



Feeding Barnet – A Food Security Summit

A Report and Recommendations from a Community Exercise in Co-creation

Saturday 2nd November 2024

The ARK Pioneer Academy, Barnet

Contents

Contents.....	2
Executive Summary	3
What is the Barnet Food Partnership?	4
The Context for “Feeding Barnet – A Food Security Summit”	5
Introducing The Summit and its Speakers.....	6
Strategic Recommendations from the Summit.....	13
A Recommended Plan for Next Steps	16
Appendix 1 – Barnet Food Charter.....	17
Appendix 2 “Laying it all out on the table”	18
Appendix 3 - Speaker Biographies.....	21



Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the Food Summit was to open an informed conversation about food insecurity with all the food-related stakeholders in the London Borough of Barnet. Last year 153,000 emergency food parcels were distributed to local residents-the figure is much higher this year. Food insecurity is having a negative impact on our community now and will have long-lasting effects on health and wellbeing as much of the food that is distributed goes to children. The gravity of the situation has been accentuated by the recent closure of the Barnet Food Hub. The current reactive, charity-based system in the borough is not sustainable.

Method

Over a period of months, the Committee of the Barnet Food Partnership undertook desk research, on-line meetings, face-to-face meetings and site visits to identify best practices for tackling food insecurity from other London boroughs and the UK. The Summit brought together recognised academics, activists, and thinkers to share their knowledge and experience with our community stakeholders.

The contributors were asked to share their ideas on how to tackle food insecurity in the London Borough of Barnet and the audience was also asked to do the same throughout the event by writing their ideas on a tablecloth, literally “laying it all out on the table!”.

Findings

Throughout the research and on the day of the event it became clear that the most successful practices in tackling food insecurity are those that are *strategic* in nature and address the *underlying cause of presenting* at foodbanks. The provision of donated or surplus food alone is not enough and it is important to address the underlying drivers of poverty in the borough.

Recommendations

The background research and the summit have identified six *strategic recommendations* for Barnet Council:

	Recommendation	Key evidence / insight
1.	Actively support new models of emergency food provision e.g. by offering suitable premises for the development of an affordable food club or social supermarket.	Barnet’s current reliance on voluntary foodbanks is unsustainable and unable to meet the increasing demand. Barnet currently has no other food provision models, unlike most other London boroughs.
2.	Revise policy on its use of bailiffs as a mechanism of debt collection.	Barnet has the second highest level of use of bailiffs in London and this causes significant distress and harm to vulnerable groups in society. https://www.mylondon.news/news/new-map-shows-parts-london-30040242

3.	Reflect the strategic importance of food within overall council priorities e.g.by offering more dedicated council officers on food issues and proactively engaging with relevant food organisations in Barnet.	When compared to other local authorities the committee has engaged with, Barnet has the least human resource dedicated to food.
4.	Proactively promote council employment opportunities reserved for Barnet residents to food insecure communities e.g. by collaborating with emergency food providers and through clear signposting on the council website.	We believe there is an important opportunity for Barnet to help address root causes of food poverty by supporting residents to secure jobs under section 106 of the Town and Country Act 1990.
5.	Become an accredited Living Wage Employer.	Barnet is one of four boroughs across all 33 London boroughs that is not an accredited Living Wage Employer.
6.	Become an accredited “Right to Food” Borough. This encourages the council to consult with stakeholders when its decisions could jeopardise the availability of food.	Becoming a Right to Food borough is particularly important at the present time given the challenging budget constraints that Barnet is facing. It will help avoid any unintended consequences on food security.

What is the Barnet Food Partnership?

Background

The Barnet Food Partnership brings together representatives of different formal and informal groups involved in the food system in the London Borough of Barnet.

The formation of the Barnet Food Partnership derives its aims from [Barnet’s Food Plan](#).

Our belief is that access to good food in Barnet is an essential right. Our vision is to have a sustainable, equitable and resilient food system. All residents should have access to affordable food that is:

- Good for their health and wellbeing
- Good for the environment
- Good for the local economy
- Brings communities together

In keeping with the activities laid out in the Barnet Food Plan, the Barnet Food Partnership is a member of Sustainable Food Places and recognised as a formal food partnership, with commendations for its Charter ([See Appendix 1](#)) and Terms of Reference.

Considering the vision and aims of the Barnet Food Partnership, we are heavily invested in tackling food insecurity in the borough.

A Call for New Members

The Barnet Food Partnership is keen to bring in new members as we seek to optimise the food system in the London Borough of Barnet.

Membership is free and our presence and activities are building a healthy momentum. Membership at the time of “Feeding Barnet – A Food Security Summit” was in the range of 60 individuals and organisations.

We would like to welcome new members to our help realise our vision. If you are interested, please email **barnetfoodpartnership@gmail.com**.

The Context for “Feeding Barnet – A Food Security Summit”

The Experience of Food Insecurity in London Borough of Barnet

It is impossible to relay all the experiences of the residents of the borough who experience food insecurity. However, it is possible to identify broader facts and trends which led to the Barnet Food Partnership calling for a summit on the matter to seek change.

- It is acknowledged by stakeholders working with food insecurity that the Borough has **22 recognised foodbanks**. This is the number of community partners which were registered with The Barnet Food Hub, based in the old East Barnet Library, prior to its closure in September 2024. The Barnet Food Hub was responsible for distributing donated and bought, fresh and ambient food, to its partners.
- Captured in the minutes of the Borough’s Health and Wellbeing Board an **estimated 153,000 emergency food parcels** were distributed to the Borough’s residents in 2023. This figure is conservative at best and comes from numbers reported back to The Barnet Food Hub by its partners. These were reported using different methods and the figure does not account for the numerous informal food banks that exist all over the borough. Furthermore, one parcel does not equate to the feeding of one person; it could be one household with several members.
- Data from across the emergency food partners for 2024 categorically shows that **demand is spiralling upwards** and the figure for 2024 will far outstrip that of 2023.
- **The council’s decision to stop funding The Barnet Food Hub** as of September 2024 was a source of much distress to the emergency food partners and garnered considerable media attention. While there is currently a short-term contingency involving volunteers, the partners have a heavy burden to manage in terms of supply, logistics and fundraising. Furthermore, the absence of the Barnet food Hub means that even estimated figures for food parcel provision are now very hard to come by.

- In addition to the points made above, the current system of emergency food supply, often based in church halls, has its daily operational challenges. The recent **serving of an Eviction Order to Colindale Foodbank by the London Borough of Barnet** constitutes such a case.

Introducing The Summit and its Speakers

Objective

The objective of “Feeding Barnet – A Food Security Summit” was to highlight exactly what the situation in the London Borough of Barnet is currently and to map what it could become based on research and best practices.

This involved the Committee of the Barnet Food Partnership undertaking desk research, virtual meetings, face-to-face meetings and site meetings.

Now and the Future

Six experts in their fields were selected to take the Summit audience from the “now” of food insecurity in Barnet to a possible “future”. It’s worth elaborating on both.

The current emergency food system in the Borough is almost totally reliant on a traditional **food bank model** which is **tactical**, based on **just-in-time** donations and managed almost exclusively by the **voluntary sector**. This is unsustainable and unaligned with the vision of the Barnet Food Partnership.

An envisioned future system needs to consider a **strategic** approach which is **robust**, built in **partnership** with Barnet Council and which employs the best models to ensure **choice and dignity**. This is better aligned to the vision of The Barnet Food Partnership.

“Laying it out on the Table” – An Exercise in Co-Creation

The Committee of The Barnet Food Partnership was keen to take the Summit beyond the realms of a “talking shop” or an academic discussion.

After their talk, and before their question-and-answer session, each speaker was invited to give their main recommendations. In addition, the audience was invited to offer practical suggestions throughout the day.

All suggestions were “laid out on the table” quite literally by committing them in pen onto a white tablecloth in the auditorium ([See Appendix 2](#)).

The suggestions of the Barnet Food Partnership, the guest speakers and the community all appear in this document and can be read as recommendations.

In addition to the six speakers, audio excerpts from interviews with food bank users were played at intervals though the summit. Quotes from these interviews can be found in the speech bubbles throughout this document.

The Speakers

Professor Nathan Davies – Director of Education, UCL Division of Medicine



“Dietary quality and food security assessment amongst Barnet food bank clients”

Overview:

In his talk Nathan shared with the audience invaluable research that he and his team have been undertaking in six of the foodbanks in the London Borough of Barnet over the last three years.

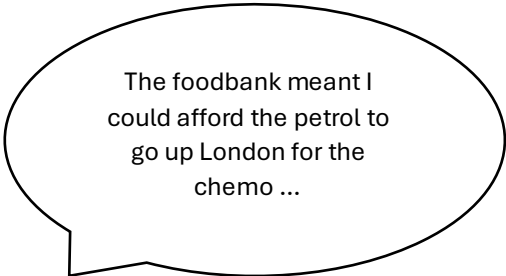
The Conclusion:

Despite record distribution by food banks across the borough, survey data show increased signs of poor diet and malnutrition. The diet of those surveyed was consistently below the average for the UK population, and this has implications, especially for young people, because diet is a predictor of future health outcomes.

For More Insight See:

[Survey shows increased signs of poor diet and malnutrition despite record distribution by foodbanks across Borough of Barnet](#)

[More malnutrition admissions at the Royal Free London - Barnet Post](#)



The foodbank meant I
could afford the petrol to
go up London for the
chemo ...



Julie



“Securing progress: towards a holistic approach to tackling hunger.”

Overview:

In her talk Heather shared with the audience robust data for food insecurity in the capital. Food insecurity is intrinsically linked to deeper and broader issues like social security and employment status. Food alone cannot be the solution to food insecurity.

The Conclusion:

Holistic management of food insecurity is a more beneficial approach. This involves “guaranteeing the essentials” at a national level and leveraging public procurement as well as effectively advertising the Barnet Resident Support Fund at the local level.

For more insight see:

[Changing policy | Trussell](#)

In 2015 I had my first epileptic attack .. I can't work .. I can't drive .. the food hub is a journey for me.. I live alone...I get to have a chat ...



Nirosh

Abby Preston - Project Officer, Independent Food Aid Network



“Advocating for a cash first approach to food insecurity.”

Overview:

In her talk Abby explained how charitable food aid is unsustainable and she presented data to show that in terms of food insecurity, only a small percentage of citizens use food banks. Furthermore, there is a paradox associated with food banks where festive food drives, for example, feed the cycle of normalisation.

The Conclusion:

As poverty levels increase, it makes common sense to address it with a very clearly signposted, cash-first approach which is healthier, more dignified, and encourages choice.

For more insight see:

[Why Cash First? | IFAN](#)

<https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/cashfirstcommunities>

Worrying about Money Leaflet and Barnet Specific Site:

<https://www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/barnet>

[Barnet Worrying about Money leaflet](#)



Hilde

Andrew Forsey - National Director of Feeding Britain



“A strategy to eliminate hunger in the UK by 2030.”

Overview:

In his talk Andrew outlined the origins of Feeding Britain in a cross-party group of peers and MPs and how the subsequent partnership work is drawn from an evidence base of best practice at local and national level to build systemic change. Andrew warned of the difficulties we face if we follow a North American approach to managing food insecurity which tends to be short term, tactical, philanthropic, and corporate.

The Conclusion:

It is important to build partnerships, based on best practices that support systemic change primarily at a local but ultimately at a national level.

For more insight see:

<https://feedingbritain.org/about-us/>

The food bank makes a big difference to me because my son comes down from Wales and he can eat a lot ...the extra food we get means we can have him down more often....



Kevin

Joseph Chow – Head of Impact, Community Shop CiC



“Why do we eat?”

Overview:

Joseph premised his talk on the idea that while we strive to be right, we may overlook the need to be effective. This is a premise that can be applied to how we choose to tackle food insecurity. Eating is about commensality and Community Shop social supermarkets bring dignity and resilience to communities by combining a shop, community hub and kitchen under one roof. This was highlighted using a video case-study.

The Conclusion:

In the complex world of managing food insecurity, there are multiple choices. The effective choice is to consider giving “a hand-up rather than a hand-out.”

For more insight see:

[Community Shop Social Supermarket | The Company Shop Group](#)

... I get pension credit but that is really not enough ... so I was really, really struggling ... but the food bank has really helped me a lot ...



Shria

Daniel Mermelstein - Universal Basic Income Advocate



“Poverty is a lack of cash, not a lack of character: an introduction to Universal Basic Income and how it can help reduce poverty and inequality in Britain today.”

Overview:

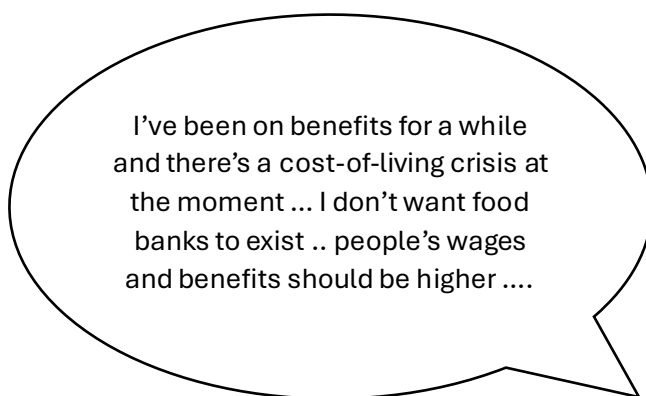
Daniel introduced the audience to the concept of UBI. He started by suggesting there is no such thing as ‘food insecurity’, as its root cause is a lack of money (poverty). While the idea of UBI is for many a modern and radical concept, Daniel reminded the audience that this has had a long tradition that bridges the political spectrum. While addressing the challenges to UBI, the audience was reminded that new ways about thinking about money will be important not least due to the advent of AI and its effect on the job market.

The Conclusion:

Do not be afraid to consider radical ideas about cash allocation to alleviate poverty. A radical approach may be necessary in radical times.

For more insight see:

<https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/ubi-labs>



Kieron

Please note that full biographies of the speakers can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Strategic Recommendations from the Summit

1. The council to actively support new models of emergency food provision:

The current reliance on traditional food banks, which is dependent on donations and managed predominantly by volunteers, is unsustainable. To align with the vision of the Barnet Food Partnership, the council must foster innovative and strategic approaches to emergency food provision that emphasise choice, dignity, and long-term sustainability.

Successful models in other local authorities demonstrate the effectiveness of social supermarkets or affordable food clubs, which integrate food access with social and educational services in community hubs. The council can play a critical role by providing rent-free or subsidised premises for such initiatives. For example, regeneration projects in areas like Brent Cross offer opportunities to include purpose-built facilities for these models.

The Barnet Food Partnership committee has visited Community Shop in Lambeth (<https://www.companyshopgroup.co.uk/our-stores/community-shop>), which was a community asset transfer. They have also visited Dagenham Social Supermarket (<https://feedingbritain.org/location/dagenham/>), where the council leverage public procurement opportunities to support the initiative.

2. The council to revise its policy on the use of bailiffs as a mechanism of debt collection:

The Barnet Food Partnership has made a request for the most recent figures from the Council, but data published by Martin Lewis for the year to April 2023 shows that the London Borough of Barnet resorted to the use of bailiffs 34,956 times to collect debts. This was the [second highest figure](#) of all the local authorities in the United Kingdom.

Over the same period, the London Boroughs of Bexley, Hackney, Kensington and Chelsea and Newham made no referrals at all to the bailiffs. There thus appears to be a continuum of practice ranging from aggressive money collection through to making resident's wellbeing a priority.

The Barnet Food Partnership has first-hand experience of this aggressive policy with the recent changing by the Council of the locks at Colindale food bank due to a small bureaucratic oversight. Ironically, this happened on the same weekend as the Summit where the food bank manager was in attendance.

Evidence suggests that the practice by local authorities of exerting increasing pressure on vulnerable households, causes a decline in mental wellbeing and often a subsequent fall into "the council tax trap". This trap refers to those who have missed just one payment but face debt collection, fees and charges worth hundreds of pounds.

3. Reflect the strategic importance of food within overall council priorities:

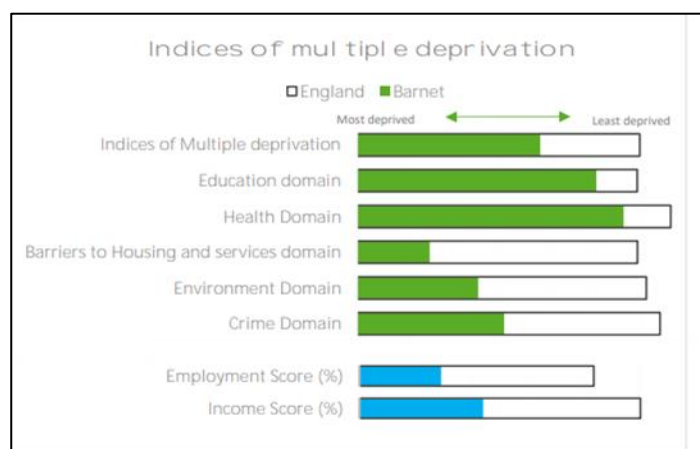
During the research, it became clear very quickly that, when compared to other London boroughs and local authorities around the country, the London Borough of Barnet has very little by way of dedicated officers or officer time dedicated to tackling food insecurity.

Executing The Barnet Food Plan requires oversight and liaison across multiple community groups, social enterprises, associated council strategies, council plans and projects. Barnet has only one part-time officer working on this and The Barnet Food Plan is one of at least three responsibilities the officer is expected to cover. In our research, we did not come across a local authority with fewer officers or less officer time dedicated to food insecurity.

The London Borough of Newham serves as a good example where food security is at the very top of council priorities, where there is a Head of Food, a Food Officer, a Food Growing Officer and a Strategist who works directly with schools on food security.

It should also be noted that the London Borough of Newham has had free school meals for primary school children since 2009.

4. Proactively promote employment opportunities held by the council and reserved for Barnet residents:



Source: Trussell Trust Data Pack for The London Borough of Barnet (September 2023)

When appraising the indices of poverty in the London Borough of Barnet, an acute challenge is the availability of appropriately paid jobs. Currently, there is no formal arrangement within the borough's food banks to link clients with job opportunities. Yet we believe there is an opportunity to support clients who are looking for work.

Section 106 agreements made between the Borough and developers are designed to address issues that any developments may impose on local infrastructure and also to support job opportunities in the local community. As a result, Barnet has a suite of jobs, that are available specifically for local residents and can be viewed [here](#) (hover over points on map to see jobs).

We believe that formally advertising and connecting employment opportunities to food bank clients, *and providing the necessary drop-in support on-site*, will serve to support residents into work and out of the poverty which brings them to the emergency food suppliers.

5. The London Borough of Barnet to become a Living Wage Employer:

Increasingly, it is becoming the case that residents who are visiting Borough's food banks are employed. The recent [Client Survey Report 2024](#) from Finchley Food Bank notes that "Of the respondents ... around 26% were working and 27% were looking for work."

In discussions with residents who visit the emergency food partners in the borough, it is not unusual to meet people who are subcontracted to Barnet Council, often as carers.

If one runs an analysis of the London Boroughs on the [Living Wage Foundation](#) website, 29 of the 33 London Boroughs are accredited Living Wage Employers. However, the London Borough of Barnet is a noticeable exception.

Barnet's position in terms of paying a living wage is corroborated by Sustain's most recent "Good Food Local: The London Report," where Barnet performs only averagely in the "[Beyond the Foodbank - London League Table](#)". This might be indicative of the fact that food insecurity is still very much treated by Barnet Council only as a Public Health matter, rather than being an integral part of many other aspects of the Council's work.

While becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer will not fix food insecurity overnight, it shows intent and leadership in what we believe is one of the few London boroughs (if not the only London borough) solely reliant on a traditional, donation-based, philanthropic food bank model.

6. The London Borough of Barnet to become a "Right to Food" Borough:

The London Borough of Barnet and the Barnet Food Partnership have had a notable success in working with Sustain to make the latter a formally recognised food partnership and the London Borough of Barnet a Sustainable Food Place.

Several London Boroughs have taken steps to go beyond this to become "Right to Food" boroughs, not least our close neighbours Brent and Haringey. By formally adopting a [human rights approach](#) to tackling food insecurity, those in power are obliged to ensure that they do not worsen matters. For example, when making decisions or passing new laws and policies, it must be ensured that things do not push people into further poverty

This is important for tackling food insecurity in Barnet because it could mean that such decisions as ceasing to fund the Barnet Food Hub, or the locking up Colindale food bank, both recent events, could not happen without prior consultation. The stakeholders in tackling food insecurity, including the Council, need to partner much more closely and work together to achieve this important goal.

A Recommended Plan for Next Steps

Until the formation of the Barnet Food Partnership, it is accurate to say that the emergency food suppliers in the borough worked relatively independently of each other under the general auspices of the Barnet Food Hub. Any changes of local policy related to food insecurity tended to be made without consultation and passively accepted.

The closure of the Barnet Food Hub (itself a decision made without consultation), ongoing spiralling demand, and the clear *systemic* and *structural* nature of food insecurity in the borough means that a consultative partnership between the council and the community must happen.

It is therefore recommended that:

- **The Barnet Food Partnership, emergency food service user, or appropriate representative of the community, is invited to all meetings under the Public Health portfolio that are related to feeding our community. This should be a standing membership regardless of whether the meeting is regular or ad hoc.**
- **The Barnet Food Partnership, emergency food service user, or appropriate representative of the community, is invited to all meetings under the Financial Sustainability and Reducing Poverty portfolio that are related to feeding our community. This should be a standing membership regardless of whether the meeting is regular or ad hoc.**
- **It is clear that the London Borough of Barnet has a long way to go to align with other local authorities in terms of both progressive approaches to food provision and the alleviation of poverty. The Committee of the Barnet Food Partnership request a joint meeting with the portfolio holders for Health and Wellbeing, and Financial Sustainability and Reducing Poverty, to discuss the clear recommendations made in this report.**

Appendix 1 – Barnet Food Charter



Barnet Food Charter

Who we are

We are the **Barnet Food Partnership**, bringing together representatives of different formal and informal groups involved in the food system in the London Borough of Barnet.

Our vision

We believe access to good food in Barnet is an essential right. Our vision is to have a sustainable, equitable and resilient food system. All residents should have access to affordable food that is: good for their health and well-being, good for the environment, good for the local economy, and that can bring communities together.

Our shared aims

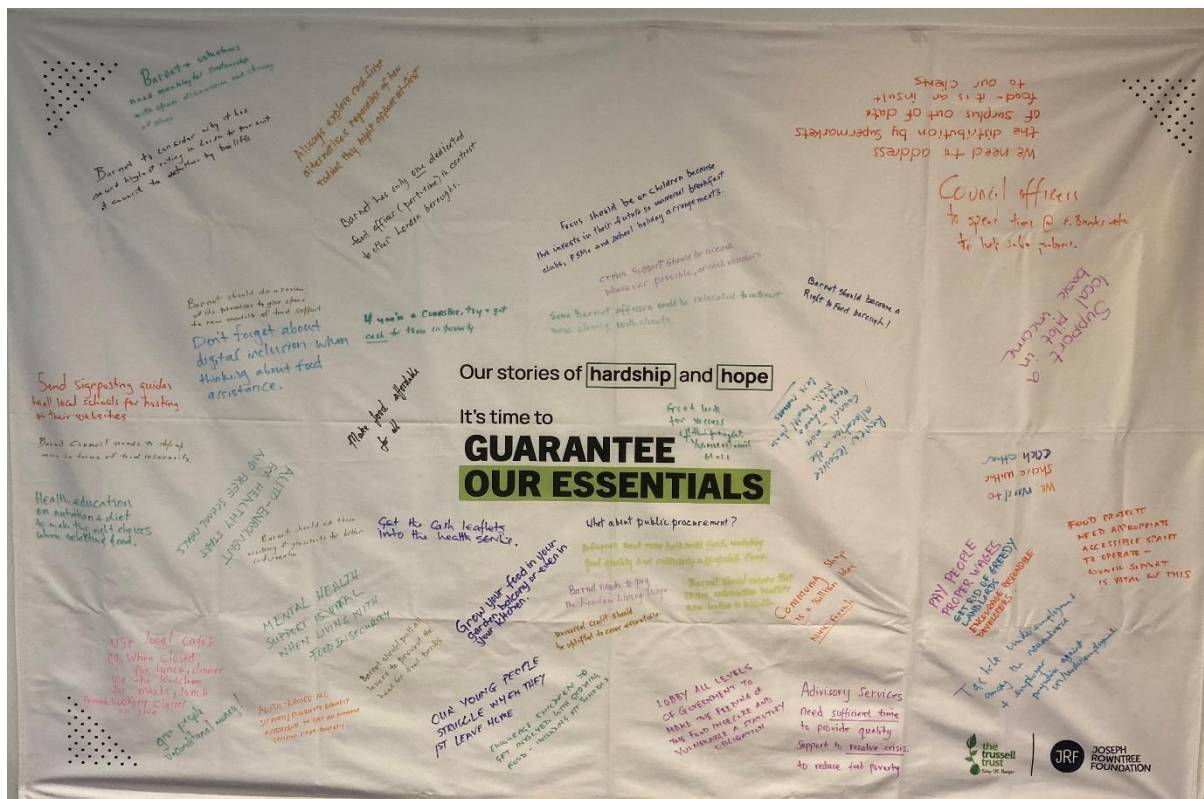
- 1 Collaborate across all sectors to realise our vision and improve the food system in Barnet**
 - Protect and promote the voices of the diverse stakeholders within the food system with a view to influencing policy
 - Support sectors in forming working groups to highlight their challenges and bring their voices to borough-level discussions
- 2 Build community food knowledge, skills and resources**
 - Encourage and celebrate food which is sustainable and locally grown
 - Increase access to initiatives to develop food skills like cooking, food growing, and budgetary advice
 - Collaborate with the council, and support community groups and networks, to share information on healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food
- 3 Tackle food insecurity and widen access to affordable healthy food**
 - Identify and understand the drivers of food insecurity through the collection of accurate qualitative and quantitative data
 - Use food insecurity data to influence decision making and policy change on a local and national level
 - Encourage and support emergency food providers to offer wrap around support services to clients and advocate for this approach across the borough, with a view to reducing need
 - Understand, promote and support programmes within the borough, like Healthy Start Vouchers, BACE Holiday Activities, Free School Meals, and other support, that tackle food insecurity
- 4 Create a robust, vibrant and diverse local food economy**
 - Identify and promote local food enterprises, food growers, farmers markets and food cooperatives
 - Encourage food businesses to provide healthy, sustainable and affordable options in the supply and provision of food
- 5 Promote and encourage sustainability and health in catering and food procurement**
 - Influence and campaign for the council and anchor institutions to procure sustainably produced, healthy food
 - Encourage local government and organisations to prioritise social value across the food chain
- 6 Address the environmental impact of our food system**
 - Increase awareness about food waste across the supply chain, and promote environmentally responsible food choices amongst Barnet residents
 - Increase opportunities for Barnet residents to participate in food growing and learn about how food is grown
 - Promote and support food growing to increase biodiversity, and increase collaboration and communication between food growers in Barnet

If you would like to find out more about the **Barnet Food Partnership** or get involved, please contact Katherine Carr on barnetfoodpartnership@gmail.com.



BARNET FOOD PARTNERSHIP

A Co-creation of Community Ideas



Cash first approach

- Always explore cash first ideas, regardless of how radical they might appear.
- Crisis support should be in cash wherever possible, or given as cash vouchers.
- Get the cash leaflets into the health services e.g. hospitals, GP Surgeries.
- Give people unconditional money!

London Borough of Barnet Council

- Barnet and volunteers need a more meaningful partnership with open discussion and sharing of plans.
- Barnet council needs to step up more in terms of food insecurity.
- Barnet has only one dedicated part-time food officer, in contrast to other London boroughs.
- Barnet needs to consider why it has the second highest rating in London for pursuit of defaulters on council tax.
- Barnet needs to pay (its workers) the London Living Wage.

- Barnet should ask those volunteers working at the grass roots for better information.
- Barnet should become a Right to Food borough.
- Barnet should come and ask those working at the grassroots for better information.
- Barnet should do a review of its premises to give some space for new models of food support .
- Barnet should ensure that IFAN interactive leaflets are linked to its website.
- Barnet should pull all levers to prevent the need for food banks.
- Food projects need appropriate and accessible spaces to operate – council support is vital for this.
- If you're a Councillor, try and give cash not food to those in poverty.
- Review resource allocation in the Council – (we need) more people working on food and public health please!
- Send signposting guides to all local schools for hosting on their websites.
- Some Barnet officers could be relocated to interact more closely with clients.
- What about public procurement?

Children and young people

- Engage children to get involved with growing food – including at schools.
- Focus should be on children because this invests in their future so universal breakfast clubs, FSMs and school holiday arrangements.
- Our young people struggle when they leave home.
- Auto-enrolment for Healthy Start and free school meals.

Central government

- Auto-record all sickness/disability benefit assessment to get an accurate decision more quickly.
- Lobby all levels of government to make the feeding of the food insecure and vulnerable a statutory obligation.
- Universal Credit should be uplifted to cover the essentials.

Other ideas

- Advisory services need sufficient time to provide quality support to resolve a crisis and reduce food poverty.

- Community Shop is a brilliant idea!
- Don't forget about digital inclusion when thinking about food assistance.
- Grow food in your garden, on the balcony or even in your kitchen!
- Health education on nutrition is needed to make the right choices when selecting food.
- Make food affordable for all.
- Mental health support is vital when living with food insecurity.
- Refugees need more help with food, including good quality and culturally appropriate food.
- Support a local pilot in Universal Basic Income.
- Tackle unemployment among the neurodiverse and also employer prejudice against un/underemployment.
- Use local cafes when closed for (providing) lunch and dinner. Use the kitchens for (preparation) of meals, provide cookery classes on site.
- We need to address the distribution by supermarkets of surplus, out-of-date food – it is an insult to our citizens.
- We need to share with each other

Appendix 3 - Speaker Biographies

Professor Nathan Davies – Director of Education, UCL Division of Medicine

Prof Davies is recognised as a leading researcher in nutrition and liver disease. He has published extensively and led on a number of large projects. Nathan is both the Head of Education for the world-leading Division of Medicine at UCL and the Director of Nutrition Education at UCL. Under his leadership Nutrition has become one of the fastest growing areas of study at a master's level in Medical Sciences.

Professor Davies, his colleagues and students have undertaken extensive relevant research over recent years of the food banks in the London Borough of Barnet.

Heather Buckingham – Social Change Advisor, Trussell

Dr Heather Buckingham is Social Change Advisor at the Trussell Trust. She has a background in social research and over seven years' experience as a senior leader in the charity sector, working on issues including poverty, homelessness, financial inclusion and social cohesion. Heather was previously Director of Research and Policy at the Church Urban Fund, and prior to that held Research Fellow posts at the University of Birmingham and the University of Southampton. She is also an Honorary Visiting Fellow at Bayes Business School, at City St George's, University of London, and a Visiting Lecturer at the Centre for Charity Effectiveness there.

Abby Preston, Project Officer, Independent Food Aid Network

Abby is an MA Public Policy graduate from the University of Warwick where she wrote a dissertation on food policy under austerity in England. Her dissertation concluded that charitable food aid cannot continue to function as a de facto social safety net in the UK, and we need a stronger social security system and adequate wages and job security to ensure affordable and nutritious food for everyone. At the start of 2022, Abby worked in Coventry City Council's Community Resilience team before starting to work with IFAN as a Project Officer in July 2022. She is currently collaborating with stakeholders across multiple local authorities in England to co-develop 'Worrying About Money?' cash-first referral leaflets. Abby also supports and contributes to Money Counts training sessions linked to the 'Worrying About Money?', as well as helping IFAN member organisations with questions and concerns. Abby regularly speaks on behalf of IFAN at virtual cash-first referral leaflet launch events and recently spoke at a conference on food waste and food poverty on the Isle of Wight.

Andrew Forsey, National Director of Feeding Britain

Andrew has been the National Director of Feeding Britain since 2019.

Previously, between 2013 and 2019, he was the head of Frank Field MP's office in the House of Commons. In 2014, he served as Secretary to the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom and co-ordinated the Feeding Birkenhead programme, the first of Feeding Britain's regional partnerships.

Andrew also played a leading role in a series of inquiries into hunger amongst children during school holidays, malnutrition amongst older people, and trends in the labour market between 2016 and 2019. Together with Frank, he drafted the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill which led to the creation of the Government's Holiday Activities and Food programme. In 2024, he was awarded an OBE for this work.

Joseph Chow, Head of Impact, Community Shop Cic

As Head of Impact, Joseph delivers a vital role within the Community Shop model, in leading a team of trained practitioners to deliver personalised support and development programmes for Community Shop members. Over his 5 years at Community Shop, Joseph has successfully developed and led the personal development and community wellbeing programmes offered, as well as maintaining the most recent insight through relevant research and academia. His previous experience in psychology, health & social care across both private and public sector organisations, accompanied by the attaining of two masters' degrees, has provided Community Shop teams with the necessary tools and care to best serve its members. All of this has subsequently had a positive life-changing impact on thousands of members.

Daniel Mermelstein

Daniel Mermelstein is a Barnet activist and an advocate for a Universal Basic Income. He volunteers with various UBI organisations, including the UBI Lab Network (<https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/>), and the Citizens' Basic Income Trust (<https://citizensincome.org/>). He has also been actively involved in the project to run a Basic Income pilot in East Finchley (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-65806599>). He is passionate about taking the UBI message to whoever will listen!