

A large crowd of diverse people is shown from the chest up, holding up numerous signs. The signs are green with white text and a small circular logo. The text on the signs includes "End Hunger" and "Food Justice". The background is a blurred indoor setting with stage lights.

BEYOND FOOD BANKS

**CAMPAIGNING ON
FOOD JUSTICE**



**co-operative
party
local**

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INTRODUCTION



Even before the Covid19 crisis hit, it was estimated that over eight million people in the UK regularly had trouble

“**Such is the inequality in our economic system, profound structural change is required**”

diverse. Children suffer from holiday hunger when free school meals are not available; parents on low incomes

putting food on the table, half a million people used foodbanks and one million people lived in food deserts where it is impossible for people to buy healthy food.

People's experience of food poverty is

go hungry to feed their children; for some it can be a struggle to get to the shops to buy nutritious food; for others it can be difficult to prepare it.

Despite the many different faces of hunger, there the big picture is not that there is too little food. Farmers and retailers have for the most part worked hard to provide UK consumers ever greater choice and judged historically, cheap food. The problem is that too many people simply have too little money. **Such is the inequality in our economic system, profound structural change is required to fully address this.** But there are simple steps that we can do individually and at a local government level to make a difference. This document details what those steps are.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19



The pandemic crisis brought a taste of food insecurity to many who were previously untouched by hunger. Though empty shelves in supermarkets were thankfully short-lived, the experience was a shock to many who had been used to being able to buy exactly what they wanted then they wanted it. From an issue which was perhaps only discussed by most people before putting a weekly shopping list together, very suddenly food supply became the hot topic for discussion.

In truth, the UK Government's response to the Covid19 food crisis has been at best, mixed. Food parcels to the shielded were initially of substandard quality and had to be supplemented by councils in many places. What has impressed was the resilience and entrepreneurialism of communities: friends and neighbours who rallied round to shop for the vulnerable in their communities, those who at short notice and with no experience set up local food banks to meet rocketing demand, and the

many Covid19 support groups on Facebook and in village hall who often spontaneously emerged to form a link between individuals, communities and food suppliers.

Our communities' responses have been a heartened example of co-operation in action. But what is troubling is that the worst of the crisis is perhaps yet to come. Authoritative voices tell us that we are closer to the beginning of the pandemic than the end, and with furlough winding down and the end of the Brexit transition on December 31 there is a sense that we will see the spectre of large scale unemployment and poverty once more.

Back in 2019 Government commissioned Henry Dimbleby to undertake an independent review of the food system from "field to fork". The Covid19 crisis prompted Dimbleby to bring forward urgent recommendations and detail steps to address the immediate challenges of food poverty.

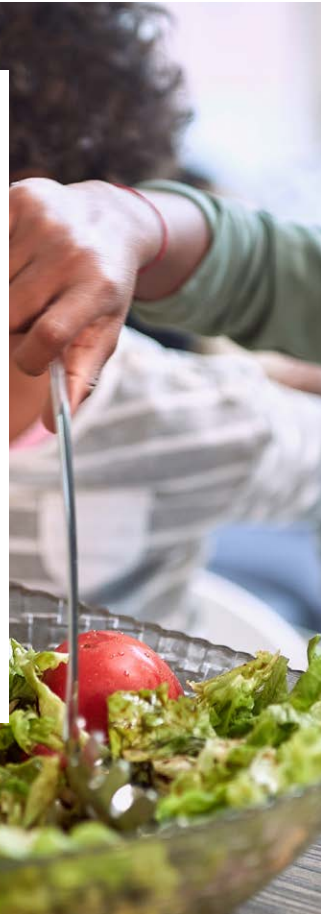
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There are lots of great examples of direct action across the country, from members setting up and running food banks, to getting involved in community fridges, food networks and partnerships.

Our campaign for Food Justice looks to tackle the structural causes of that action, and bring about political change.

Labour Hunger Campaign:

"Despite their excellent work, food banks and other charities cannot solve the structural causes of food poverty; we need political solutions. When local councils adopt a food poverty action plan, it's an important acknowledgement that responsibility for tackling hunger lies with the state, albeit at local level. It also facilitates a focus on preventive measures and collaborative working."



ACTIONS FOR COUNCILS

We suggest that councils take a three-step approach to tackling food poverty.

1. Appoint a Food Justice Champion

Every council should be clear about who has responsibility for tackling food insecurity, by appointing a food justice champion. A clearly defined lead is well-placed to draw together the different work streams in a council and is easier for outside organisations to deal with than if responsibility is split between different or no portfolio holders.

2. Develop a food action plan to work on this issue co-operatively

Every council should seek to develop a food action plan which identifies the gaps that exist and what needs to be done, and seeks to work with statutory bodies, co-operatives and the private and voluntary sectors to deliver it.

3. Put the plan into action through a Food Partnership

Food Partnerships – such as those set up by Feeding Britain or which work with Sustainable Food Places – bring people together to work co-operatively across all aspects of the food system to solve some of today's most pressing social, environmental and economic issues.

These are for some councils, significant steps which can face

political barriers or which might be objected to on resourcing grounds.

Where this is the case we recommend that councils should ask scrutiny to examine the issues around food insecurity in their area and propose solutions.

Where this has happened, for example in Medway, scrutiny committees have tended to come back and endorse the approach of having a food partnership and plan for the area.



Cllr Kemi Akinola, Founder and CEO of Be Enriched and IFAN Board member – fighting for food justice

CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE?

Though it is only three steps for councils to take, it is important to build up the campaign for change council policy whether in power or opposition. Find out what is already happening in your area, what organisations are experiencing, and how the council supports them. Areas you may want to look at:

- Is your council promoting Free School Meal eligibility?
- Is your council promoting the Healthy Start Voucher Scheme?

In order to get people talking about the issue, you may want to:

- Organise a Co-op or Labour Party meeting about the issue. Local foodbanks, Councillors and activists can speak about their experience locally.
- Talk to your local foodbanks about their experiences and what support they get locally.
- Get people to sign up to our campaign here: <https://party.coop/campaign/food-justice/#foodask>
- Take our model motion to Council to bring about change.

CAMPAIGNING LOCALLY

The first step is to find about your local food organisations and get in touch. Find out about their current successes and the barriers they face.



- Make sure that you are in touch with FareShare
- Contact your local co-operative retail society to see how they are helping access to food initiatives
- Encourage applications from Covid19 Support Groups to the National Emergency Trust <https://nationalemergencytrust.org.uk/>
- Encourage schools to promote Free School Meal eligibility in England and Wales.
- Promote Healthy Start vouchers in England and Wales. These vouchers are if you are pregnant or have a child under four years old and on certain benefits to help buy some basic foods. You can see uptake for Healthy Start Vouchers in England and Wales in your area here: <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-uptake-data/> (In Scotland, Best Start Vouchers are available through Social Security Scotland.)

WORKING WITH THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Since the Rochdale Pioneers came together to sell low cost unadulterated food to their friends and neighbours in the 1840s, the provision of healthy, nutritious and affordable food has been at the heart of the co-operative movement does.

The movement was the one of the first supporters of Fairtrade and one of the first to embrace colour-coded nutritional indicators on food. It should come as no surprise then that the Co-operative Party is campaigning alongside the co-operative movement locally and nationally for food justice and doing what it can to help the millions of people in the UK struggling to feed themselves and their families.

Co-op Stores across the UK are run by different groups and societies. To find out who runs your local store, look under the store details here: <https://finder.coop.co.uk/food>

THE CO-OP GROUP

Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Co-op Group has helped donate 5 million more meals to those going hungry by raising money for FareShare.

Co-op then backed Marcus' Rashford's campaign #MakeTheUTurn campaign to extend free school meals to children who need them over summer.



Plus, all pupils at Co-op schools who usually rely on free school meals, receive Co-op vouchers.

The Co-op is now donating money to the National Emergencies Trust, to create a fund that will be distributed to local grassroots projects across the UK who are helping people gain access to food, for example through food redistribution and programmes that support groups to nutritious and balanced meals.

Also, the Group run a platform called Co-operate, which is an online tool to help communities come together and co-operate.

Things you can do to work with the Co-op Group:

- Make contact with your local Member Pioneer: <https://www.coop.co.uk/membership/contact-a-member-pioneer>
- Put your local food group's details on Co-operate: <https://co-operate.coop.co.uk/add-your-activity-or-group/>
- Groups can apply to receive surplus food from stores here: www.coop.co.uk/environment/food-share





EAST OF ENGLAND CO-OP

Food poverty and food justice is a topic close to East of England's heart and they have a longstanding relationship with local Foodbanks. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that vulnerable members of our community do not go without.

As of August 2020 the Co-op have donated over £75,000 from our East of England Co-op Community Cares Fund, made up of cash, vouchers and food to help foodbanks meet the increase in demand.

In July 2020 they held their second Foodbank Summit, bringing together representatives from local Foodbanks, this time online rather than face-to-face. Best practice,

ideas and solutions to problems were shared by the bucket load, and as a result of the discussion the co-op has been able to tailor support to meet the needs of individual foodbanks. Part of this support, along with an injection of cash and vouchers, was to launch a donation drive in food stores, from Friday 24th July to Friday 28th August. They've been blown away by the response from shoppers and touched by some of the personal stories they've shared when making their donations.

To find out more about the Foodbanks supported in the East of England and how you can help visit www.eastofengland.coop/community

CAMPAIGNING IN SCOTLAND

Elaine Smith MSP has been leading the campaign to incorporate the right to food in Scottish law, through her draft bill. If it is not taken up in this Parliament, then the campaign will continue with Rhoda Grant MSP taking it forward in the new term.

All the actions for councils are applicable to Scotland. For example, West Lothian passed a motion at council, which led to the mapping of existing food provision including help and support from council services along with that of community groups. With the information gathered, an interactive map was produced to highlight food projects across the county giving access to food for those in need.

A food conference was held and the council resolved to put aside £150k to help towards reducing food insecurity by supporting a two year time limited

CAMPAIGNING IN WALES

Dr. Poppy Nicol and Alice Taherzadeh were commissioned by the Wales Co-operative Party and members of the Co-operative Group in the National Assembly for Wales to investigate how co-operative ways of working have the potential to support sustainable and just food systems within Wales.

Their findings of this work are presented in the 'Working Co-



project to establish and develop a West Lothian Food Network, increasing funding to host The Big Lunch in local communities and the provision of starter packs to those accessing the Scottish Welfare Fund

More information here: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/48304/Access-to-Food>

operatively for Sustainable and Just Food Systems'. It sets out a number of case studies and recommendations specifically to Wales, and also applicable to local councils.

You can read the report here: <https://party.coop/2019/11/05/working-co-operatively-for-sustainable-and-just-food-systems/>

BEST PRACTICE



HACKNEY: LEADING THE WAY IN POWER

Hackney is a unitary authority in North East London. Pre-coronavirus, its directly elected Mayor Philip Glanville embraced the Co-operative Party's campaign for food justice and gave Cllr Chris Kennedy the Health, Adult Social Care and Leisure Cabinet Member - responsibility for tackling food poverty.

With the direction of a political lead, the Council set-up a food partnership of over 40 organisations to co-produce a food action plan to tackle food poverty. The Council also supports 60 estate community gardens, a food voucher scheme for people on low-incomes to buy fresh fruit and vegetables from council-run markets, and remains the largest funder of lunch clubs in London.

As the full extent of the coronavirus crisis began to emerge, the importance of access to food took

on a new urgency and the Council found itself well-placed to address the significant challenges, having already established a clear lead for food poverty and local partnerships to bring the Council and charities together. This resulted in the Council supporting 2,000 households on top of the Government's shielding support with weekly food parcels, and have delivered 14,000 food parcels to residents since the crisis began.

The Council worked with local community charities to provide culturally appropriate food parcel options, and hot food options for those that were struggling to cook at home. Food vouchers were also mobilised to households in need, and over 4,000 vouchers were accepted by council-run markets over lockdown.



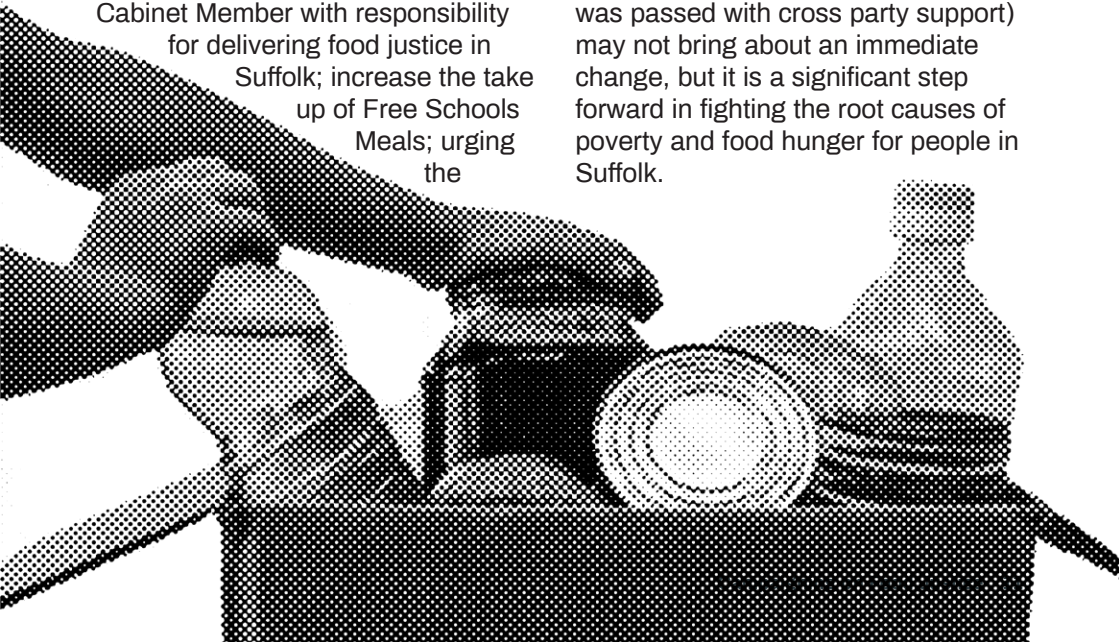
SUFFOLK: SETTING THE AGENDA IN OPPOSITION

With the Conservatives in Suffolk holding 50 of the 70 council seats, Labour as the opposition party was pragmatic about accepting amendments from the ruling administration.

When it came to addressing food poverty, the Conservatives wanted to highlight the additional funding given to food banks and the Holiday and Activity Programme in Suffolk, as well as to welcome the government's extension of the Free School Meal programme over the summer holidays whilst accepting Labour's five asks: nominate a Cabinet Member with responsibility for delivering food justice in Suffolk; increase the take up of Free Schools Meals; urging the

government to enshrine its existing commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 into domestic legislation; asking the Scrutiny Committee to investigate the extent and causes of hunger in Suffolk and make recommendations about what can be done to tackle it; and, working with our District and Borough Councils and other partner organisations to develop and implement a Food Justice Action Plan which would look to eliminate food poverty in Suffolk.

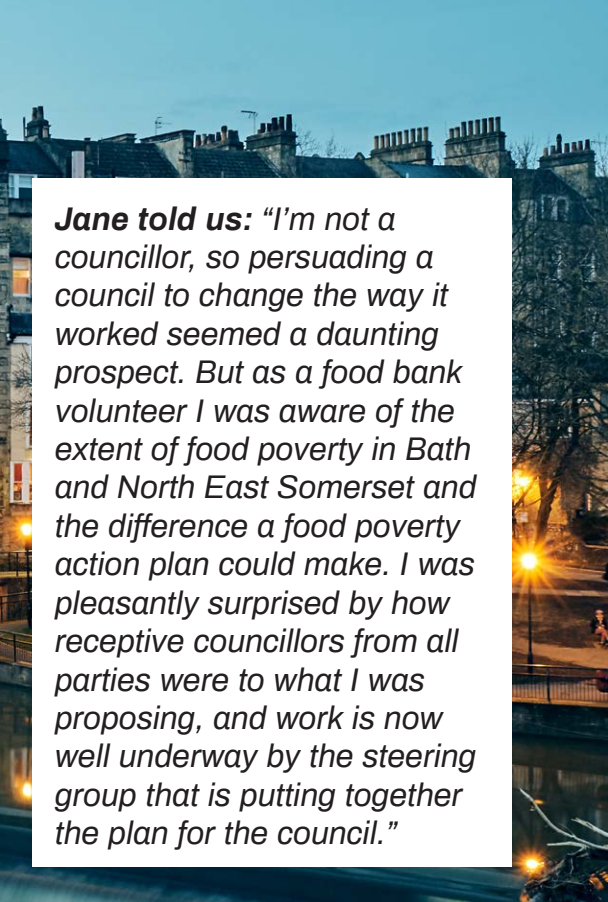
Labour councillors in Suffolk acknowledge that their motion (which was passed with cross party support) may not bring about an immediate change, but it is a significant step forward in fighting the root causes of poverty and food hunger for people in Suffolk.



BATH: THE POWER OF A DETERMINED INDIVIDUAL

Jane Middleton, a volunteer at her local food bank, approached her LibDem controlled council in Bath with the suggestion that they adopt a Food Poverty Action Plan. After presenting the issue at council and using the press to make her case she persuaded the Council to commit to a Food Poverty Action Plan in order to address the growing problem of hunger and food poverty in the area.

Jane is also the driving force behind the Labour Hunger Campaign which promotes a Charter containing a bold 13 point action plan for Labour in Opposition and in power. The Charter urges all Labour councils adopt a Food Poverty Action Plan.



Jane told us: "I'm not a councillor, so persuading a council to change the way it worked seemed a daunting prospect. But as a food bank volunteer I was aware of the extent of food poverty in Bath and North East Somerset and the difference a food poverty action plan could make. I was pleasantly surprised by how receptive councillors from all parties were to what I was proposing, and work is now well underway by the steering group that is putting together the plan for the council."



MEDWAY: SCRUTINY THEN ADOPTION

Labour & Co-operative Councillors on Medway Council tabled a motion proposing a lead member to tackle food insecurity, a food partnership, and urging the Council to adopt a food plan.

Rather than accept a motion from the Opposition, the ruling Conservative Group on the Council opted to send the issue to scrutiny to further reflect

on the issue. Six months after initially debating the issue, the Conservative Council brought back a report from scrutiny endorsing all the key points from the original motion: a lead member to tackle food insecurity, develop a food partnership and work up a food plan to tackle hunger in the borough.



NORTH LANARKSHIRE : TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

North Lanarkshire Council is a minority Labour-controlled council and is committed to tackling growing levels of poverty. In 2018, aimed at addressing the poverty-related attainment gap and holiday and weekend hunger, the council developed Club 365.

The programme provides meals and activity for primary-age children registered for free school meals on the days that they are not in school. This covers all weekend and holiday periods and it is believed to be a first for the UK. Following a trial in 4 community hubs in the spring of 2018, the programme now operates across North Lanarkshire in 18 hubs, with an average daily attendance of 307.

Children participate in a range of activities, including sports and arts and crafts, they are provided with a two-course meal and are given food home. There is a blended approach to Club 365, with the council and the Third Sector providing venues and activities. The council provides all of

the food, which meets with national nutritional guidelines. The sites are identified through a comprehensive mapping exercise based on Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

A number of additional interventions take place at the hubs, especially for parents. These include adult literacy classes, cooking classes, informal advice on benefits from the council's Financial Inclusion Officers and employment support from council arms-length employment service, Routes to Work.

Club 365 has been cited as an example of best practice from the Scottish Government's Poverty and Inequality Commission and, in February 2020, £1.1 million was committed to the programme for financial year 2020/21. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown, Club 365 recommenced during the 2020 summer holidays, following appropriate government guidelines on hygiene and social distancing.

APPENDIX 1: MODEL MOTION

This council notes:

- That Trussell Trust research that shows three million children are at risk of hunger during the school holidays.
- Foodbank use has dramatically increased, the Independent Food Aid Network recorded a 59% increase in demand for emergency food support between February and March.
- That the government has committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which have an international and domestic commitment to ending hunger by 2030

This council believes:

- No one in the UK should go hungry, not least children. Food justice is about taking action on the causes of hunger such as affordability and availability of good nutritious food.
- Local councils and communities played a key role in during the Covid-19 pandemic that should be recognised.

The council resolves to :

- Appoint a food justice champion, who will lead on tackling food poverty locally.
- Support / set up a food partnership to bring together partners to develop a food action plan to address the causes of food poverty.

APPENDIX 2: FURTHER RESOURCES

You can find out more about the campaign on our web pages here:

<https://party.coop/campaign/food-justice/>



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