

Cheshire East Food Alliance



Right to Food Strategy

May
2024

Introduction

Food systems are fragile. Supply chain disruptions, the cost-of-living crisis, geopolitical tensions, and the ongoing climate emergency highlight the urgency of the task to make our food systems fairer, more sustainable, and more resilient.

In 2020 and 2021, Henry Dimbleby published two separate parts of The National Food Strategy. The UK government published a White Paper to respond to the recommendations. One ambition of this review was to create a food strategy that “enables people to access safe, healthy and affordable food regardless of where they live or how much they earn”. In Cheshire East, this intention was translated into a need to develop a 'Right to Food' strategy. This document outlines the progress to date.

“Everyone is entitled to their food always being adequate, available and accessible” - Professor Michael Fakhri



Cheshire East Food Alliance and Right to Food Strategy

The Cheshire East Food Alliance (CEFA) was launched at an event in October 2023. This was attended by representatives from organisations across the food system, including Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Community Foundation. The project partners and funders, charity, community and faith food groups, town councils, housing trusts, retailers and national food charities.

This will play a key role in developing a 'Right to Food' strategy; to address food insecurity across Cheshire East.

The project is being led by CVS Cheshire East with funding and support from Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Community Foundation.



**Mar
2020**

The Trussell Trust reported a soaring 81% increase in emergency food parcels from food banks. This was during the last two weeks of March 2020, compared with the same period in 2019; including a 122% rise in parcels given to children as the coronavirus pandemic continued to unfold.

Notice of Motion 22nd June 2021. Proposed by Councillor A Critchley and Seconded by Councillor L Smith because of the increasing crisis of food poverty. This was due to reaching tipping point for so many in our communities.

**Jun
2021**

**Jun
2022**

In response to cost of living challenges, a collaborative Spotlight Review Event was arranged in June 2022. The aim was to bring together a range of stakeholders, local Councillors, council officers and representatives of VCFSE sector; all of which support local people to access food.

Poverty JSNA published by Cheshire East Council.

**Dec
2022**

**Jul
2023**

Cheshire East Food coordination lead starts role.

**Aug
2023**

Mapping exercise undertaken to identify current community food provision.

Consultation with stakeholders to gather feedback on the Right to Food strategy themes.

**Sept
2023**

**Oct
2023**

Food poverty Co-ordinator has been in post since July 2023. The first Cheshire East Food Alliance meeting took place 17th October with over 40 attendees registered.

First Community Fridge operational in Cheshire East.

**Dec
2023**



Over 50 community food projects are provided by 37 different organisations across Cheshire East. These include: food banks, social supermarkets, community cafes, meals and cooking projects, allotments and growing projects and meal or food delivery services (1)

50 Projects,
37 Organisations



Up to 1,500 households across Cheshire East rely weekly on food aid from food banks, social supermarkets or other community food projects (1)

1,500
Households



Collectively, community food projects across Cheshire East are spending upwards of circa £168k per year on food (1)

£168K spent
on food



Falling donations, increased demand and rising food costs are the most commonly cited challenges faced by community food projects. Others include reduced levels of surplus food, reduced funding and rising non food costs (1)

Multiple food
barriers



Multiple issues
leading to aid



Common requests by Community Food projects across Cheshire East include:
Help with energy costs, financial management, mental health, accessing white goods and furniture, physical health support and support to get back into work (1)

40 HAF
locations



In 2023/24, Cheshire East Council provided 40 Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) locations (2)

75,000 Food
Vouchers



From April 2023 and onwards, Cheshire East Council issued 75,000 emergency food vouchers via Household Support Fund (2)

Sources:

1 Community food support across Cheshire East report - October 2023
https://www.cvsce.org.uk/sites/cvsce.org.uk/files/2023%2009%2007_Cheshire%20East%20Food%20Alliance_Community%20Food%20provision_presentation.pdf

2 Cheshire East Council
(<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-haf.aspx>)



14,176 pupils across 127 schools in Cheshire East benefit from the NHS School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (3)



Across Cheshire East, 59% of those eligible benefit from the NHS Health Start Scheme (compared to 62.5% across England) (4)



A survey of North West LAs suggest only Trafford had a lower free school meals claimant rate than Cheshire East. It also suggests there are 8,000 children who are in poverty, but not eligible for any form of free school meals, or means tested free school meals. (5)



Sources:

3 Cheshire East Council (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/financial-support/household-support-fund.aspx)

4 NHS Healthy Start scheme - April 2024 (<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>)

5 Free school meals in the North West report - February 2024 (https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Free_school_meals_in_the_North_West.pdf)

The Food Alliance, will:

- Develop a 'Right to Food' strategy.
- Work at three levels:
 - Directly with individual members - providing support where necessary e.g. setting up a new food pantry, social supermarket.
 - As a network - so providing support, advice and resources the whole group can benefit from e.g. access to training, event programme.
 - Aim to influence policy decisions - Council and other organisations, locally and regionally.
- Follow a partnership approach.
- Ensure positive engagement with everyone in need.
- Provide advice and advocacy: local champion for food related issues / relevant national campaigns e.g. Love Food, Hate Waste etc.
- Ensure alignment with relevant national organisations WRAP, Feeding Britain etc
 - Work Cheshire wide with CW&C and Warrington, and beyond, where advantageous (appropriate) e.g. influencing FareShare.

The vision and ambitions need to reflect:

- Local Council (see below) and Health care priorities.
- Funder priorities.
- National strategies/reports e.g. Govt food strategy/Broken Plate Report/The Courtauld Commitment 2030 – through a local lens.
- Reflect the challenges of food groups: food, funding, donations, volunteers.
- Represent local resident needs (those with lived experience).
- Local private 'food' sector challenges.

'Ensuring a food secure Cheshire East where residents have a 'right to' affordable, quality, healthy, sustainable food'.



Cheshire East 'Right to Food' Strategy – Working Themes

Ambition	Outcome
Ensuring people can afford, or have access to, food to make up a healthy diet	Better understand the causes and consequences of food poverty to create lasting local solutions
	Providing residents with long-term support to reduce the dependence on food banks
	Ensuring people in crisis (poverty) receive emergency support/access national support programmes
	Encourage healthier food choices
Building food confident communities	Increasing community engagement with food and food knowledge
	Ensure community-based food initiatives are connected and sharing good practice
	Increased knowledge and number of active community growing or cooking projects developed.

Ambition	Outcome
Support a shift towards a sustainable food system for Cheshire East	Surplus food seen as part of the solution to achieving food security
	Better food use and reduced food waste (less going to landfill/reducing greenhouse gases)
	Reduced food waste in domestic refuse/commercial refuse
	Increase in food produced and procured locally
	Increased knowledge about the environmental impact of food decisions (what we eat, how it's packaged and how far it's travelled)





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