

# Cardiff Covid-19 Food Response

## *Explanatory Note and Summary*



## Scope of Report

**The findings and recommendations in this report relate to activity in the Cardiff local authority area between March and June 2020.** The report has been produced by Food Cardiff through the Covid-19 Food Response Task Group. Members of the task group include: Cardiff Council, C3SC, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Cardiff Foodbank, FareShare Cymru, Cardiff Business School.

## Background

Covid-19 has brought tremendous challenges on all aspects of our society. As a result of the pressure exerted on the food system from demand (panic buying), availability of resource (staff and volunteers) and closure of public services (e.g. children accessing Free School meals, day centres for older adults) there were, and continue to be, three main challenges:

1. People being unable to afford food in crisis;
2. People who are unable to access food (self-isolation, service closures etc.);
3. Local food businesses unable to open (having knock-on effects on food supply, workers' income etc.).

We have heard from various food organisations across Cardiff that the scale and the nature of the support they are providing has changed dramatically and rapidly since the start of the crisis. To coordinate, expand and amplify the incredible response, Food Cardiff convened the Covid-19 Food Response Task Group, which set up a network of Anchor Organisations and Food Response Partners.

## Subsequent Evidence and Activity

Whilst producing this report further evidence has been published and additional activities undertaken including:

- The Trussel Trust's new analysis forecasts a 61% increase in food parcels needed across its UK network in October to December – six parcels given out every minute<sup>1</sup>
- Data collected by YouGov on behalf of the Food Foundation<sup>2</sup> between 24th August and 1st September 2020 showed:
  - 14% of UK adults living with children reported experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity in the last 6 months, compared to pre-Covid-19 levels of 11.5%
  - 12.3% of parents in Wales have reported that their children experienced food insecurity in the last six months - compared with the UK average of 10.0%.
- Cardiff Council and partners launched Cardiff Summer Squad and worked closely with Children's Services and School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) co-ordinators to run holiday provision schemes in 9 primary schools and 2 secondary schools.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.trusseltrust.org/2020/09/14/new-report-reveals-how-coronavirus-has-affected-food-bank-use/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/new-food-foundation-data-sept-2020/>

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- Food Cardiff launched the Good Food Cardiff Autumn Festival to tackle food insecurity and social isolation, building on the Cardiff Growing Together project. The festival is a month-long programme of physically-distanced and virtual events which aims to involve thousands of people in growing, cooking and sharing food throughout the city.
- 3,375 volunteers registered with the Cardiff Volunteer Centre run by C3SC with 1,646 volunteers joining at least one activity between 18 March and 31 August 2020.

## Summary of Recommendations

### We recommend that:

1. Cardiff Council adopt the approved method for measuring Food Insecurity (USDA Food Insecurity Module) in city-wide surveys e.g. Ask Cardiff 2020 to monitor levels of food insecurity in the city;
2. Food Cardiff Partners to maximise support to the shielded group through existing support mechanisms, prioritising income maximisation (e.g. Discretionary Assistance Fund, benefits checks), digital access (e.g. online shopping) and raising awareness of local food infrastructure (e.g. voluntary shopping services);
3. Any future provision for food parcels for those shielding should meet the Government recommended dietary guidelines (Eatwell Guide), plus take account of dietary and cultural needs and provide for the whole household. This should apply to any provision whether delivered through a national Welsh Government or local Cardiff Council scheme;<sup>3</sup>
4. Food Cardiff partners to continue to ensure Cardiff residents have access to good quality advice in order to maximise income, for example by further rolling out Food-Related Benefits Training and Nutrition Skills For Life to public and third sector services;
5. Cardiff Council to continue to provide Free School Meals or equivalent provision across term-time, including to those with no recourse to public funds. Maximise the uptake of FSM to existing and newly entitled families, by ensuring ease of access and by raising awareness;
6. Cardiff Council to map holiday provision needs across Cardiff and ensure quality assured holiday provision is available for vulnerable and food insecure children across the city. Maximise the number of vulnerable and food insecure children attending Cardiff Council run provision, including the School Holiday Enrichment Programme;
7. Food Cardiff Partners to learn from and continue developing the Anchor Organisation and Food Response Partner network to link voluntary and third sector support with local authority services.

**We also recommend that The Food Response Task Group continue to work as a food poverty alliance, working strategically to ensure all areas of need are covered and Cardiff residents can easily access support.**

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<sup>3</sup> N.b. Shielded parcel contents were previously determined by Welsh Government. Adequate funding would need to be provided in order to meet this recommendation.

## Reflections

### What has worked well

- **Partnership working and local co-ordination:** the existing food partnership infrastructure (Food Cardiff) enabled the Food Response Task Group and Anchor Organisation model, which reduced duplication and maximised impact.
- **Cardiff Council input and resource:** as shown in the full report, Cardiff Council have taken a holistic and responsive approach to ensuring Cardiff residents can both access and afford good food.
- **Third Sector pivoting:** many third sector organisations changed existing or accelerated developing projects to focus on the immediate food needs of communities.
- **Grassroots response:** new grassroots groups such as the network of Mutual Aid groups were quickly and organically established. A [recent survey](#) ranked Cardiff the 'most community spirited' area in the UK with 73% of people reporting that they were supporting their neighbours.
- **Speed of response:** All of the above mobilised quickly, in response to a rapidly changing situation, which mitigated some of the potentially large issues.

### Challenges

One of the biggest problems is that these are short-term solutions to a long-term challenge. Food insecurity was exacerbated and some of the underlying causes are set to continue through the Covid-19 recovery and beyond. In particular:

- **Funding:** Public sector, third sector and grassroots responses were all reliant on limited and Covid-19 specific funding. Though some models (e.g. Your Local Pantry) have an element of financial sustainability, most projects do not have the level of funding to fully meet the short-term need, or to continue beyond the immediate crisis.
- **People:** Much of the food response has relied on volunteer time and effort, often from people furloughed or unable to work during lockdown. Many of these volunteers will be returning to work or will have less time available as lockdown eases. Paid staff have also been able to focus more time specifically on the food response, but will need to return to previous roles and/or priorities post-lockdown.
- **Tackling Root Causes and Dignity:** Receiving food aid, shopping assistance or temporary financial measures (e.g. credit card payment holidays) do not tackle the root causes of not being able to afford and/or access food and could delay rather than solve problems. They also don't always offer the most dignified solution, for example by limiting choice of food or unintentionally creating a stigma. The long-term food response should focus on tackling the root causes of poverty and take a cash-first approach to ensure people maximise their income.

