

Lewes District Food Partnership February 2025 Update

Natalie Pearson, LDFP coordinator

General updates:

- Stef left her role a couple of weeks earlier than planned. Penny has stepped in to fill gaps where necessary as Natalie settles into the Coordinator role.
- Seanne Sweeny will present the LDFP strategy to the Equalities Stakeholder Group Meeting for feedback in March (Natalie cannot do this/attend due to a clash with Pinch Points workshop).

How are we addressing the priority areas?

Develop a more dignified approach to community food support

- In response to news that HSF6 cannot be used to set up hardship funds at emergency food network projects (due to needing to spend money by 31 March), the quantity of Huggg supermarket vouchers for Lewes District food bank users has been increased. This will allow people to have the choice to spend the money on food items that they want, at a supermarket of their choice. Vouchers have been distributed at Denton Island Community Centre, and the EFN have started to fill out referral forms with their members/users for processing and distribution.
- In February's EFN meeting, projects reported concerns about rising running costs and the challenges of delivering an emergency-only, time-limited service in a context where people have come to depend on the food banks for various reasons. Conversations centred around HSF and how the voucher scheme will work. Natalie confirmed the allocation and processes after this meeting, and
- Natalie attended a Feeding Britain webinar on models of combining support services with community food projects, which highlighted some case studies and raised interesting questions to be further shared and explored with colleagues and networks.
- The ESCC cost-of-living leaflet came to LDFP's attention via SCDA colleagues and the COLPAG meeting. Copies have been requested to share with the EFN to support signposting, replacing (for now) the IFAN leaflet that was in the making, to avoid duplication.

Champion a Good Food Culture for Lewes District:

- Natalie has met with all Grow Cook Eat member projects to start building relationships, discuss small grants and gain feedback about desires for the network, its communications and events.
- 14 spring events from the Grow Cook Eat member projects have been lined up through the small grants programme, including gardening workshops, a German food event, the launch of a forest garden, nature wellbeing walks, and the re-launch of a seed-to-supper programme.

- The first Grow Cook Eat network event of the year is being planned for April, offering an opportunity for projects to connect, share, align priorities and strategies, and plan for the year ahead.
- The £15 million DEFRA funding for getting surplus food off of farms was discussed with SCDA colleagues and external organisations. While we ultimately decided not to put in a bid, the opportunity was taken by Hilary Schan to liaise with FareShare and by Natalie to make connections with Sussex Surplus/FeedBack and local farms including Barcombe Nurseries and Ashurst Organics – with whom the Partnership may collaborate with on ad-hoc surplus projects, or other activities.
- With support from Topsy Jewell (LDFP Steering Committee and Seedy Saturday organiser), Natalie wrote a blog on Seedy Saturday in Lewes, the annual seed-swapping event. Potential for LDFP to be more involved in future years?
- Natalie contacted local bakeries about the Real Bread Week campaign – an opportunity to showcase good quality, healthy bread-making – encouraging them to chime into the campaign on social media and add themselves to the national map of ‘good bread’ locations.

Foster Young People’s Connections with food:

- Natalie met with Prept Foundation about working together on cookery skills sessions for children, either based in-school or at Plumpton with a farm tour. They offered a free workshop session for a school and Natalie is working on fixing a date for this with a school that hasn’t already benefited.
- Natalie met with Ashleigh Barnard and Verity Wilde about the HENRY programme and Healthy Start to discuss ways in which the programme can be promoted and uptake encouraged, e.g. through the Seasons social prescribing project, events and signposting via LDFP.

Pinch Points:

- Workshop 2.1 was completed successfully with good attendance by participants across locations. The key themes identified in the analysis of Phase 1 were confirmed as accurately capturing their experiences.
- The Pinch Points team met with funders at Lloyds Foundation to discuss project status, emerging findings, possible challenges and opportunities. A third year of funding was discussed – this may be sought as govt. restructuring may impact the influencing aspect of the work.
- Further work has been done to map key stakeholders and update them on project progress and findings so far.
- LDFP met with representatives from Lewes District Council to brief them on the project and align expectations for next steps re. engagement and influencing.

Engagement with Alliance for Dignified Food Support

- ADFS attended Hastings food bank for two days to interview members and volunteers about their experiences of using the food bank; LDFP supported.

- A training session has been set up with Malling food bank volunteers, following completion of their evaluation. Evaluations have been offered to EFN members.

Other

- Natalie spoke to Maria Stack about the East Sussex Climate Change and Health Impact Assessment and will submit feedback on behalf of the Partnership as she is unable to attend the next workshop on 5 March.

Priorities for March

- Ensure HSF6 funds are spent by end of March.
- Send out LDFP quarterly newsletter, including programme of events
- Begin to create comms plan for LDFP and carry out website updates.
- Create comms, influencing, and monitoring and evaluation plans for Pinch Points
- Launch the Seasons/Foundry Healthcare social prescribing pilot
- Organise dignity training and evaluations with EFN
- Engage with schools network on salient topics and action plan items
- Progress the LDFP strategy towards ratification and publication