

Lewes District Food Partnership April 2023 Update

This month has been a busy one for building links with individuals, institutions and other charities working in the 'food-sphere' in Lewes District. Our work developing the Charter for Dignified Food Support has continued and I have been busy recruiting participants for the 'Feeling the Pinch: Have Your Say' project which will highlight the real stories and lived-experiences of residents experiencing food insecurity. I met with Alex Britten-Zondani from Food Matters about developing an East Sussex approach, acknowledging there are food issues that are county-wide and will need engagement from all four food partnerships in the area.

How are we addressing the priority areas?

How can we move beyond foodbanks and develop a sustainable approach to tackling food insecurity?

- The Lewes District Emergency Food Network continues to support over 500 households every week. All of the projects strive to provide fresh produce and choice wherever possible.
- The EFN continues to work together to find ways to redistribute food when there is surplus, there are now a number of avenues for surplus food that are not foodbanks (including two community fridges in Lewes, and one in Newhaven, and a whatsapp group for last minute 'rescuing' of food).
- Stef Lake, Carl Walker and Ronald Ranata have continued working on a Charter for Dignified Food Support which will be given to the EFN and national groups to comment and feedback on.
- Met with Diversity Resource International to discuss ways of celebrating diversity. An interesting point was made about not 'over-surveying' communities and ensuring there is real value in reaching out in order to avoid tokenism. We have made helpful contacts for translation services and I provided information on how to access food support services as we discussed there are additional barriers for people from some communities to access food support (appropriate food, worried about prejudice & discrimination, feelings of shame etc).

Feeling the Pinch: Have Your Say

- Recruited 17 participants from across the Lewes District (including Lewes, Ringmer, Barcombe, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford).
- First workshop scheduled for the 2nd of May, with subsequent meetings throughout May and June with a final hearing at the end of June where local policy- and decision-makers will be invited to listen to the realities of residents living in the Lewes District.
- Articles to be published in Newhaven Matters, Tenants Voice Magazine and (hopefully) the Sussex Express.

LDFP Small Grants Round 3

- We have distributed £17,500 of small grants to projects across the Lewes District that focus on reducing food poverty, tackling food inequalities (such as diet-related ill health) and building Good Food Movements. We are supporting a healthy snack initiative at a nursery in Lewes which is incorporating food education for kids and parents, two community cafes that improve access to freshly cooked nutritious food, and a number of other projects.

How can connections be fostered to promote community growing, cooking & eating?

- GM has come on as Project Assistant for the Grow Cook Eat Network, working 10 hours a month to develop the network; promoting community leadership, encouraging projects collaborating and working on a newsletter for sharing news in the district.
- She has identified a number of resources that would be helpful for the GCE network including policy templates for project, and a list of local caterers and community kitchens.
- Met with Cllr Wendy Maples to discuss allotments in Lewes Town, many are not in use and there is potential for them being portioned up. We could help promote through LDFP.

How can schools become community hubs for the development of a good food movement?

- Table Talk Foundation who are a Sussex based food education charity that sponsor a chef from the Academy of Culinary Arts. They work with a number of schools in the Lewes District and have recently started a partnership with Plumpton College where they co-funded a brand-new state-of-the-art kitchen which is being incorporated in to food curriculum for students and used by Table Talk to run workshops for school aged children. They are keen to run holiday activities for low-income families (via foodbanks etc) and I have spoken to a director about working on some projects together.
- On the topic of Plumpton College, I went to a second meeting there with the principal and a cohort of lecturers to talk more about the plans for a Community Food project at the campus. I spoke to them about concepts such as pay-as-you-feel and open-access and we agreed that these models were the best way for an inclusive approach to offer food support to students which reduce stigma. They're planning to start a project in the new academic year.
- Had a School Foods Subgroup with members of the steering group and Mari from Albion in the Community who also run workshops and activities in schools in Lewes District (similarly to Table Talk). Mari is very keen on school food and interested to be involved in the subgroup. I am working on creating a list of resources that can be accessed on the website that contain information about good work schools are doing in the district. The minutes to the meeting will be available on the LDFP drop box.
- GM (Sharing Skills CIC) is working with Seaford Head School on developing a community garden project and has meetings with the governing board about the food available in the canteen.
- AM-F is continuing to talk to Priory School about opening up their catering contracts. She works with Green United (a group of students campaigning for sustainable issues, including food waste) and wants to see the school food contract changed in line with the requests of the students.

Communications & Media

- I am in the process of creating a shared drive/dropbox to compile all important documents and minutes so that it is easy to keep up with the work of the steering group and subgroups. Case Study on East Sussex County Council and Food Partnerships published on the Sustainable Food Places website
https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/case_studies/1341/

- Facebook launched @lewesdistrictfoodpartnership
- Met with Ruth Thomson who is writing a book called 'Grown in Lewes' about contributing to it from the perspective of food activism and communities volunteering in food projects

Next steps for May/June

- Steering group meeting on May 2nd
 - Review of steering group TOR and membership
 - Steering group to discuss organisational structure and legal status of LDFP and agree next steps
 - Stef to take part in panel on Achieving Food Justice at Extinction Or Regeneration conference
 - Stef to share draft principles for dignified food support with stakeholders
 - Start the workshops for 'Feeling the Pinch: Have Your Say!'
 - Attend a meeting with the students from Green United to listen to their 'Big Asks' around food waste and sustainability.
 - Attend a county-wide meeting with the 4 East Sussex food partnerships to look at the work of Food Matters to develop a county-wide approach.
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