consistently report a link between reduced social isolation (and feelings of loneliness) and improved mental health and wellbeing (see paragraphs 14.1, 15.2 and 19.1). Given that food is such an accessible and universal activity, food systems designed to involve and engage communities could provide ways to tackle mental health problems and the resulting societal costs.
13. A holistic approach to food projects - for example offering advice, signposting and information on relevant support services - increases awareness and uptake of statutory and third sector support schemes among the hardest to reach and most vulnerable people in communities. (See paragraphs 17.1 and 17.5.)

## The co-benefits of community-led, place-based food initiatives

### Community action

14. We have found that community-led food initiatives can **catalyse community action** to bring people together and build stronger relationships, and ultimately build cohesive, inclusive and thriving communities, with positive knock-on effects on social issues that arise in the absence of strong communities (e.g. social isolation and loneliness). Sharing food is a universal experience that can help to cross divides and break down barriers, even when people appear to have nothing in common.

Example case studies:

14.1 The Soil Association's Food for Life and Better Care programmes harness the power of good food to connect people of all ages through growing, cooking and eating together. The programme involves year-round food activities, delivered in collaboration

with six partners across the UK, taking place in communities, care settings and schools. It has the aim of embedding **intergenerational activities** into practice, addressing unhealthy relationships with food, and improving social isolation.

Schools and care settings are generally situated at the heart of their communities, and therefore have an essential role to play in building an integrated, health-promoting society. There is an increasing awareness, supported by research, that **connecting generations** can go some way to addressing the aforementioned issues, and that food provides a universal connecting point. For example, the care homes that Food for Life is operating within saw a 63% increase in social interactions and a 77% reported increase in the residents' mental wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

Project evaluations have reported significant impacts: more than 50% of primary schools in England serve menus certified by Food for Life's 'Served Here' award, which ensures pupils are twice as likely to eat their five a day and eat a third more fruit and veg than pupils in unaccredited schools. Evidence also suggests that Food for Life has the potential to reduce the gap for disadvantaged children in terms of health and academic achievement, and the programme produces a social return for local communities of £4.41 for every £1 invested.

The Better Care programme, which is focused more on older people in care settings, recorded notable improvements in participants' nutritional intake and increased sociability. Case studies illustrate the powerful, transformative impact on participants: interventions such as getting them more involved in community activities or forming connections with children have provided a range of benefits including improved health and wellbeing, and reduced feelings of loneliness and depression.

Soil Association's ambition now, through a new **Food Generations** project that began in April 2019, is to embed intergenerational activities using food in communities, schools and care settings. It will do this by testing which intergenerational activities work in diverse areas across the UK and building a robust evidence base about its impact.

This will take the form of test-and-learn pilots, in which regional teams will pilot intergenerational activities in 20 disadvantaged and diverse local authority areas in five regions across the UK. Learning from these pilots will then be disseminated and activities scaled across the UK. The project will seek to develop and establish national and regional strategic collaborations with education, health and social care providers, caterers and organisations supporting different generations (such as NSPCC and Age UK).

**14.2 Incredible Edible Ltd** is an umbrella organisation for a movement of more than 100 local grassroots groups around the UK, (and 600 globally), whose vision is to create a kinder future through the

power of food. This grassroots movement aims to: inspire and empower communities through growing and celebrating local food; promote the use of public space to grow food as a catalyst for community action; support local food economies by encouraging the production and consumption of local food; and develop and share innovative approaches to sustainable food production and invest in the urban farmers of the future - all underpinned by the aim of bringing people and communities together.

Incredible Edible Ltd is a truly 'people-led' community movement; it is local people taking small actions that build into something benefiting a whole community. Most groups are led by volunteers and the board is mostly constituted by representatives from local groups. Incredible Edible Ltd believes the movement has the potential to become a significant national enabler and change maker around food systems and community capacity.

However, groups often face challenges securing funding and working effectively with local businesses and local government. To enable the Incredible Edible model to grow, they ask that more public unused space be made easily available, that hospitals and health centres devote space to community growing projects and that schools teach students the basics of growing food.<sup>2</sup>

As a case study, the Incredible Edible Todmorden group has operated for ten years now and remains one of the most successful and well-known local groups. It was recently evaluated by Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Central Lancashire, who found positive outcomes including: increased pride, respect and community spirit; improvements to the public realm; increased physical activity; putting Todmorden 'on the map'; income generated for local businesses; and increased engagement with wider food-related issues. Together, these changes create a greater sense of a 'better' place.

**14.3 91 Ways to Build a Global City** was developed in Bristol to address a need to bring together the city's different communities, who often do not interact or have opportunities to interact with each other. This is not an issue unique to Bristol, it is something common across many cities and towns all over the UK. The name refers to the 91 languages spoken in the city.

91 Ways uses the convening power of food to bring communities together with the specific aim of breaking down barriers, making genuine connections, and building stronger communities. It takes a simple but effective approach, creating events and opportunities in communities for people to come together over food, usually by centring events on certain cohorts (e.g. newly arrived people, or refugees) who will then cook for members of the public and eat with them in a social setting. This leads to a better appreciation and understanding of culture and heritage, helping to cross divides and to find common ground. The events

are fun, they are about celebrating difference and understanding commonality, about bringing people together. Since their inception in 2015, 91 ways have brought together over 10,000 people, speaking 40 different languages, through 125 events.<sup>3</sup>

Currently the initiative is rooted in Bristol, but 91 ways is in the process of developing a replicable template of their project for use across the UK and hopes to pilot replica projects in other locations. 91 Ways is also exploring different partnership models for the initiative (i.e. affiliate, franchise, partnership) and identifying options for moving forward.

14.4 **Heart and Parcel** is a small project in Manchester which combines cooking with English for Speakers of Second Languages (ESOL) classes for migrant women. For many migrant women who are unable to attend formal ESOL classes it can be their only opportunity to learn English. The workshops are accessible to women of all language abilities and by focusing on cooking, women with lower level English don't feel left out, as they are always able to take part in preparing the meal.

After participants said that they also wanted to improve their writing skills, Heart and Parcel developed the Cook / Eat / Write / Share (CEWS) project. Over six weeks, participants shared and wrote down recipes, which were compiled into a recipe book alongside their pictures and stories. This project helped women to learn practical English that they could use in their everyday lives. Many fed-back that they felt more comfortable asking for help at the supermarket and spoke English more in their everyday lives as a result of the project. One participant said, "The English language practice stays with us, and will always be incorporated into our everyday life."<sup>4</sup>

## Mental health and wellbeing

15. As mentioned in the previous example (14.1), by helping to facilitate stronger social relationships and integration into communities, community-focused food initiatives can improve the **mental health and wellbeing** of individuals. Specialised food-related activities such as 'therapeutic' community allotments and horticultural therapy sessions have also proven very successful in improving participants' mental health and wellbeing, due in part to reduced levels of social isolation but also because of the nature of the activities.

Example case studies:

15.1 The Growing Communities' [Grown in Dagenham](#) project on Dagenham farm, which ran from 2016-2018, offered food growing sessions for local Barking and Dagenham residents experiencing mental health issues. The sessions were free and open to self-referrals and referrals from professionals. The project continually experienced a higher demand for these sessions than they were able to accommodate, noting that no other projects of a similar

nature were available in the local area. Participants fed back that the project was unique in its therapeutic impact; as one participant commented, “100% this helps with anxiety, it’s better than any tablet or therapy.” In addition to the opportunity to socialise and the structure added to their week, participants valued the outdoor nature of the work, the satisfaction in watching their plants grow, the warmth and empathy of the staff, and the project’s flexible approach. Participants appreciated the ability to choose the job they wanted to do, depending on how they were feeling, and felt the staff listened to them. This flexibility was important, as one participant explained, “You’re not under pressure to do anything. You can choose what to do.”<sup>5</sup>

15.2 The [Community Allotment City Hull Project](#) (CACH) is developing five large unused/semi-derelict green spaces in the city’s high deprivation areas into 50 community allotments and edible gardens, allowing locals to grow their own produce and improving access to healthy food. The community allotments are very much ‘neighbourhood-based’ and the project tries to build connections and nurture a friendly atmosphere by pairing novice plot-holders with growing experts to provide support and advice. This allows residents to get to know their neighbours as they grow alongside each other and an independent social audit found that as a result, participants experienced reduced levels of social isolation.<sup>6</sup> The same audit also found improved mental health amongst participants and a reduction in the use of local mental health services, estimating a social return of £1 : £10.94, which represents significant cost savings to public organisations such as the NHS and the City Council. Comments from participants underline the project’s social value, for example: “It has been fantastic for me health-wise, mental health-wise. This project has helped me get ready to go back to work; I want to go back to work.”

CACH is currently working in partnership with other charities and the NHS to build a ‘therapeutic’ allotment to allow people with disabilities and mental health problems to get involved and benefit from allotment gardening.

## Sustainability

16. Some of our funded projects involve rethinking food systems so that they benefit everyone in communities while also benefitting the **environment**. By considering innovative ways to improve the food system with a local community focus, there is potential for mitigating climate change and improving sustainability, e.g. reducing packaging waste, food waste and carbon-heavy transport, as detailed in the project examples below.

Example case studies:

16.1 We awarded £5m to **FareShare** (2018-2021), an organisation that saves good food from going to waste and redistributes it to

frontline charities across the UK, reaching an estimated 924,325 vulnerable people every week. A small amount of the food has been unsold in supermarkets, but the bulk comes from suppliers, producers and distribution centres due to over-production, over-supply and changes in packaging or branding. FareShare works with all major food suppliers in the UK, and accesses the food in a variety of ways, often negotiating direct delivery from the suppliers themselves, or by physically collecting the food. FareShare then distributes the food to regional distribution centres across the UK who dispense it to 9,800 charities and community organisations. Volunteers are a critical part of these services - they stock the centres, liaise with charities, physically sort and deliver the food, and understand the local needs and context in which they operate.

FareShare's impact on mitigating climate change is considerable: avoidable food waste generates 19m tonnes of greenhouse gases over its lifetime, which is estimated to be the equivalent of one quarter the amount produced by cars in the UK.<sup>7</sup> Each tonne of food redistributed equates to between 3.7 and 4.2 fewer tonnes of CO2 equivalent emissions. In 2018/2019, FareShare saved 20,838 tonnes of food from waste - enough for 46.5 million meals.<sup>8</sup> While substantial, this only represents 7% of the edible surplus food available in the UK, and it is estimated that at least 250,000 tonnes could be redistributed to feed people in need.<sup>9</sup>

FareShare's impact on the voluntary and community sector is also huge: recently NatCen Social Research found that one fifth of the 568 FareShare member charities surveyed indicated that their project could not continue without the savings they derive from FareShare, and 25% of those surveyed said they would have to consider reducing client services to buy food commercially. Many member charities use this food to tackle hunger and food insecurity in their communities - FareShare Southern Central alone is helping to feed well over 22,000 people in need each week.

FareShare welcome the Government's grant to tackle food waste and believe that more steps in this direction would do a great deal to alleviate food wastage and food insecurity; further action could also be taken to ensure that liability is reduced in the context of food waste.<sup>10</sup>

16.2 **Hubbub's Community Fridge Network** tackles food waste by providing an easy way for people or businesses to get food near its 'sell by' date to others. The project brings together major retailers, grant giving bodies, local authorities and community groups in an attempt to reduce business and domestic food waste and strengthen communities. There are now more than 70 Community Fridges open across the UK helping thousands connect to their communities, access nutritious food, save money and reduce waste. Every month, each Community Fridge **attracts up to 200 visitors** and redistributes **32 tonnes of food** that would

otherwise go to waste.

Beneficiaries of the fridges vary from place to place, however the biggest user group is those facing financial hardship and struggling to buy food. Anecdotal feedback indicates that Community Fridges enable individuals and families to have access to fresh, perishable food that they might not otherwise be able to afford. However, a mixture of beneficiaries, including those who use it for environmental reasons and the opportunity to give as well as receive, helps to reduce the stigma that can be associated with hand-outs. Members of the network have said it enables food to be redistributed in a dignified way that makes people feel good, as they know they're also stopping good food from going to waste. Community groups report that there are people using the fridges who wouldn't want to use a food bank.

The majority of Community Fridges are housed in community centres and churches, but some are sited in cafes, universities, on street locations and in other managed spaces. As a result, the way the fridges are operating varies greatly. Hubbub have learnt that the network isn't about conformity, but instead benefits from a flexible approach, providing support and guidance that can be tailored by groups to meet the needs of their location and beneficiaries.

The vast majority of food re-distributed via Community Fridges (95%) is from national and local retailers and markets; the rest is from domestic donations including allotment holders.<sup>11</sup> The links to retailers for food donations are key to the project and Community Fridges benefit retailers financially, as giving away food often costs less than disposing of it. 20 national businesses/retailers have donated surplus food to the Community Fridge Network and Hubbub has developed a redistribution arrangement with 7 major retailers. There are also numerous local donors including local grocers, markets, bakeries, stores and cafes. A big challenge in meeting demand is finding enough volunteers to collect food at times specified by retailers and logistical challenges of transporting food; this could be overcome if it were possible to shift some of the onus of redistribution costs onto retailers.

16.3 Projects in our **Communities Living Sustainably** programme have found that food and growing activities are a good 'hook' for engaging the public with the wider sustainability agenda and projects used this opportunity to engage their community with wider project activities and local sustainability issues.

Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) was a five-year, £12 million programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Twelve communities in England received up to £1 million to help deal with the potential impact of climate change and build the sustainability and resilience of their local community, in turn providing inspiration to other communities across England and

sharing what they have learned with each other.

CLS activities ranged from green space activities to projects relating to biodiversity, but the food and growing activities proved to be the most fun and accessible, with all groups reporting high levels of local interest and attendance.<sup>12</sup>

Local groups particularly valued CLS project development funding, for planning and enabling projects to build strong, well informed foundations for future plans (for example mapping available land for growing). Groups fed back that this development funding can be more difficult to attain than funding for project delivery, but that it is a vital component of developing a successful project. Learning also suggests that community projects benefit from guidance on the time and resources needed to set up and deliver growing projects, prior to applying for funding, as many underestimated the time, resources and expertise needed.

CLS projects have found working with a range of local partners to be beneficial; projects with strong partnerships made stronger, faster progress. CLS was predominantly a revenue funding programme and as hoped, groups were able to use these partnerships to source capital materials to add value and further progress their activities.

**16.4 Our Bright Future's Student Eats** enterprise programme puts sustainable food at the heart of universities and colleges across the UK by supporting students to set up food enterprises and growing sites and by embedding sustainable food production and education across campuses, curriculums and communities. With more and more students growing and selling sustainable food, the programme is making a positive impact on campus life - across enterprise, community, wellbeing, education and sustainability.

A total of 59 student-led social enterprises have now traded through Student Eats and together they have:

- Sold over £110,000 worth of sustainable food, diverting more than 6.5 tonnes of food from landfill;
- Created, expanded or improved 58 food growing sites;
- Enabled 2,061 young people to improve their employability skills (1,717 directly running enterprises);and
- Been supported by people volunteering over 24,000 hours of their time.

**16.5 The Community Land Advisory Service in Wales (CLAS Cymru)** supports community groups, local authorities and landowners, enabling local people to access, own and improve green spaces in their area. The overarching aim of the CLAS Cymru project we funded, which ran from 2013-2018, was to increase the amount of

land in Wales available and accessible for community growing. By the end of the five years, the project had supported 227 community growing projects and 92 landowners, acting as an ‘honest broker’ providing mutually beneficial advice and support to those with land and those looking for land. This makes them uniquely valuable, as one beneficiary explained, “Yes there are other organisations that help community projects in other ways but none with the specific expertise that helps projects through the most difficult and off-putting aspects - planning and securing land.”<sup>13</sup>

Learning from the project showed that despite government support for communities wishing to take ownership of land and other assets, in practice the transfer of ownership or long-term lease of land remains a difficult process for communities to navigate successfully if unsupported; even short-term license agreements with local authorities require protracted negotiations. Community growing groups have identified the need for an honest and impartial organisation to broker the relationship and ultimate agreement between themselves and the statutory sector.

Those involved in CLAS Cymru-supported growing projects reported increased skills and knowledge about how food is grown, increased awareness about the importance of caring for the environment (e.g. composting, recycling, bio-diversity), increased sense of community and improved physical and mental health. Following the success of this project, CLAS Cymru has secured funding from the Welsh government as part of their commitment to driving up the quality of local green space and supporting communities to identify and take control of green spaces.

## Tackling food insecurity

17. Putting people and local communities at the heart of designing food systems can go some way towards addressing **food insecurity** concerns, in that it can provide a more holistic approach where beneficiaries are supported to build informal networks and access advice and signposting to services. Community food projects are often perceived to be more accessible than formal routes of support, either due to less stringent bureaucratic requirements or because people perceive there to be less shame or stigma associated. Putting local people in the lead when it comes to food systems can also empower communities to use their voice to engage with policies that affect them - ensuring that systems work helpfully for all members of the community.

The 2014 All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom produced a list of 77 recommendations for addressing food insecurity and recognised that many of the root causes are structural and include low pay, the welfare system, benefits administration and taxation.<sup>14</sup> Several of the inquiry’s recommendations are relevant to our funded projects:

- The importance of locally based networks and solutions that form part of

a coordinated regional or national response.

- The co-location of services, such as wrap-around support at food banks (moving beyond simply giving out food).
- The unavoidable need for approaches to tackle immediate hunger / emergency food provision.
- The potential in the redistribution of surplus food and waste prevention.
- Resilience - cooking, parenting and budgeting.

Taking inspiration from some of the examples below and putting communities in the lead could help to put the UK on track to achieve its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger by 2030.

#### Example case studies:

17.1 [Feeding Britain](#) is running pilot projects in Bristol, Bradford, Leicester and Derbyshire to support people at risk of food insecurity and help them to get back on their feet, so they no longer need food banks and food projects. The project hopes to create a community model that can be replicated elsewhere in the country to address the root causes of food hunger; ensuring people can access accurate and relevant advice at the point of use in community food projects. The pilots will be evaluated to learn best practice from each area and to inform future models of advice-based provision.

The project has found that direct on-site provision of advice at the point of food crisis has been incredibly beneficial to clients, many of whom have been offered advice and case advocacy to support them to tackle the issues that made them vulnerable to hunger in the first place, as well as signposting to further support, such as Healthy Start Vouchers.

In the Bristol project, rather than offering formal advice surgeries, advice workers instead focus on building rapport with parents and families who attend the centres, engaging with mothers particularly. Through this informal contact they signpost available services (including financial support, issues with debt or universal credit, etc.). This method has proven very effective for clients, who feel it is more like a conversation with a friend than a formal professional advice appointment. Advice workers then follow up these conversations with a telephone call, to ensure that clients have actively sought out signposted assistance.

Demand for the advice surgeries is enormously high, with issues around Universal Credit, chronic low income and debt being most prominent. A number of food bank users who have benefited from advice and follow-up support have noted that they wouldn't have sought advice of their own accord and that the presence of an advisor when collecting their food parcel had been invaluable.

Based on the learning from their food projects, Feeding Britain believe that a holistic food strategy should include support for research and implementation of innovative solutions (by communities, charities, farmers, the wider agricultural industry

and government) to tackle rural food poverty. These could include mobile community shops, home delivery services of low-cost food, community cafes and social eating spaces, and new models for rural meals on wheels services.<sup>15</sup>

17.2 [Ediblelinks](#) in Northern Warwickshire uses food waste to address food insecurity and illness resulting from poor nutrition. Each day they redistribute unwanted food from the private sector to 40 school breakfast and after-school clubs, and more than 130 community groups. The project works in partnership with two borough councils and the online supermarket Ocado, which provided two transit vans so that the project could collect and deliver food to community groups. This food is given to people who have obtained an emergency food voucher from North Warwickshire Borough Council or who have been referred to the food bank through a partner organisation. Through these strong partnerships, over the past 12 months Ediblelinks have increased support to community groups by 136% (from 90 to 213), reaching over 12,500 beneficiaries. There is evidence to suggest this has contributed to the 28% reduction in food bank referrals in the local area.<sup>16</sup>

In 2018 the project received three national awards for its use of innovative approaches to food distribution, which go further than conventional food banks; it puts fresh food in the hands of people in food crisis and creates tailored programmes to help them regain financial independence. At the same time, the project works with existing community groups to prevent people from reaching crisis point.

One example of this innovation is their ‘honesty shops’, which allow people to access food and other items in return for a donation - however small - giving people access to perishable food and items they wouldn’t otherwise have. Because the honesty shops are open to everyone there is less stigma associated with using them; in contrast, participants regularly feed back that they avoid food banks because of the strong sense of shame they feel about getting a ‘handout’. This feeling seems to be widespread and very inhibitive, with participants saying things like “I would rather shoplift than use a food bank”. Staff have also noticed that false rumours regularly circulate amongst people coming into honesty shops, for example: “I won’t go to the council for help because if they think you can’t feed the kids then social services are called.”

Personal shoppers in the honesty shops support beneficiaries to work to their budget and prioritise their needs, while also signposting or referring to other services and support. Trained in key public health messages, the personal shoppers advise on label reading and raise awareness of the link between lifestyle and health. Partner organisations (such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Family Information Service, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, Communities and Partnership Team and more) also

attend honesty shops, allowing them to engage with some of the most vulnerable and hard to reach people.

17.3 The [Menu for Change](#) project is a multi-sector partnership set up to challenge the root causes of food insecurity whilst piloting new interventions in response. The project is being delivered by Oxfam Scotland, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, Nourish and The Poverty Alliance. It aims to tackle the underlying drivers of food insecurity, prevent repeat crisis experiences and support a move away from emergency food aid being the primary response to food insecurity issues. The project is testing alternative interventions rooted in dignity for individuals facing food insecurity, piloting new services and activities. For example, in East Ayrshire community members involved in the Menu for Change advisory group have developed and run a community co-op because they wanted to have an alternative to emergency food aid. The co-op is open 12-3pm every Thursday in North West Community Partnership Community Centre. It is entirely led, designed, and run by community members.

One element of the Menu for Change project, putting cash at the heart of responses, is being delivered in three Local Authority areas - Fife, Dundee City and East Ayrshire. The project is working intensively with local groups and public sector stakeholders in these areas to review and improve practices in addressing food insecurity, to evolve the emergency response from food to money - and to identify ways to stop people from facing a cash crisis in the first place. Learning from this will be shared across Scotland.<sup>17</sup>

Menu for Change is also engaging in research opportunities to build an evidence base on interventions to prevent food insecurity. This includes a longitudinal study to identify how people's substantial personal efforts towards a life free from hunger, and the fear of it, can be better supported by actors operating across the public, private and third sectors. Results published in October 2019 find a consistent theme is the importance of participants being treated with respect and dignity, an expectation too often unmet.<sup>18</sup> Many described strong feelings of shame associated with having to access food banks, feelings which did not diminish with repeated use. In contrast, food aid services, particularly community café type settings, which provided opportunities for socialising and for engaging with support and advice services, appeared to have a very positive impact on some participants in the study. Interviewees' experiences point to the importance of holistic, person-centred approaches to service provision that enable people to build connections and access advice, while being treated with dignity and respect.

17.4 **Alexandra Rose Charity (ARC)** offers a new way of addressing food insecurity through a fruit and vegetable voucher scheme in

London. This project is relatively simple but with real potential to transform the diets and health of families in a way that maintains and strengthens families' dignity.

**Rose Vouchers** give parents with young children on low incomes the opportunity to buy fresh fruit and vegetables using vouchers redeemable at local markets. Vouchers are worth £3 per child per week. Eligibility for Rose Vouchers is based on assessments undertaken by Children's Centre staff, who also distribute the vouchers. Children's Centre staff recruit those families who stand to benefit most because of their susceptibility to food insecurity, diet-related health issues or other risk factors.

By locating Rose Voucher registration and distribution at Children's Centres the project also supports participants' engagement with existing interventions and activities focused on health and wellbeing - a holistic approach that has been shown to encourage participation by target families. Alexandra Rose Charity (ARC) believes that long term solutions for childhood obesity, diet-related ill health and food poverty demand a response from retailers; rather than relying on the public and voluntary sectors for solutions. Another outcome from the scheme is increased awareness of eligibility for, and subsequent increased uptake of, Healthy Start Vouchers.

Unique to this scheme is its recognition of the place of markets in communities and how Rose Vouchers supports this; under threat through changing shopping habits and urban development, markets remain critically important as sources of healthy low-cost food in areas that often suffer from poor food access. A number of sources would cite a role for markets in revitalising communities. It's particularly important for the scheme to maintain good relations with market traders and so far ARC and partners have been able to do this.

Since being piloted in Hackney and Greenwich in 2013 the scheme has so far expanded to include Lambeth and as of 2019 has supported over 1,000 families to access vouchers. An evaluation of the scheme to date has shown:<sup>19</sup>

- 95% of families have increased their consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- 75% report a decrease in consumption of processed food and ready meals.
- 65% report increased preparation of meals from scratch.
- 95% report a general feeling of increased wellbeing, weight loss, improved sleep, higher energy levels, improved bowel health, etc.
- Improved confidence in cooking with fresh produce.

17.5 [Community Shop](#) runs social supermarkets, where people on low incomes can buy cheap surplus food while at the same time accessing support and training. We have funded the opening of a new site in Grimsby, which in 2018 served 1,309 local households

an estimated 2.5 million meals made with Community Shop produce. This allowed members to access deeply discounted, good quality food. The project also provides support and builds connections; in 2018 Community Shop Grimsby put 399 members in touch with other community organisations, engaged 267 members in their food mentoring programme and helped find employment for 30 members.

The project is empowering the local community by supporting 15 'Community Leaders' who use the space to plan, develop and deliver their own bespoke groups and activities for the community, such as coffee mornings to combat social isolation and 'Mums and Tots' groups to provide support and advice for new mums. In this way the project is more than a community supermarket - it is a local hub enabling the community to become healthier, better connected and more resilient.

17.6 In Brighton, community gardening group [Nurture through Nature](#) addresses food insecurity by growing fresh allotment produce for food banks and community centres. In addition to their weekly growing group, they also collect and donate unwanted produce from other growers at the allotments, reducing unnecessary food waste. The project relies on volunteers, encouraging local people who are unemployed or socially isolated to volunteer, and actively involves them in planning how to use the plot over the growing season. Volunteers find the project rewarding and beneficial to their wellbeing; as one volunteer commented, "It's great to have some structure back in my life and feel like I've contributed to something really important. Food is a basic need often taken for granted and to be helping to grow it for others who may be in food poverty, whilst also reaping the therapeutic benefits of connecting with the land and the other volunteers, feels great. It's a mutually beneficial and brilliant project." <sup>20</sup>

## Improving people's diets

18. A community focus when it comes to food systems can **improve the diets** - and consequently the physical health - of individuals: from improving knowledge about nutrition and cooking skills, through to ensuring fresh produce is readily accessible to everyone.

### Example case studies:

18.1 We have supported several projects run by [Food Train](#), a large organisation that seeks to strengthen community responses to reducing malnutrition amongst older people in the UK, through people-led intervention and exploration. 1 in 10 older people in the UK are malnourished. Food Train delivers a range of services to older people across Scotland, including grocery home deliveries, support and befriending services. Their services, delivered by volunteers, aim to allow older people to live independently in their own homes for longer and ensure that

people are accessing good quality, healthy food. There are many clear benefits experienced by Food Train beneficiaries, including access to healthy food (for those who find it hard to reach shops or carry heavy groceries), an increased sense of independence and reduced burden on carers, and social contact through volunteer visits, through which volunteers often build good relationships, provide informal advice, signpost to other services or alert agencies to any concern.<sup>21</sup>

Research shows that community initiatives like Food Train can fill the gaps in services, contributing to the overall wellbeing and independence of beneficiaries. For example, an independent evaluation in 2015 provided evidence that Food Train ‘addresses the fundamental concerns of its users about access to, and availability of, food by providing a consistent reliable source of grocery shopping, along with improved independence and wellbeing’.<sup>22</sup>

Food Train are in the process of engaging stakeholders to create a sustainable approach to reducing malnutrition, creating a lasting and engaged network committed to responding and adapting to this issue as learning is gathered. So far, partnership working and relationships with local councils and supermarkets have been instrumental to its success. Early evaluations show that the Food Train model is transferrable between rural and more urban locations thanks to its flexibility to adapt to local need, while at the same time adhering to the core service function and values of the wider Food Train organisation.<sup>23</sup>

18.2 **Grow, Share, Cook** is a project run by [Tamar Grow Local](#), which provides opportunities for households on lower incomes to improve healthy eating and cookery skills in Plymouth, helping to address food poverty and the accessibility of fresh food through the three steps of growing, sharing and cooking. Working in partnership with Plymouth Community Homes, Plymouth City Council and Food is Fun CIC, Tamar Grow Local supplies beneficiaries with fortnightly bags of 5 different seasonal fruits and vegetables which are sourced direct from growers and community growing projects in the Tamar Valley and in Plymouth. Outside of the local growing seasons, bags are supplemented with British produce bought from a local wholesaler. A recipe sheet designed around the contents are included with each bag to help encourage recipients to try out new and varied meal ideas. As well as receiving fortnightly veg bags, recipients also take part in cookery sessions designed to widen cookery knowledge using local and seasonal produce and encourage recipients to eat fresh fruit and vegetables on a more regular basis.

## Boosting volunteering

19. Involving and engaging communities in local food initiatives can provide **volunteering opportunities & skills training**, which can support people (e.g. the long-term unemployed, people on probation, ex-offenders, etc.) to re-integrate into society and gain employment. So many of the projects we fund depend on volunteers, including many of the projects mentioned in this consultation response. We've found that volunteering creates a double benefit, both for the person giving their time and the people they help. Volunteers can play a key role, but it is important to give them the support and training they need to fulfil this role. The projects below highlight examples of the impact of community-based food initiatives on volunteers, and the importance of developing programmes that provide one-to-one support to volunteers and invest in skills development.

### Example case studies:

**19.1 Rhubarb Farm** is a horticultural-based social enterprise in Bolsover that offers work placements, training and volunteering opportunities to people experiencing mental health problems, social isolation or with complex needs, e.g. ex-offenders, recovering drug or alcohol misusers, or ex-service personnel with PTSD. Rhubarb Farm uses a therapeutic organic horticulture model for developing skills, confidence and employability, and for improving health and wellbeing. Individuals can grow fruit and vegetables, learn woodwork, and cook and serve food in a community café. They are supported by a buddy volunteer.

To date, the organisation has supported almost 1,000 people and Rhubarb Farm have numerous testimonials of the impact they have made on participants. For example David Hopkins, a Community Mental Health Worker says, "I have worked in mental health for many years, and when you meet someone... who never leaves the house due to anxiety, and you support that person into working at Rhubarb farm, and then you see the positive difference in that person a few months later, you realise that Rhubarb Farm makes a huge difference to lives, and should be a prototype for similar projects around the country."<sup>24</sup>

Rhubarb Farm Horticulturalist, Emmy Aubignac, explains that many of the project's volunteers are affected by loneliness: "Before they start coming to Rhubarb Farm, volunteers say they lack companionship, feel left out and isolated. People suffering from loneliness don't naturally talk - but the magic of food is that it brings people together and makes conversation easier."<sup>25</sup>

**19.2 FareShare's** (see 2.1) volunteering programme provides opportunities for skills development and improved employment prospects. Analysis of the 2018-19 annual volunteer survey found that for those volunteering to increase their work prospects, 84% thought that volunteering for FareShare would lead to paid employment.<sup>26</sup> There is also good evidence in the survey that volunteering with FareShare increases physical and mental wellbeing: on the whole, volunteers felt fitter, happier and more

satisfied with their life; 75% felt they had made new friends and increased their social network.

For example, Keiran is a volunteer with FareShare in Sussex and now a well-known face in their warehouse. Keiran first heard about FareShare when he was homeless and staying at a hostel that received food from FareShare. Now, thanks to their volunteer project, he is getting training for a forklift truck qualification, learning new skills and “giving back to projects I used when I was in need.” He has also found a part-time job at one of the charities FareShare supplies - a local community centre that caters for the over 50s.<sup>27</sup>

## Achieving systemic change

### Working in partnership

20. Realising the benefits outlined above would require systemic change in the UK food system; this can only be achieved through **increased connectivity amongst organisations** - no one organisation or approach can have a significant impact alone. Lessons can be drawn from our work connecting organisations, building on and strengthening partnerships, sharing learning and supporting cross-sector initiatives that aim for equitable access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

#### Example case studies:

20.1 **Food Power** is a four-year programme led by Sustain and CAP, which will catalyse the development of people-led, long-term and sustainable approaches to tackling food poverty across the UK, designed following consultation with key stakeholders, experts by experience and grassroots delivery organisations.

One of the project's initiatives is for 32 local areas to develop **local food poverty action plans**, which are designed to develop long-term sustainable solutions to the problem of food insecurity, with buy-in from local people, businesses and agencies. Creating co-ordinated plans might include addressing the increasing (at times overwhelming) demand on emergency food aid; working together to achieve key priorities on health and inequalities; tackling a more specific issue such as poor access to affordable healthy food in a defined area; or meaningfully ensuring the voice of those affected by food poverty shapes local interventions. Plans will draw in a spectrum of organisations to ensure connectivity between actors. The involvement of experts by experience is integral to the programme and will result in at least 120 people being supported and empowered to take an active role in identifying and advocating for long-term solutions to food crisis. Further, at least 30 local alliances will be able to monitor, evaluate and improve the impact of their interventions on both acute and long-term household food insecurity.

Food Power say there is a need for policymakers and practitioners to recognise the specific nature of rural food insecurity. There is a wealth of good practice around the UK and beyond, but this needs to be drawn together and some evaluation carried out to identify what works best and identify successful practice and innovation. More research is needed to map and quantify rural food insecurity, recognising that it is a complex issue closely linked to wider issues such as fuel poverty, rural premium, loss of local services and transport.<sup>28</sup>

20.2 In the summer of 2019 we provided funding for a new **Food Learning Network** to be led by **Sustain** over two years, which aims to harvest intelligence and connect UK organisations running UK-wide food programmes (predominantly our grant holders). The initiative will provide workshops, regional learning events and webinars, with a legacy ambition to capture and share learning more widely at low cost or free. Sessions will relate to shared issues around organisational capacity, with the common theme being around improving the food system through user-led approaches.

20.3 We have provided substantial support to the **Food Foundation** to scale their **Peas Please** initiative across the UK via a partnership model, which will build on existing work and galvanise lasting change.

The extent to which the UK food system is detrimental to public health, especially for people with a low income and children, is a major societal issue; poor diet is now the UK's single largest cause of early death.<sup>29</sup> Tackling low vegetable (veg) consumption in the UK could prevent 20,000 premature deaths every year<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, eating more veg may displace some of the meat that is eaten, reducing the UK's carbon footprint by up to 17%.

Using a health behaviour change model, (like the NHS Change for Life programme), the Food Foundation's Peas Please aims to improve public health and reduce diet-related disease by making it easier and more appealing for everyone in the UK to eat more veg. Peas Please works in partnership with key players to achieve systemic change in consumer behaviour, practice and policy.

Taking a unique whole-system approach, Peas Please works at every step of the food chain, from production to consumption. For vegetables, this means working with growers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, food service outlets, caterers, schools, government, local authorities and beyond.

Peas Please focuses on changing the environment in which people make decisions about what they eat, which includes product availability, price, positioning and how appealing veg is. In particular, Peas Please aims to:

- Increase the amount of veg on offer - on menus, in meal

deals, in ready meals, on aisle ends, or in retail promotions.

- Make veg more appealing through advertising and PR, improve the taste of veg-based meals through better culinary education, and community-based events and engagement.
- Explore the challenges, barriers and potential enablers to veg consumption, which will feed into the collective effort to find out what it takes to get people eating more veg across the UK.

Peas Please is working with businesses, policymakers, public authorities, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, academics and funders to run pilots of new approaches to increase access to veg for low-income families. For example, Peas Please hopes to create collaborations between clinical commissioning groups or local GP surgeries in areas of deprivation, working in partnership with local greengrocers (or other retailers selling veg) to trial fruit and veg prescriptions for those with diet-related diseases, and monitoring impacts on consumption and NHS drug costs. As another example, Peas Please has encouraged Lidl to collaborate with Brighton City Council and Brighton University to work directly with low-income customers to understand how their stores and veg offer could be improved. Peas Please has also driven the development of a scoping study in Lambeth and Southwark to engage wholesalers in working with convenience stores to improve their veg offer.

Peas Please will help drive increased investment in veg advertising from pledgers. Its annual pledger conference enables industry players to talk about joint challenges and share learning. Healthy eating is an industry-wide issue - retailers acknowledge they still have a lot to learn about consumer behaviour. Peas Please has already secured 47 pledges of action from businesses operating in the supply chain, and commitments from 21 city partnerships across the UK. Early-pledging organisations include Tesco, Sainsbury's, Lidl, Mars Food, Sodexo, PWC, Castell Howell and Birmingham City Council.

By taking a whole-system approach, collaborating with more than 150 organisations and engaging a strong network of actors at national and subnational levels to support the initiative, Peas Please have already had a transformative impact; in the first eight months of their work they delivered 4.8 million additional veg portions, and directly reached 728,000 people and 68,000 children.<sup>1</sup>

**20.4 Sustainable Food Cities (SFC)** is a 5-year project (2019-2024) led by Food Matters, Soil Association and Sustain, aiming to improve the sustainability of local food systems through increasing the number of cross-sector partnerships between public sector agencies, businesses, academics and NGOs. It

supports grassroots community and strategic organisations to make healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live. In addition to a small grants programme and coordinator roles, SFC provides support to each partnership by: facilitating a food summit in each area to bring together interested parties, which maps existing initiatives and explores key local food issues to build a vision and action plan; sharing knowledge and expertise on a collaborative systems approach to tackling food related issues such as food poverty and food waste; and supporting governance so that each partnership can achieve more than the sum of its parts through collaboration and a strategic systems approach to become the hub of the local food movement.

SFC now has a network of 50 active member locations, including some of the UK's most economically deprived urban areas, and it has had an increasing role in shaping changes at the local level. For example, local food partnerships are now represented in local authority areas that cover a total UK population of 20.4 million people. In most SFC cities it is likely that without the project, action would only consist of fragmented initiatives addressing a limited range of sustainable food issues with limited impact.

Since the initial stages of the programme, SFC has been a subject of keen interest for researchers inside the UK and international higher education sector. Between 2015 and 2019 there have been at least nine academic publications about the programme.

Central themes of the research suggest that SFC shows:

- a basis for bringing together disconnected issues across the food system
- an innovative model for local governance and trans-local governance
- a promising format for convening formerly disconnected actors
- an exemplar of community food action at scale
- an example of innovative city action on food.<sup>30</sup>

## Co-production

21. Central to the projects we fund is the involvement of people and communities at every stage of the process. **Co-production** means that services and systems are developed and delivered with meaningful input from the people they set out to help, in turn ensuring that real needs are addressed as well as improving engagement. Our latest report, [A Meeting of Minds: How co-production benefits people, professionals and organisations](#), explores the practice of, and our learning about, co-production, as well as the benefits for people, professionals and organisations. The report finds that for co-production to be successful, projects and services need sufficient time, resources and the flexibility to do it well; it can't be an add-on activity that isn't budgeted for.

## Example case studies:

21.1 Our programme **A Better Start (ABS)** uses partnership working, co-production and a 'service design' approach to facilitate systems change. ABS is a ten-year (2015-2025), £215 million programme supporting five partnerships based in Blackpool, Bradford, Lambeth, Nottingham and Southend to support families to give their babies and very young children the best possible start in life - for example by improving their diet and nutrition, to support healthy physical development and protect against illness in later life.

By using a service design approach, the ABS partnerships bring together practitioners and commissioners with parents, carers and the community ('experts by experience') to review and improve existing service provision or develop new services. The partnerships have found that evidence-based programmes can't be taken 'off the shelf' and simply applied to a new area or target group; instead, they have found success by taking evidence of what works and combining it with innovative ideas, to adapt services to work for a specific target group or in a given context.

Service design is a new way of working for many people and some practitioners may feel they don't have time for it when faced with a heavy workload. Partnerships have each found different ways of gaining support for service design in their area, for example:

- Southend holds service design days which include parent representation to ensure their views and experiences are heard and taken on board, and has created an open access portal called the Service Design Knowledge Lab.
- Bradford has developed an evaluation toolkit to provide a model for the Service Design process and how to set up an effective evaluation.

Co-producing services provides the opportunity for challenging traditional ways of thinking and providing valuable insights into what it is like to live in a place and experience the services on offer. ABS partnerships continue to develop their outreach strategies and to ensure they are reaching and encouraging those who don't normally have a voice in the 'system'. We anticipate that each local portfolio will continue to be refined over time in response to shifts in policy, systems and contexts and we are working with the partnerships to think about how they can plan for these changes. A complex, long-term programme like ABS that aims to bring about a shift in culture, behaviours, systems, policies and spending, is very challenging. It will take time and needs careful, sensitive oversight from leaders with vision and long-term commitment.

21.2 ABS has found that involving the community in the programme brings benefits, including for community members themselves, but it is important to acknowledge the time and resources needed

to do this properly. One of the many benefits of co-production is that people with lived experience offer constructive challenge that can be used in a positive way, pushing professionals to think beyond existing ways of doing things. People interrogate professional assumptions and ask questions others might not be comfortable to raise, or even have thought about. These might be simple practical things that can easily be overlooked when designing a service.

E.g. **Small Steps Big Changes** (A Better Start, Nottingham) found co-designing a Cook and Play service with parents challenged the assumption that they needed an expensive crèche for children, while the parents attended cookery workshops. Parents told staff that they didn't have anyone to look after their children while they cooked tea at home, so the project redesigned the service with a safe, observable place for children to play, significantly reducing costs.

21.3 Co-production also ensures that interventions are attractive and sensitive to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds and takes account of cultural preferences. For example, **The Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) service** run by **Lambeth LEAP**, another A Better Start partnership, uses a 'test and learn' approach to make its evidence-based programme relevant and engaging to local parents. The service supports pregnant women with a high Body Mass Index (BMI) to adopt healthier food choices and increase physical activity with the intention of improving birth and longer-term outcomes for them, their babies and families. Initially developed by health professionals and experts, it has since been modified through rapid adaptations based on user feedback, to take account of the prevalence of obesity amongst the Black African and Caribbean populations.

Modifications have been fairly small, such as changing the wording in the initial invitation letter to make clear that the programme allows families to still enjoy the food they like to eat, and building a family session into the programme so that the family can support mums to meet their goals after completing CAN. Women say how accessible the programme's content is, including the service manual, which is said to be both clear and easy to understand, and culturally sensitive.

The 'test and learn' approach has been key to the success of CAN to-date, allowing the service provider to quickly adapt the way CAN is communicated and delivered, to remove barriers for individuals (that could become barriers for whole groups) and maximise access to the support. Data shows that target groups are being reached and retained, and there are now 100 women enrolling in CAN each year.<sup>31</sup> Learning from ABS finds that meaningful, robust data is essential for this kind of 'test and learn' programme, but that data collection should not create a burden for practitioners and it is important to work with them to get their buy-in.

21.4 Another project for which co-production is absolutely integral is [Every One Every Day](#), a partnership between the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBDD) and Participatory City Foundation. Every One Every Day is at its core a resident-led project seeking to build participation into the fabric of everyday life across the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham. It was established in 2017 to work with 22,000 residents, create over 250 neighbourhood-led projects and form more than 100 new businesses across the borough over a five-year period. It is the largest participatory project of its kind in the country.

In terms of food-related activities, Every One Every Day involves three public fridges that support food sharing and reduce food waste; a community kitchen that is free to use and that has cooked over 2,000 meals to-date; two Incubator Programmes including a food co-operative with specialist support to grow food, design food products, develop branding and understanding of the financial principles of food businesses; food growing spaces and an in-house café. The project also involves accessible high street ‘shops’ and ‘hubs’, which provide a space for co-production activities and spaces for hosting sessions and events.

Every One Every Day empowers participants by supporting emerging ideas and immediately offering opportunities and support for people to host their own sessions or undertake their own projects. The project is achieving quite a complex phenomenon - co-production of a participatory culture, which it describes as a “combination of enabling the potential of the people who participate and co-creating new cultures of participation.” This culture is rooted in the nature of relationships between people (e.g. welcoming, receptive, respectful, non-judgemental/non-stigmatising, caring, helping, supportive, incorporating mutual dependence) and the project encodes these values into its everyday practices; for example, in how new participants are welcomed and how collaboration among residents is facilitated.

Year 2 evaluation findings suggest compelling evidence that Every One Every Day’s systems approach to building large scale participation is feasible and is working well in Barking and Dagenham. It also finds that the approach is inclusive and is bridging networks in the borough, enabling participants to make new friends and reducing social isolation. As one participant reflected, “Could you imagine, everyone talking to each other! It’s amazing... which wasn’t happening before... it’s good that [EOED] has come. I know that it’s not only my experience but other people’s experience too... they live in the neighbourhood but have not been engaged with their neighbours before in the way that they are now... It’s making an impact on happy living in the neighbourhood.”<sup>32</sup>

## Innovative funding models

22. In designing a new UK food strategy there is the opportunity to explore **innovative funding models** for charitable organisations and community businesses. We know that funding models are more effective when they are:

- 1) tailored to an organisation's specific needs,
- 2) aligned to the impact they set out to achieve, and
- 3) long term in their approach.

Blended finance is where non-repayable (grant) and repayable (loan/equity) funding are combined in a tailored funding package. This creates an opportunity for grant funding to leverage additional money from investors across the investment spectrum, who may not ordinarily support these types of organisations.

Since 2015, The National Lottery Community Fund has worked alongside Big Society Capital and the Access Foundation to provide a mix of grant and loan funding to 16 new impact investment funds offering investments of up to £150,000 of repayable finance. This blended funding model opened up access to growth capital to social enterprises with a median turnover of £223,000 and 5 full time employees.

### Example case studies:

22.1 **Sow the City**, a Manchester-based social enterprise, tackles food insecurity by supporting communities to grow their own. They received £41,000 investment from Growth Fund partner GMCVO's £12m Social Enterprise Fund to support their growth so that they could trade through the winter as well as summer and broaden their offering through the opening of a boiler house.

22.2 **The Root Connections** in Somerset received funding from Growth Fund partner Somerset Community Foundation's Somerset Social Enterprise Fund. They are using this investment to develop and grow a veg box scheme which will support their work with homeless people on their farm near Stratton-on-the-Fosse.

22.3 We know that community businesses create opportunities for, and put power in the hands of, local people to help make their neighbourhoods better places to live. In 2015, **Power to Change** was set up as an independent trust to accelerate the growth of community businesses across the country, endowed by the National Lottery Community Fund. Power to Change have pioneered tailored funding to meet the Voluntary and Community Sector's distinctive needs by providing grant, equity or blended finance. From 2015 to 2018, they invested over £1.2 million in community shares, alongside more than 5,000 individual investors in communities, unlocking a further £2.7 million for community business use. Power to Change funding has already helped keep many community hubs in community ownership, reduce their dependence on grants and diversify their income streams.

### Example case studies:

22.4 Thanks to Power to Change's support, [Forty Hall Community](#)

[Vineyard](#) has grown from an acre of grapes planted in 2009 into a 10-acre community-managed vineyard in Enfield, North London.<sup>33</sup> Power to Change awarded £10,000 to Forty Hall Community Vineyard through the [Trade Up](#) programme, an innovative match-funding model that matches earnings from community businesses.<sup>34</sup> This funding enabled Forty Hall to continue providing their services to the community and developed their online store to sell the wine from the vineyard. The vineyard is tended by volunteers, who report greater confidence and self-esteem, improved social connectivity and greater employability. The project reports community impacts including reduced number of GP appointments and reduced demand on local mental health services and budgets; greater social cohesion and reduced stigma of residents with mental health support needs.<sup>35</sup> The Trade Up programme also develops community business leaders to help with sustainability of community organisations.

22.5 **Can Cook (Food) Ltd** received £100,000 of loan funding in 2016 and a further £100,000 the following year from Key Fund, via Power to Change. Both these investments were completed in exchange for category B shares. A further £40,000 was agreed in early 2019. Can Cook was set up in 2007 as a food organisation working with people living in South Liverpool who didn't have basic cookery skills. They have since provided around 14,000 people with cookery training, enabling them to prepare fresh meals for themselves.<sup>36</sup> Through their work in the third, public and food sectors, they identified a need for better quality food provision for adults and children who are cared for by others in a variety of settings, including educational, residential and day care. Following various approaches from care providers, Can Cook ventured into catering and now provide a fresh food catering service for care and education settings across Merseyside and North Wales.

## Conclusion

- 23 Across the UK the Voluntary and Community Sector is leading the way with ideas for food systems that work for people and communities in their area. Place-based approaches that are meaningfully co-designed with local communities lead to people taking ownership of what they eat and how it's sourced in ways that are sensitive to local economies, demographics and community assets.
- 24 Engaging with, and listening to, the Voluntary and Community Sector will be key to the success of any food strategy.
- 25 Dawn Austwick, CEO of the National Lottery Community Fund, and colleagues would be happy to meet with ministers or officials to discuss the areas covered in this submission or any other aspect of the work we are doing that may be of interest.
- 26 We would also be pleased to organise visits to projects across the country who we

know are doing great work in improving food systems for communities, providing the opportunity to see these projects in action and hear from some of the people involved.

## **Further information**

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