



GET TOGETHERS

Bringing people together through food

Summary of activities, learning and challenges

June 2021 – November 2021



Bringing people together through food

Created in 2019 **Food For Life Get Togethers (FFLGT)** are regular community activities that connect people from different ages and backgrounds through food.

Food brings people together.

And right now, it's more important than ever to stay connected with one another.

Funded by the **National Lottery Community Fund** and delivered with the support of **five national partners**, Food for Life Get Togethers are part of a bigger movement, supported by the Soil Association, to make good food the easy choice for everyone.

In the last three years Get Togethers has motivated, inspired and engaged **2424** community organisers across the UK to bring their communities together at over **2000** food activities, reaching around **100,000** people.

Get Togethers uses a **Theory of Change model** which aims to mobilise, build capacity and leadership in community food activities across the UK. We work collaboratively, test with evidence and continually learn.



A world where people of different ages and backgrounds regularly connect, learn and play a more active role in their local food system

RESULTS FROM

- 1 People of different ages or backgrounds have stronger connections with each other in communities across the UK through cooking, growing and sharing good food
- 2 People across the UK have increased knowledge, skills, networks and resources to run and sustain social good food activities
- 3 Get Together organisers are more connected with each other, actively participating in or leading their own peer networks, which increase the transfer of information, knowledge, and resources about social good food activities within or between communities of interest, practice or geography
- 4 Knowledge and understanding related to equality, diversity and inclusion in social good food activities is developed and shared widely through the programme
- 5 'Good Food Champions' influence and inform changes in policies, practice or behaviour in their communities, settings or projects that contribute to regeneration of a world with good health, in balance with nature and a safe climate.

RESULTS FROM



INFORMED BY

Insights and learning

Get Togethers in review – June 2021 – November 2021

mobilisation

[Noun]: the action of organising and encouraging a group of people to take collective action in pursuit of a particular objective.

Mobilisation of new entrants into the programme has continued to increase. Year 3 of the programme marked a planned shift in mobilisation strategy, as we moved from on the ground Regional Engagement Officers to a digital focused, one to many user-journey.

New registrants begin a six-part automated email journey that welcomes them to Get Togethers and signposts to resources, networking and capacity building opportunities. This has seen positive results so far, with **950** people completing the registered activities journey and **95** completing the newsletter sign up journey.

There is evidence that awareness of the programme amongst the public is starting to break through. Research from Eden Project Communities showed that **8%** of **8,000** people surveyed in a national representation survey had heard of Food For Life Get Togethers, compared to 20% who had heard of the Big Lunch.

AT A GLANCE:

- **733** new groups engaged with programme since 1st June 2021 – 18.2% higher than in the previous 6 months (623) and 30% higher than in June–November last year (319). This brings the total engaged groups to date to **2424**
- Based on registration data alone, Get Together activities expected to reach **33,743** people taking the total for the programme to **99,804**
- Cook and Share Month was a key moment for engaging new audiences and deepening our connection with those already involved, with **440** groups registering their Get Togethers
- Sign-ups for the Get Togethers newsletter reached **1,127** recipients during Cook and Share month, putting us on target to exceed our goal of **1250** sign-ups by the end of year 3.

CASE STUDY:

Middle of the Hill Community Group, Small Grant Recipient

The community garden was a new project for 2021, as Rachel explained – “we started this because one of the residents wanted to grow herbs but living in a flat didn’t have a garden of their own to do it in, so we turned a small area of green space on the estate into a community garden. A local vegan restaurant provides their veg peelings for us to make compost with and a disabled resident let us hook up a water butt to the drainpipe from his bungalow to store water for the plants.” It’s not all been plain sailing, with some of the veg going missing but: “people have come up to me and said how much they appreciate what we’re doing, that the area looks so much better now... There can be a real buzz when the residents come together at the gardening group. It’s a good reason for people to come out of their flats and socialise with their neighbours.”



LEARNINGS:

1. Resources and a toolkit were produced for partners, to help them share details of the Cook and Share campaign, although this was less widely used by partners who preferred to use newsletters, social media and networking events to share information
2. Rapidly changing from a face-to-face programme before lockdown, to one online presented some significant challenges and some delays to getting systems fit for purpose
3. We have successfully transitioned from a region focus to a UK wide reach, as evidenced by the map here:

KEY

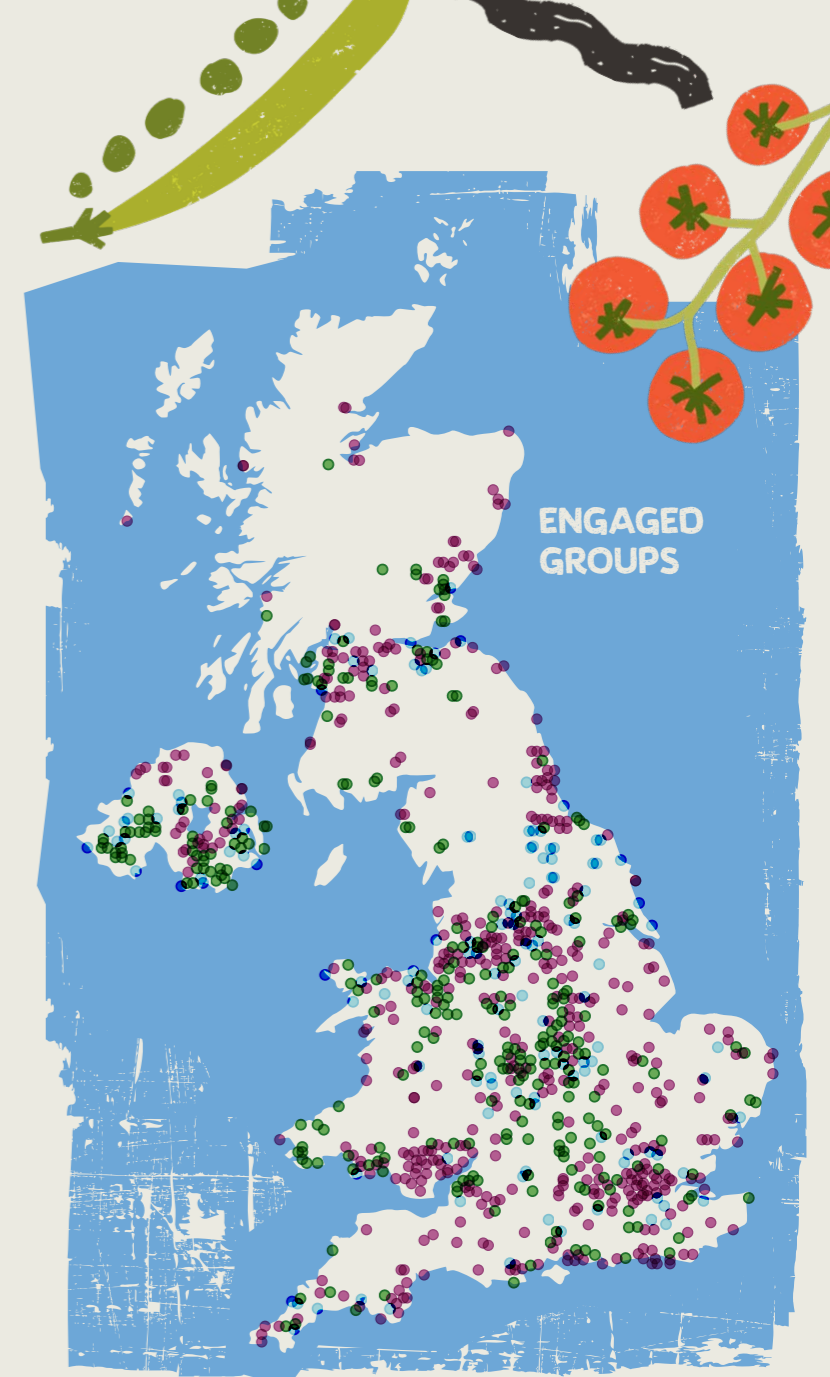
Groups engaged for first time in:

- Year 1 ● Year 2 ● Year 3

The pink dots represent settings engaged in Year 3 and demonstrates the increased reach of the programme.

This UK wide reach was achieved thanks to the mobilisation efforts of our Local Commissioned Partners (LCPs) and National Partners via their networks, as well as targeting wider internal networks such as Sustainable Food Places and Soil Association supporter newsletters. Press advertising also helped us to broaden our reach, targeting specific geographical areas.

FFLGTs Community Advisors told us that Facebook was the best social channel to connect with community groups and during this six-month period the Facebook Community grew to over 1000 members.

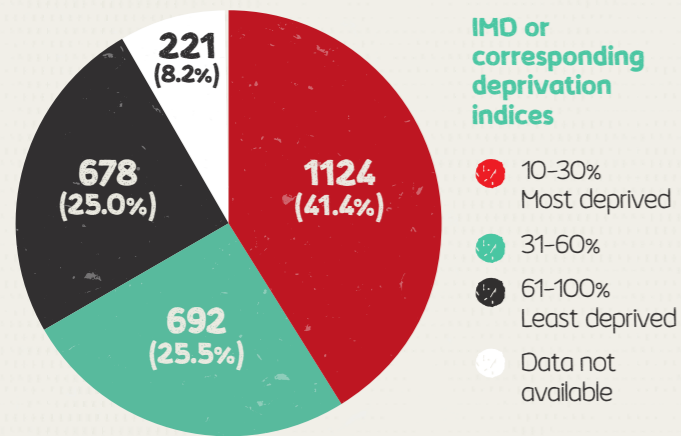


Optimising Facebook adverts during key event campaigns was an effective method of mobilising new entrants into community food activities.

As the programme expanded UK wide, a key challenge was to ensure that Get Togethers maintained its engagement of and support for those from diverse and or disadvantaged communities.



ENGAGED:



The chart above shows the percentage of new engaged groups in the **30%** most deprived areas remains high and has increased compared to the same 6 months last year despite moving to a national mobilisation strategy.

capacity building

[Noun]: process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources.

UK-wide online networking sessions have played a key role in both mobilising new Get Together organisers and building their capacity to organise community food activities.

AT A GLANCE:

- **Five virtual network events** were delivered in partnership with our Locally Commissioned Partners (LCPs) covering a range of topics such as community orchards, cooking to connect and developing effective partnerships
- **514** individuals registered for at least one network event (of which approximately **300 have been new entrants** to FFLGTs)
- Network registrations spanned from Plymouth to the Outer Hebrides and with **42%** coming from the **30%** most deprived communities in the UK
- Attendance at online sessions regularly reached over **100** participants, our network events represent a low-cost method of engaging in a one-to-many model of delivery that initiates action – over **80%** of respondents to surveys indicated that they intend to act on their learnings and integrate good food activities or practices, following attendance. We didn't see impacts of 'zoom fatigue'.

This has been achieved in a number of ways.

- Adopting FFLGTs Community Advisors recommendations on the style and tone of voice that would resonate with community groups
- Targeted Facebook adverts saw 1.4M impressions, 9,957 clicks and 112 conversions, with 83 of those conversions coming from the 30% most deprived communities
- Commissioning Coventry University to research the motivations, enablers and barriers to participation in social food citizenship activities amongst diverse communities. This helped to develop insight and understanding, and this learning was shared at Eden Project Communities Festival of Discovery, a national network for community organisers.



FFLGTs local commissioned partners are playing a leading role in organising network events and a priority for 2022 will be to support them to continue to sustain these networks beyond the funding cycle of the programme.

Our Small Grants scheme continues to engage new registrations into Get Togethers as well as build capacity of groups to develop and sustain community food activities that bring people together.

It's really helpful to learn from other organisations and groups about what's worked and what hasn't. Increased knowledge improves confidence - it was also really inspiring to hear of all the brilliant work going on and being planned.

Network Session Attendee

LEARNINGS:

1. Our online offer of cooking, growing and sharing training did not resonate as we would have hoped, with only a handful of settings completing the training. There are several possible explanations for this. Our registration onto our learning platform can be complicated, with joining instructions often being sent to junk folders and 'digital fatigue' following Covid. A task and finish group has been established to review this offer and decide on the future viability of online training
2. We have successfully focused on equity of access to resources from the programme, with **58%** of the programme's highly engaged participants – who receive the most input from us – coming from the **30%** most deprived communities in the UK
3. Relatively small grants of £150 can motivate collaboration and community food activities that continue well beyond the grants original purpose.

CASE STUDY: A small grant boost

Soup, muffins and movies for Cook and Share Month.



"Gathering around a table to share good food and conversation is such a simple thing but has an immeasurable impact on people's lives."

Incredible Edible Handbridge are a thriving community group in Cheshire. They have been holding regular Cook and Share events after securing vital funding as part of our Small Grants programme. Their autumnal soup and movie events have been a huge hit among the locals, attracting families of all ages and backgrounds.

Lisa Rossetti at Incredible Edible Handbridge, said: "This is the perfect opportunity to meet, especially after being isolated from each other during the pandemic. Getting out and meeting people is essential for our wellbeing whatever our age, especially at this time of year."

90% of Get Togethers organisers agree that their activities created friendships, as well as supporting people's health and wellbeing. Cook and Share Month is the ideal opportunity to bring people together over good food and conversation, whether you're serving up the soup or spilling the tea."

The last round of Small Grants to support Cook and Share Month was our biggest yet with **153** Small Grants of £150 awarded. Additionally, FFLGT supported a Small Grants scheme delivered by Linking Generations Northern Ireland where funding was awarded to a further **23** groups.

building leadership

[Verb/Noun]: establish and develop the action of leading a group of people or an organisation.

FFLGTs is building leadership capacity of community food activity organisers.

We have created a diverse network of LCPs spanning a range of sectors including arts, education, growing organisations and community benefit groups. This network is mobilising others and leading capacity building network events which transfers their specialist knowledge to communities across the UK.

Five of our current LCPs are also members of our new community food leadership programme, My Food Community Leadership Programme (MFC).

AT A GLANCE:

- MFC is an accelerated leadership programme for community food organisers which FFLGTs launched in September 2021. We recruited a cohort of 47 emerging and established food leaders from across the UK who use good food to bring people together in communities
- MFC offers participants the chance to network and share with peers at monthly connect and share sessions, receive expert input from community food experts and engage in roundtable discussions on topics that impact their activity, such as diversity and inclusion
- Additionally, our leadership specialist partner **Koreo** have delivered sessions on visioning for the future and arranged for all participants to receive a professional coaching call to ensure that members are supported to put theory into practical action and achieve their goals
- MFC members have been organising their own Get Together activities and participating in the wider Get Togethers networks in this period.

The focus of the programme so far has been to encourage participants to develop a shared language and understanding of local food systems, to understand and reflect on their own sphere of influence and to connect with other members. My Food Community Leadership Programme will focus on putting the learning into action through developing community action projects funded by the programme.

LEARNINGS:

1. MFC is currently an online course, but members have told us that they would welcome the opportunity to meet face-to-face. This is being planned for February 2022, where we will bring members together to launch our funding round, which will support their community action projects, and encourage collaboration among members to ensure maximum impact for the projects
2. Attendance has been an issue as members struggle to balance busy lives with being part of the programme and there has so far been higher attendance at food related sessions rather than the sessions that encourage the group to reflect on their role as leaders. Weekly sessions may have been over ambitious, and we will look to reduce the amount of contact time in 2022
3. The need for network events and MFC was highlighted by our recent research from Coventry University, which pointed to the importance of building learning communities, networks, partnerships, collaborating on shared visions and supporting distributed leaders.

“ My Food Community has allowed me to connect, reflect and share the rewards and challenges with like-minded food champions who are tackling the same issues around food and sustainability. The programme of work has given me access to a breadth of viewpoints from experts and participants. It sometimes feels difficult to make time to pause and reflect, this programme has ensured time is protected to do this. ”

Francesca Vale - Nutritionist, Bury



“ We used the grant to buy ingredients so that our brain injured clients could take part in online cooking sessions while they were isolating at home during Covid. We did not have resources to do this ourselves and so the grant was key to the project, helping remove barriers to participation (cost, access to shops during lockdown etc). Our clients have now returned to our centres and so we are no longer offering online sessions but plan to resurrect cookery/healthy eating on our timetable at the earliest opportunity. ”

Small Grant Recipient



Looking ahead to 2022 → →

We saw significant increases in engagement in FFLGTs during the last 6 months, despite a reduction in team size, with Small Grants, networks and partnerships playing a key role. These engagements lead to action in communities on food that's good for people and planet.

Priorities for the next 6 months focus on programme legacy through our capacity building and leadership development activities and by sharing and embedding our learning internally and externally.

In My Food Community Leadership Programme as well as bringing our cohort together for the first time for face-to-face input, we will be turning theory into practice through their community action projects, co-designing version two and recruiting our next cohort of members.

We will embed leadership pathways for community organisers through opportunities to share their knowledge, experience and success at network events, coaching and mentoring our Local Commissioned Partners and connecting MFC alumni with emerging leaders to peer support and mentor.

As we approach the final year of the programme we will increasingly focus on 'translating', sharing and embedding our learning widely. FFLGTs impact and research outputs from the University of the West of England, Coventry University, internal thematic reports, and case studies or stories from partners and communities will be disseminated, focusing on themes linked to our Theory of Change.



👩👧 **We had a street party. We are a block of 38 who over Covid really came together to support each other. We are based in Deptford and are a very diverse community with over 20 languages spoken in just 38 homes. We were able to coincide our street party with the council approving the closure of our street with The Walk with Little Amal. This was an amazing day for Deptford and as the fun closed on the main square we started our street party. We were able to support this event with seating from the nearby brewery and a bbq from a nearby coffee shop and bar. 🍷🍷**

Small Grant Recipient



🐦 @SAfoodforlife
#FFLGetTogethers
#NationalLottery

www.fflgettogethers.org

