



Community Food Mapping of Lewes District: Emergency Food Provision, Food Ladders and Local Resilience

Lewes District Community Food Partnership

Achieving Year 1 Action plan for Community Food Support

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a food mapping exercise looking at emergency food provision within the Lewes district. The purpose of the project was to identify the range, distribution and accessibility of services providing emergency food support and to assess how these services contribute to wider local food resilience through approaches associated with food ladders. The report explored whether provisions within the district extends beyond immediate crisis intervention towards long term and more sustainable forms of intervention.

A mixed method approach was used to undertake the mapping exercise. Google my maps was used to geographically identify and map emergency food providers and community food initiatives across Lewes. Stakeholder engagement was conducted through email, phone and teams with the organisations providing the food support. Alongside reviewing publicly available documentation, organisation websites and resources.

The findings identified a diverse network of emergency food provisions across the district, this includes food banks, community cafes, pantries and surplus food redistribution programmes. Services were primarily concentrated within the larger urban areas such as Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford, while rural areas appeared to have more limited food provisions and greater transport barriers. Stakeholder responses highlighted several barriers affecting access to services including stigma, limited opening hours, referral systems, rural isolation and lack of transport. Concerns relating to nutritional provision were also identified, such as the dependence on donated and surplus food, inconsistent variety and limited refrigeration or storage which limits accessing fresh produce.

Some organisations demonstrated elements of a food ladders approach through affordable food schemes, community cafes and welfare signposting. Partnerships between charities, schools, churches and local organisations appear to strengthen local networks and community's responses to food insecurity. However evidence of structured progression pathways beyond emergency food aid remained limited, many organisations operate primarily within crisis response models due to increasing demands and economic pressure.

Introduction

Food insecurity remains a significant public health and social issue across England. The rising cost of living and insecure employment have contributed to increasing the number of households struggling to access sufficient nutritious food (Lewes District Food Partnership, 2025). In response, emergency food provisions (EFP) such as food banks have expanded rapidly across the country. While these services provide essential short-term help for those experiencing hardship, their growing presence reflects increased reliance on EFP (Milbourne, 2024).

Over the past decade the demand for EFP has considerably increased. Particularly in periods of economic instability and the recent cost of living crisis (The Trussell Trust, 2024). In many communities, emergency food providers now play an important role in supporting vulnerable households and reducing immediate hunger. However, these crisis-focused models are often limited in their ability to address the underlying causes of food insecurity. Food banks can provide immediate relief, but they do not provide long term food security or reduce vulnerability to future economic shocks (Hannah Lambie-Mumford, 2013).

As a result, increasing attention has been given to approaches that can move beyond crisis intervention and aid longer term resilience. One approach is the food ladders; this describes the progression from emergency food aid towards more sustainable and empowering forms of food access. This may include community pantries, social supermarkets, cooking programmes, community cafes and growing food initiatives that encourage participation. The food ladder models aim to improve dignity, choice and social inclusion while reducing the reliance on emergency food aids (Sustain, 2021).

Linked to this concept is resilience within the local food systems, this refers to the ability of local food systems and communities to withstand social, economic and environmental challenges while maintaining equitable access to food. Within Lewes District, organisations such as the Lewes District Food Partnership work collaboratively with community groups, charities and stakeholders to strengthen responses to food insecurity. Initiatives such as community food networks, affordable food schemes and food education projects demonstrate efforts to embed resilience within the local food system rather than relying on food banks.

Aim and Objectives

Aim:

The aim of this report is to map EFPs within Lewes District and assess the extent to which a food ladders approach is embedded to strengthen local food resilience. The report seeks to explore how existing services respond to immediate food insecurity while considering pathways towards longer term sustainable food access.

To achieve this, several objectives were identified. Firstly, the report aims to identify and geographically map key emergency food providers operating across Lewes District. This includes food banks and community food indicatives. This report will also identify structural barriers affecting service accessibility and delivery. In addition, the report will assess nutritional adequacy considerations within food banks and examine the progression pathways beyond emergency food aid.

Methodology

This project used a community food mapping approach to identify and explore food provisions across Lewes's district. Google My Maps was used to geographically plot food services operating within the district, enabling visual identification of the distribution of food banks and related community food projects. Services mapped included food banks, community fridges, larders and cafes.

Information was collected using publicly available data sources, including organisation websites, online community directories and information provided by the Lewes District Food Partnership, this website was particularly useful for identifying current food aid initiatives, opening times and eligibility requirements (Lewes District Food Partnership, 2022).

Additional information gathered includes:

- Service location
- Opening times and frequency
- Open access or referral
- Additional support such as community café, welfare or signposting

The mapping exercise aimed to identify both the geographical spread of EFPs and the extent to which services appeared to provide outreach beyond immediate crisis intervention. The mapping also enabled a comparison between urban areas, such as Lewes and Newhaven, and more rural areas where provision appeared less concentrated.

Alongside the mapping exercise, organisations were contacted via email and telephone if set up to gather additional contextual information regarding service delivery, barriers to access and nutritional

considerations. This information was thematically analysed to identify themes between food provisions.

The methodology was informed by principles of sustainable food access and the food ladder approach, which emphasises the progression beyond emergency food aid towards more sustainable and community centred models of food services (Tendall et al., 2015).

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken to provide additional insight into the operation of EFPs across Lewes District. Organisations identified through online mapping and local food network resources were contacted via email.

A semi-structured approach was used to allow organisations to provide both information and reflective insight regarding service provision. Questions explored how frequently services were accessed and the extent to which organisations had experienced increasing demand or repeat service use. Stakeholders were also asked to identify barriers affecting access to services, including issues relating to transport, stigma, referral systems and awareness of support available.

Additional questions focused on referral criteria and whether individuals required repeat referrals to continue accessing aid. This enabled exploration of how EFPs operated in practice and whether referral systems may affect accessibility. Organisations were also asked to identify any perceived gaps within their services, including resources or forms of guidance they felt unable to provide due to funding, staffing or supply limitations.

Nutritional considerations formed a key area of stakeholder engagement. Participants were asked whether they felt the food provided through their services was nutritionally balanced and whether there were foods they wished to offer more consistently, such as fresh produce or culturally appropriate items. Questions also explored perceptions of how food quality may affect the health and wellbeing of service users. In addition, organisations were asked whether they offered advice or signposting services, such as welfare resources or budgeting advice, and whether these services were perceived to reduce longer-term reliance on food banks.

Several common themes emerged from stakeholder responses, including increasing demand linked to the cost-of-living crisis, challenges associated with reliance on donated food supplies and concerns regarding the consistency of nutritionally balanced food provision. Some organisations also highlighted the importance of integrated support services and collaborative working between local providers. These findings align with wider literature emphasising the importance of community-based and

resilience-focused responses to food insecurity (Lambie-Mumford and Dowler, 2014; Tendall et al., 2015).

Approach

Findings from both the mapping exercise and stakeholder engagement were analysed using principles associated with the food ladders approach. The food ladders model conceptualises food aid as a progression from immediate crisis intervention towards sustainable and empowering forms of food access. Rather than focusing solely on emergency food aid, the framework considers whether services provide opportunities for individuals to access broader forms of support that may contribute to longer term food security and reduced vulnerability to future crisis (Sustain, 2021)

Analysis therefore focused on the extent to which organisations within Lewes District provided assistance beyond immediate food provision. Findings demonstrated variation in the level and type of resources available across organisations. While some providers operated primarily as emergency or surplus food distribution services, others described wider partnership approaches involving collaboration with cafes and community fridges.

Stakeholders' responses highlighted several themes relevant to the food ladder framework. Many organisations identified barriers affecting access to services, including transport difficulties, limited opening hours, rural isolation and stigma associated with food insecurity (Dignity Principles — ADFS, 2019). One provider highlighted that individuals who were housebound, new to the area or experiencing shame regarding their circumstances may be less likely to access provisions of help. Another organisation identified that the lack of delivery services and dependence on individuals travelling to collection points created accessibility challenges, again, particularly for those in rural areas. Physical accessibility and stigma remain significant barriers within emergency food systems (Lambie-Mumford and Dowler, 2014).

Elements of progression beyond crisis support was also focused on. Evidence of signposting and informal referral pathways were identified across several organisations, particularly in relation to welfare assistance and local community services. However, providers frequently notes that while signposting may reduce stress and improve access to additional resources, it did not necessarily reduce reliance on food services due to the persistence of financial hardship and food insecurity. Suggesting that food aid alone cannot address the structural determinants of poverty and insecurity (Garthwaite, 2016).

Nutritional considerations formed an additional component of the analysis. All the providers emphasised the importance of offering fresh produce, cooked meals and nutritionally balanced foods

where possible. However, stakeholders also identified challenges associated with reliance on surplus and donated food supplies, including limited storage capacity and reduced consistency in the nutritional quality and variety of food available (Loopstra et al., 2019). One organisation highlighted that receiving poor quality food has psychological as well as physiological implications. Dignity, choice and nutritional adequacy within community food initiatives is highly important (Dowler and O'Connor, 2012). One organisation explained that they aimed to provide a wide variety of food but were bound by what is surplus from stores, another described having to buy the cheapest version of products due to financial limitations and prioritising spending on fresh produce where possible. Organisations generally attempted to accommodate dietary needs where possible, one provides cooked meals for both meat and vegetarian as well as different milks such as soy or oat and gluten free food items.

How organisations worked together within the local food system was also looked at. Many responses suggested that services were not working in isolation, with several organisations describing links with local charities and community groups. However, at the same time several practical challenges affecting what can be offered was identified. Common issues included limited funding, dependence on minimal volunteers, needing bigger fridge and freezer storage and finding it challenging to support those living in rural areas. These challenges show that although there are strong community networks within Lewes District, many services still operate under pressure.

Limitations

There are some limitations that must be considered when looking at the findings this mapping exercise. Although stakeholders' engagement provided the most valuable insight into food banks in Lewes, some organisations did not respond. This may cause the findings to not fully represent the experiences and practices of all organisations. In addition, the level of detail provided varied, meaning some areas of analysis were explored in greater depth than others.

The project was also constrained by time limitations; this restricted the scope of stakeholder engagement and availability to follow up discussions. Consequently, the mapping relied on publicly available information. While these sources were useful for identifying services, the information may overlook any recent adjustments made to any of the services. Another limitation from this is informal or unregistered community food support may not have been captured in the mapping process. Smaller projects operating without a significant online presence may therefore be underrepresented within the findings. In addition, limited nutritional data were available from organisations making it difficult to objectively assess the nutritional adequacy of food provision across services.

A huge thing is that the study did not include perspectives from service users themselves. As a result, the findings primarily reflect organisational viewpoints rather than lived experience of accessing emergency food support. This limits the ability to fully understand issues such as dignity, stigma, cultural suitability and the perceived effectiveness of the services from the people accessing them.

Due to the short-term nature, it was not possible to assess long term outcomes associated with EFP or determine whether additional support services reduced ongoing reliance on food aid over time. Despite these limitations, the mapping exercise provides a useful overview of food provisions within Lewes District and highlights key themes relating to accessibility, nutritional considerations and resilient community food systems.

Discussion

The mapping exercise identified a network of emergency food providers and community food initiatives operating across Lewes District. This included food banks, community cafes, fridges and pantry style projects, alongside referral-based food banks, these community initiatives help to decrease stigma associated with food insecurity. As shown in the geographical mapping data (see appendix A), services were unevenly distributed across the district, the greatest concentration located within the larger urban and coastal settlements which included Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford. Fewer services were identified within smaller rural villages and inland areas.

The clustering of both crisis food aid and community-based initiatives was identified within Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford, and may suggest a more developed local infrastructure within higher population areas, potentially due to greater demand, transport links and more availability for volunteers. The presence of both emergency food aid and local food services potentially indicates attempts to move beyond purely crisis-based provision and towards more socially inclusive models of services.

Lewes town also demonstrated a relatively concentrated network of provisions, with several mapped services located close together. The availability of multiple support points within urban areas may improve physical accessibility for some residents and create greater opportunities for partnership working between organisations. Stakeholder responses supported this, with organisations describing collaborative relationships with local cafes and schools.

Contrasting this, the mapping highlighted the limited provision within rural and semi-rural parts of Lewes District. Large geographical areas between Lewes and the coastal towns contained few identified services despite the wide physical areas covered by the district. This may create additional challenges for residents living in villages or isolated areas, particularly those with limited access to

transport. Stakeholder responses repeatedly identified transport as a significant barrier to accessing food aid. One provider noted that because delivery services were not available, individuals were required to travel further either directly to the organisation or to a designated pickup point. Another organisation expressed concern for those who may be housebound. These findings suggest that rural food insecurity is often less visible than urban but may be intensified by poor public transport, geographical isolation and reduced service accessibility (Smith et al, 2018). Although Lewes District benefits from strong community and voluntary involvement, the physical distance between services in some areas may limit equitable access to EFPs.

The operational structure of many services may also affect accessibility. Several organisations reported opening only one day a week and supporting around 58 households, however some were accessible 356 days a year. Volunteer led provisions demonstrate strong community engagement and local resilience, depending on volunteers may affect the consistency and sustainability of service delivery. Stakeholders also identified some practical limitations such as limited ability to expand outreach into rural areas.

Differences were also identified in how services could be accessed. Some organisations operated with fully open access, where individuals can attend without referral or formal eligibility criteria, this was particularly within surplus food schemes. Stakeholders described this approach as helping to reduce barriers associated with stigma and administrative processes. In contrast some food banks operated formal referral systems linked to social services, healthcare professions or housing providers to prioritise emergency provisions for individuals experiencing acute financial hardship. Referral periods range from one week to six months dependent on the individual's circumstances, this is consistent with wider UK food bank referral systems where such referrals are used to prioritise the resources (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). While referral systems may help manage demand and ensure the appropriate support it may unintentionally create barriers for individuals who are unaware of this pathway or are reluctant to engage with formal services due to feelings of shame or embarrassment (Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016).

Alongside emergency food aid, the mapping identified several initiatives offering broader forms of community provisions. This includes community cafes and pantry style projects. These may contribute to local food resilience by increasing access to affordable food, reducing social isolation and create opportunities for community participation. Their presence also reflects wider shifts within community food systems towards approaches that combine immediate aid with long term resilience building strategies and reducing stigma with food services (Dowler and O'Connor, 2012; Sustain, 2021). Stigma is a huge barrier associated with emergency food aid, particularly where support is linked to

perceptions of poverty, social exclusion or personal failure, although the community-led provisions help to breakdown this barrier, stigma may remain and affect engagement with assistance (Garthwaite, 2016).

Overall, these findings reflect the wider national trends that show an increasing reliance on emergency food aid over the past decade (Loopstra et al., 2015). The geographical distribution of services suggests that Lewes District benefits from an active network of EFPs and place-based food initiatives, particularly in urban and coastal areas. However, gaps in rural accessibility, transport barriers and reliance on volunteer led provision indicates that access to support remains uneven across the district. These findings highlight the importance of place-based approaches to food insecurity, considering not only the availability of services, but also their accessibility, sustainability and integration within the wider local food system (The Food Foundation, 2024).

Food Ladders and Local Food Resilience

The concepts of food ladders and local food resilience can provide a useful framework for analysing whether EFPs support long term food security beyond immediate crisis intervention. The food ladders approach describes the progression from emergency food aid towards more sustainable and empowering forms of food resources which includes affordable food access, skills development, community participation and wider welfare programmes. Rather than relying on charitable food aid, food ladders aim to strengthen individual and community capacity while reducing long term dependence on emergency provision (Sustain, 2021). Linked to this is the concept of resilient food networks, this refers to the ability of local food systems and communities to respond to economic, social and environmental pressures while maintaining access to food (Tendall et al., 2015).

The findings suggested that several organisations within Lewes district demonstrated elements associated with a food ladders approach, mostly through community-based models of support, as seen in the map there is several community cafes and fridges where people can go for a hot meal. This reflects the lower to mid rungs of the food ladder, where provisions move beyond emergency provision towards more dignified and socially inclusive food access. This is beneficial to reducing social isolation, and strengthening community cohesion (Iacovou et al., 2013). Stakeholder responses also identified specifics of these services, such as a café with freshly baked cakes, soup and bread and someone to chat too. A place for informal advice in some places due to legal and insurance limitations. One organisation highlights that food insecurity is rarely the only thing they are struggling with, highlighting the interconnection with financial hardship, wellbeing and social vulnerability (Dowler and O'Connor, 2012).

Environmental sustainability also appears within some initiatives, particularly those based around using surplus food from supermarkets. This helps to reduce food waste while increasing food access within the community, contributing positively to both environmental and affordability (Papargyropoulou et al., 2014). Within a food resilience framework, this demonstrates how local systems can improve resource efficiency and maintain access to food under economic and environmental pressure. Stakeholder responses did highlight that although beneficial, some limitations regarding consistency and food choice were present.

Despite evidence of community centred and resilience approaches the findings suggest that progression pathways beyond emergency food aid were often informal and inconsistent. While some organisations offer signposting they explained they would benefit from citizens advice staff to be on hand to signpost and explain to people services they can access, however due to financial and voluntary restrictions this is challenging. As well as nothing changing in the wider environment such as the economy, low paying jobs and housing crisis. This meant that many services appear to operate simultaneously as both emergency food and outgoing community provision, reliance on food support was references within responses, suggesting that some individuals may find it challenging to progress beyond the emergency food aid. Food banks do not have the funding to be able to address well known structural causes of food insecurity (Lambie-Mumford and Dowler, 2014)

Conclusion

This report has highlighted the important role emergency food provision plays in responding to food insecurity across Lewes District, while also identifying ongoing challenges relating to accessibility, nutritional consistency and long-term sustainability. Local food resilience remains dependent on voluntary sector capacity, community goodwill and partnerships working. Although there is very strong local networks visible, stakeholders identified common challenges such as funding, volunteer shortages, restricted storage and difficulties reaching rural communities or those who cannot travel. As well as further integration and long-term strategic coordination may be required to support sustainable progression beyond food insecurity.

Overall, this report has demonstrated that EFPs plays a significant role in assisting individuals and householders experiencing food insecurity across Lewes District. The mapping exercise identified a broad range of food services that extend beyond traditional crisis food aid including food banks,

community cafes, surplus food scenes and affordable food initiatives. However, several barriers and gaps remain such as transport difficulties, rural accessibility, stigma, inconsistent nutritional provision and reliance on volunteer capacity may limit equitable access to outreach across the district. Strengthening long term food security requires greater integration between EFP and longer-term community food initiatives that increase sustainable and dignified access to food. The community-based approaches may help to reduce reliance on crisis provision while improving wellbeing, participation and local resilience. Ultimately, a shift from crisis containment towards a more structured progression pathways is likely to be essential in strengthening Lewes Districts longer term responses to food insecurity.

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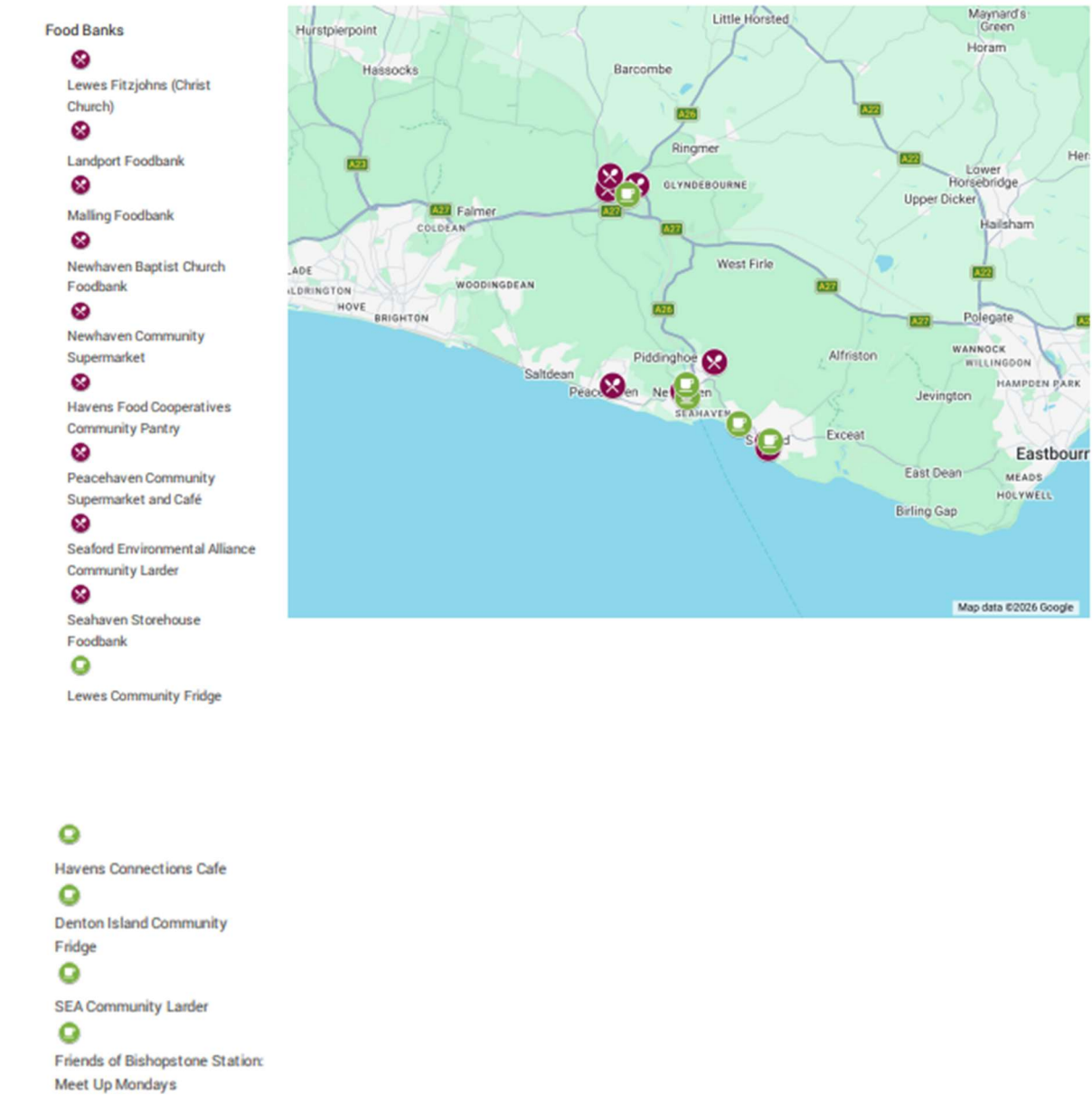
Appendices:

Appendix A: Geographical food map

Link to map

<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/d/embed?mid=1K6HQgeDgHAIZ5E0KzAJaNJ3RtO-0FPE&ehbc=2E312F" width="640" height="480"></iframe>

Food Map for Lewes



Appendix B: Responses to questions

How often are your services accessed?

- Every Monday around 81 households
- We operate 365 days a year and are accessible any day of the week.
- On a weekly basis

- we are open once a week, on average we see 58 households a week
- every Thursday 100 households, deliver to 12 in Peacehaven Seaford and Newhaven
- **What are the biggest challenges you have faced in reaching the people who need support?
What are some barriers that prevent people from accessing your services?**
- We don't currently deliver so people need to be able to travel to us or one of our community partners to access the food available. We operate using exclusively surplus food from stores and operate on an open community basis where anyone is welcome to come and take what they can make use of however that does mean the earlier someone can arrive the more variety we will have available.
- Stigma, Physical access (being able to attend during opening hours). Traveling too and from the foodbank.
- we know there are people who need support who are not accessing our services, most likely people that are housebound or new to the area or have reduced capacity but also people that feel shame about their situation
- people not wanting to come, feeling like a failure for coming.
- Our biggest challenge is awareness of what we offer, money, we need around £40,000 a year but we make £12000

Do you have a criteria for referrals, if so, what does it involve and how often do people need to be re-referred?

- No we don't have a criteria, if they would like to access our services they may do so without needing to evidence their situation.
- Clients are referred for 1 week / 12 wks and 26 wks ,Re referrals depend on the clients situation .Initial Referrals: Lewes Children's Centre/Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Lewes District Council Housing Services, Housing Associations (and social housing providers), Probation Service, Citizens Advice, GPs/Healthcare staff, schools or local church leaders. Foodbanks will need to ensure clients are receiving appropriate support with welfare/social

security – this may involve signposting to appropriate advice services. Referral Criteria: To prioritise provision of emergency support in a food crisis, those seeking help must Live with the Lewes District Council Housing area, not served by a closer local foodbank (e.g. Ringmer or Newhaven), and be one (or more) of the following: Engaged with the benefits system and: Awaiting benefits to start, Subject to a change of circumstances affecting benefit payments, On suspended benefits or sanctions, On JSA/ESA/UC but in a unique crisis, No recourse to public funds, In work and awaiting first pay cheque/disrupted pay, Families in Crisis – requiring additional short-term support.

- no criteria (other than self identifying as struggling with the cost of living crisis/facing financial/food insecurity etc) and no referral
- going to citizens advice, council, school headmaster, vicar. People will be referred between 6 weeks and 6 months
- yes, if someone is in absolute crisis then we will give them food with no referral, however anyone from a dr, school or mp can refer people. Re referrals every 12 weeks because we make sure everyone who comes is deserving and we are targeting the right people.

Do you feel there are any gaps in your service that you would like to be able to fill? Please give details and explain what would allow you to fill them.

- We feel that where we were set up as a food waste prevention project the other organisations we are partnered with such as local foodbanks, schools, cafe's and various other support groups are able to further our reach and amount of support we are able to provide.
- supporting people who can't come on a Monday or who live in rural locations. having another location or being able to open on another day would help this, or having some rural outreach
- The gaps in our service are linked to the provision of fresh and surplus foods which are limited due to storage limitations. Access to freezers and fridges would address this but we do not have the storage space in our current premises.

- no major gaps but wanting to expand to be able to supply lunch at community cafes however short on volunteers. The basic problems such as housing, government policies and jobs have not changed.
- Lacking on volunteers relating to food banks, such as someone from citizens advice to signpost, talk to people and we need navigators too for the same thing

Do you feel the food you are able to offer is sufficiently nutritionally balanced?

- Yes. As always we would like to be able to offer more variety but are bound by what we have available as excess from the stores.
- The gaps in our service are linked to the provision of fresh and surplus foods which are limited due to storage limitations. Access to freezers and fridges would address this but we do not have the storage space in our current premises.
- mostly, although we usually have to buy the cheapest versions of things like bread which are the least nutritional. we do spend most of our money on fresh produce and making freshly cooked meals (meat & veggie options), we also have eggs every week etc
- we get fresh bread, fruit, vegetables from local wholesale and fareshare and occasionally buy meat. However mostly tinned products such as potatoes, peaches, curry, soup and biscuits and pasta.
- feels its nutritionally balanced, has a grant for fresh eggs, local milk, fresh fruit and vegetables each week, buys a staple amount includes gluten free, soya and oat milks. Spending around £800 every week.

What, if anything would you like to offer more of?

- We are always looking for more volunteers and funding opportunities to keep us running.
- More variety with the produce
- the thing we've been asked for more of, by members in the past, is pack-lunch items for kids we have been receiving more chilled and frozen from Fareshare which has been popular so would

like to do more of that always good to be able to do more veg/fruit - although our offer is usually pretty good

- would like to offer more fridge products such as yogurts, and tasty fresh chilled foods, does not have enough fridge space.
- Would love to offer more fresh food, we have no fridges.

What impact do you think the food quality has on the health and wellbeing of those using your service?

- People accessing our services are getting an option of fresh products including fruits, vegetable, breads and pastries that they would have otherwise needed to go and buy. Therefore having the effect of saving people money, giving them access to other foods they may not have chosen before and preventing waste from being sent to landfill.
- It is a huge part of the overall wellbeing of our clients. Healthy nutritious food is a cornerstone of their wellbeing.
- massive - when the food is bad quality (sometimes from Fareshare) it can make people feel worse about their situation; there's definitely a psychological impact in having to receive food which is surplus. When it is varied and good quality people are happy and of course it is great for their health to be able to have different foods rather than making the same meals which are cheap but maybe not high in nutritional variety
- food quality and wellbeing are positive, I feel its nutritionally balanced
- it at least fills their stomachs, somewhat nutritious, we have a café which helps reduce isolation, serves soup, bread and cakes freshly made which is good.

Do you offer any advice services and how impactful do you think this is/would be in helping to reduce reliance on your service?

- We offer signposting where possible to other support services within the area. We would like this to have more of an impact as if someone is struggling with food insecurity it is very rarely the only thing they are struggling with.

- We are able to offer advice and signposting services to our clients alongside the food distribution. Whilst I have seen it benefit the resources our clients can access, I would not say it has reduced their reliance on our services.
- not advice, as this is a legal term which we are not insured to deliver but we do have info & signposting services. I don't think it reduces reliance on the service, because people's situations are often not changing enough to bring them out of needing food support, but it certainly eases some of the worry which might trigger or push people further into crisis
- Signposting to other advice such as financial, leaflets to give out, we have a notice board, community garden and book club
- Would like someone from citizens advice, financial advice and someone to sit down and go through money with people to help them make better choices, as well as show people what services they are entitled too.

Appendix C: Analysis of responses

Theme	Subtheme	Example evidence
Increasing demand for support	High service usage, long term need	"every Thursday 100 households"

Accessibility barriers	Transport difficulties, stigma, rural isolation. Limited opening times	“people not wanting to come, feeling like a failure”
Nutritional challenges	Reliance on surplus food, limited fresh produce, storage limitations	“we would love to offer more fresh food” “we have no fridges”
Resource and capacity pressures	Funding shortages, volunteer reliance, infrastructure limitations	“we need around £40,000 a year but we make £12000”
Wider support beyond food	Signposting, community activities, social support	“we have a notice board, community garden and book club”
Limitations of crisis responses	Ongoing dependency, structural poverty, repeat referrals	“peoples situations are often not changing enough”

Theme 1- Increasing Demand For Emergency Food Support

Stakeholders constantly described high levels of demand for emergency food across Lewes. Some places being open 365 days a year and reported usage ranging from 38-100 households. One response highlighting how issues such as housing, money and jobs hasn't changes indicates that food insecurity is closely linked with wider structural and socioeconomic issues.

Theme 2- Accessibility Barriers

Transport being the main one, particularly for those living in rural areas and for those who cannot physically travel to services. One organisation explained that they do not deliver and need people to reveal to them, highlighting the barrier that prevents some individuals from accessing the service. Stigma was also a reoccurring theme, where people do not attend due to feelings of shame.

Theme 3- Referral Systems

Some services operated with open access where individuals could attend without any formal evidence or referrals, however others had a system where the person would need a referral from an organisation.

Theme 4- Nutritional Challenges

Stakeholders described offering fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs and milk as well as some offering cooked meals to people attending. However constantly challenges were identified such as reliance on donated and surplus food, where the variety nutritional quality was often determined by what was donated rather than planned standards, such as the comment explaining they are bound by what they have available.

Theme 5- Food Quality, Dignity and Wellbeing

Linked with theme 4, stakeholders responses suggested that having access to a varied and good quality food may positively affect both physical and psychological wellbeing.

Theme 6- Resource Capacity

Operational pressures emergency constantly, such as lack of funding and volunteers. Particularly prominent was the lack of volunteers and someone to help out with navigation roles to help individuals access wider support services.

Theme 7- Wider Support

Most organisations describe providing wider forms of support beyond food aid alone sign posting to welfare services financial support and community resources was common. One stakeholder explained “if someone is struggling with food insecurities it is very rarely the only thing they are struggling with”.

Overall, the finding suggests that some organisations within Louise district are attempting to move beyond purely crisis based a few provisions and towards more community centre and resilient focused approaches.