



Lewes District Food Partnership

Spring/Summer Report 2026

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Household Support Fund 7 — Emergency Food Network Hardship Fund & Small Grants Programme

Lewes District Food Partnership, hosted by SCDA, received £32,000 through the UK Government's seventh round of the Household Support Fund (HSF7), administered in partnership with East Sussex County Council Public Health. The funding supported two programmes:

- LDFP Small Grants Programme: Good Food East Sussex October Events Fund, and Tackling Food Insecurity Fund
- Lewes District Emergency Food Network Hardship Fund, providing crisis support to households experiencing financial hardship and difficulties meeting the cost of essential items such as food, energy and household equipment

Lewes District Emergency Food Network Hardship Fund

The Lewes District Emergency Food Network Hardship Fund was funded through ESCC via the Household Support Fund and provided crisis support to households within the district struggling to afford essentials such as food, energy and emergency clothing following a sudden change of circumstances.

The fund was open to service users of food projects within the network. Projects could nominate a referral partner — a manager, coordinator or core member of the project — to support applications and reporting.

£6,677 was made available. Each household could claim up to £150, with a maximum of £99 towards utility bill vouchers. Vouchers were purchased through the Huggg platform, including cash vouchers for applicants to buy items themselves.



Applications by category:

Item	No. of applications	Amount
White goods	14	£2,050
Cooking equipment	7	£720
Energy	14	£1,625
Water	1	£150
Food	5	£500
Income loss / support	6	£900
Electronics (e.g. Hoover)	1	£100
Subtotal		£6,045
Hugg admin fees		£627
Total	48	£6,672

The most common items applicants were struggling to afford or replace were white goods (fridges, freezers), cooking equipment (ovens, microwaves) and energy costs, including debt and meter top-ups.

LDFP Small Grants Programme

The Good Food East Sussex October Events Fund was reported in the previous reporting period.

The Tackling Food Insecurity Fund supported 15 community organisations across Lewes District this period:

- Landport Community Hub and Garden – gardening and cookery sessions
- Bishopstone Station Community Hub and Gardens – community food project events
- Sharing Skills – school cookery classes for young people
- Pippa's Group Nursery – healthy eating activities for children and families
- Fitzjohns Community Food – hardship fund and community meals
- We Are The Tree – refugee women's community cookbook project
- SNEEK CIC – development of a food-growing garden for young people
- Havens Food Cooperative – community larder provision
- Lunch Positive – wellbeing hub meals and cookery activities
- Breakwater Academy – school vegetable garden project
- Newhaven Young People's Forum – youth wellbeing café
- Friends of Newhaven Community Food – youth kitchen project
- Peacehaven Community Garden – improved site facilities
- East Hoathly & Halland Community Garden – accessible greenhouse
- Develop Outdoors CIC – composting and food-growing infrastructure



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- Mercread Youth Centre – weekly youth cooking sessions

Funding supported food growing, cooking skills, healthy eating, community meals, youth engagement, food waste reduction, community infrastructure improvements and food resilience projects.

Pinch Points — Year Two

Funded by the Lloyds Foundation, Pinch Points is a collaboration between Lewes District Food Partnership, Church Action on Poverty, Fitzjohns Community Food in Lewes and Malling Foodbank, also in Lewes. The project has just completed the second year of its three-year programme, and aims to give people with lived experience of poverty and food insecurity opportunities to influence local services and decision-making.

Achievements this year:

- Expanded participation, bringing a broader range of voices and lived experience from across the district.
- Delivered participatory workshops on Accessing Support in a Crisis and Community Food and Space.
- Developed plans to submit evidence to the Parliamentary Right to Food Commission, drawing on participants' experiences of food insecurity and accessing community food provision.
- Convened forums bringing together participants, local authority representatives and voluntary and community sector organisations, so that participants' experience could inform service design and delivery.
- Worked with East Sussex County Council so that participant voices informed implementation of the new national Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Attendees said the sessions gave space to views that are often not heard, and that this kind of feedback should continue to shape services going forward.

We are currently working on the full write up and evaluation of Year 2 and will share when this is available.

University of Brighton Partnership: Community Food Mapping of Lewes District

Emergency food provision, food ladders and local resilience — achieving Year 1 of the plan for Community Food Support

We were delighted to partner with Kathy Martyn at the University of Brighton and MA student Elsa Hatton, who produced this report for LDFFP.

Elsa undertook a mapping exercise to identify emergency food providers and community food initiatives operating across Lewes District, alongside stakeholder engagement to understand service provision, accessibility, nutritional considerations and wider support offered alongside food aid.

The mapping identified a network of food banks, community fridges, pantries and community cafés. Provision was concentrated in Lewes, Newhaven, Seaford and Peacehaven, with fewer services in more rural areas.



Conversations were held with emergency food providers and community food organisations on service delivery, demand, accessibility, referral arrangements, food provision and operational challenges.

Stakeholders identified transport difficulties, rural isolation, limited opening hours and stigma as factors affecting access. Both open-access and referral-based models were in use across the district.

Providers reported aiming to offer nutritious food, including fresh produce, cooked meals and options for different dietary requirements, but described challenges from reliance on donated and surplus food and limited storage or refrigeration.

Many organisations provide wider support alongside food, including signposting to advice services, community activities and social connection, and reported collaborative working with schools and other community groups.

The project gives an overview of emergency food provision across Lewes District and the range of support delivered by community organisations. Findings will feed into LDFFP's understanding of local food insecurity, accessibility of provision, the role of community-based food support, as well as the gaps that need addressing.

You can read the full report here: [Community Food Mapping of Lewes District](#)

Newhaven Fishing CIC and Local Food Infrastructure

Representatives from Lewes District Food Partnership were recently invited by Cllr Emily O'Brien, Cabinet Member for Climate, Nature and Food Systems at Lewes District Council, to visit the new Newhaven Fishing CIC facility alongside colleagues from Sussex Bay and Sussex Food Partnerships, to learn about its role in the local seafood supply chain.

The facility forms part of the wider Capturing the Value of the Catch programme, which supports Newhaven's fishing industry through three connected elements: improved landing facilities for fishers, a new seafront restaurant and community facilities to create local demand for seafood, and the processing and storage facility operated by Newhaven Fishing CIC.

The processing facility provides fish handling, storage, processing and distribution capacity, helping local fishers retain more value from their catch and access more efficient routes to market. It is already used by fishing businesses beyond Newhaven, including fishers from Hastings and Rye.

The facility responds to long-term challenges facing the inshore fishing sector, and aims to support fishing livelihoods, strengthen local supply chains, increase access to locally landed seafood and contribute to the economic regeneration of Newhaven.

The visit also covered a reuse initiative in which discarded fishing nets are collected and sent to Ukraine, where they are repurposed to help protect buildings such as schools and hospitals from drone attacks.

A follow-up visit found that fishing boat owners are reporting difficulty finding crew, particularly young people, to learn about the sea, the catch criteria, digital & navigation systems, climate, and the maintenance of fishing gear and craft. This has been raised with SCDA Employability to explore ways to attract and train new crew.



Sussex Six Campaign Launch

Lewes District Food Partnership attended the launch of the Sussex Six Campaign at Middle Farm, Firle, in June 2026. The campaign, run by Natural Partnerships CIC and supported by Lewes District Council, encourages shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants to stock or serve at least six additional Sussex food and drink products, with the aim of strengthening the local food economy, reducing food miles and increasing awareness of locally produced food and drink.

The event brought together local food and drink businesses, buyers, retailers, hospitality providers and local authority representatives. Producers from across the district showcased their products, giving businesses an opportunity to establish new trading relationships. Participants included breweries, bakeries, distilleries, vineyards and other local food enterprises.

Attendees voiced support for the initiative but also raised barriers to being a producer:

- Local products can sometimes be more expensive than mass-produced alternatives.
- Smaller producers may struggle to supply larger orders consistently.
- Businesses may need ongoing encouragement and support to maintain their Sussex Six commitment.
- The longer-term economic and environmental impacts may be difficult to measure without monitoring.

We will be continuing to work with local partners on how we can help overcome these challenges and promote a more sustainable, local food economy.

Explore the [Sussex Six Directory](#) for Lewes.

Wealden Climate Change and Nature Network Launch

The Wealden Climate Change and Nature Network is a new partnership initiative led by Community Action East Sussex, Wealden Food Partnership and Wealden District Council.

The network aims to bring together community groups, businesses and organisations working across climate action, nature recovery and sustainability, to share information, good practice and opportunities for collaboration.

LDFP was one of around 100 people to attend the launch from across the district. The event prompted discussion about closer collaboration between Lewes District Food Partnership, Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA) and other local networks.

Healthy Start Scheme

We are continuing to work with East Sussex County Council on promotion of the Healthy Start Scheme, an NHS programme supporting pregnant women and families with children under four who receive qualifying benefits, including Universal Credit. The scheme provides a prepaid card for healthy foods such as milk, fruit, vegetables, pulses and infant formula, alongside free Healthy Start vitamins.



Uptake depends on eligible families being aware of the scheme and understanding how to access it; increasing awareness and improving signposting were identified as key priorities. We are working with the Healthy Start team on how we can:

- Increase awareness of the Healthy Start entitlement amongst eligible families.
- Clearly explain eligibility criteria and the application process.
- Emphasise the financial support available for purchasing healthy food and accessing vitamins.
- Utilise existing communication channels, including social media, newsletters, community organisations and partner networks.
- Ensure information reaches families who may not currently be accessing support.

Resources received from ESCC include Healthy Start social media content, digital communications resources and further promotional material. ESCC representatives will also be visiting food partnerships for further talks and engagement in the coming weeks, and we are hoping to launch an outreach programme with them in September.

Food Foundation: Healthy Eating on a Budget

We recently took part in discussions led by the Food Foundation, Veg Power and partners on a new digital resource to help low-income households eat more healthily and affordably. The initiative proposes QR codes linking to an online hub of practical recipes, meal-stretching ideas, batch cooking guidance and advice on adding beans, pulses, fruit and vegetables to everyday meals.

Participants agreed messaging should avoid stigma and focus on family-friendly, budget-conscious cooking that makes familiar meals healthier and more filling, with video content, cooking demonstrations and tasting sessions to build confidence in using affordable ingredients such as beans, lentils, frozen vegetables and tinned produce.

The resource will focus on practical ways to add beans, pulses and vegetables to popular dishes such as lasagne, chilli, pasta bakes and cottage pie. Schools, community organisations, housing providers and frontline workers were identified as key partners in promoting the resource. It was agreed the resource should:

- Be digital and QR-code based
- Avoid stigma and "cost of living" language
- Promote familiar recipes rather than "bean recipes"
- Include video, demonstration and tasting opportunities
- Emphasise frozen, tinned and affordable produce
- Support frontline workers with myth-busting messages
- Be adaptable and continually updated through a web-based landing page

We will be exploring opportunities to encourage residents on low incomes within Lewes District to make more use of beans, pulses and vegetables through existing projects and communications, and will share information about the initiative through partner networks, community organisations and support services. Progress will be reported in the next reporting period; promotional resources are expected to be available in September/October 2026.



Digital Bus Shelter Advertising

Lewes District Food Partnership objected to a series of planning applications for digital advertising displays at bus shelters in Seaford, Peacehaven and Newhaven, after being alerted to the applications by a member of the Steering Group.

The objections, submitted on behalf of the Partnership, raised concerns about the impact of increased advertising exposure on children and young people, particularly the potential for digital displays to promote foods and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS). The submission pointed to the fact that such advertising could undermine efforts to create healthier food environments and support healthy weight objectives across the district and drew on precedents such as Transport for London's restrictions on HFSS advertising.

While acknowledging that public health considerations may carry limited weight in decisions on advertisement consent, the partnership considered it important to record its concerns. All of the proposed sites were subsequently granted consent.

Farm & School Twinning Pilot

Lewes District Food Partnership is taking part in a wider Sussex pilot project pairing local farms with schools, giving children hands-on experience of food and farming. In Lewes district, Ditchling Primary has been twinned with Plumpton College's farm, and Kings Academy and Priory School have been twinned with Mays Farm.

A meeting was arranged for June 2026 to bring partners together and review progress across the pilot, including how the twinning visits and activities are working in practice, what children are learning, and how the scheme could develop further.

Findings from that meeting will be reported in the next update.

Lewes Brite Box Pilot

Lewes District Food Partnership has been awarded a grant from Lewes Town Council to pilot the [Brite Box](#) scheme with a local school. Brite Box provides weekly recipe kits for every child in a class to take home and cook with their families.

The pilot is being run in partnership with Fitzjohns Community Food and Wallands School in Lewes, with launch planned for September. The initial pilot will run for one term, and we are actively seeking further funding to extend it across the full academic year.

School Food Standards

Gemma MacFarlane, a member of our Steering Group and parent ambassador for the Children's Food Campaign, recently wrote a blog post for us on concerns about the state of school food standards nationally. Gemma notes that although the government introduced School Food Standards in 2015 — limiting fried and processed food and restricting sugary drinks and desserts — these have not been actively monitored, and standards have slipped since. Wider pressures on school food provision, including tight catering budgets, short lunch breaks, and



limited canteen capacity, alongside the broader availability and marketing of ultra-processed food to young people means that a third of children now leave primary school overweight or living with obesity, and there are rising rates of diet-related ill health nationally.

Gemma has campaigned locally and nationally for improved school food standards, including speaking with MPs at a government round table on updating the School Food Standards, and is calling for improved standards alongside better training for catering and school staff to support healthier choices.

The government is currently seeking public feedback on its review of the School Food Standards.

Read Gemma's full article and feedback opportunity [School Food Standards - Lewes District Food Partnership](#)