



**Stockton-on-Tees
Food Power Network**

**Food Poverty Reduction Strategy
2021 – 2024**



Supported by



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction

This is the first Food Poverty Reduction Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees and it builds on the work already delivered within the Borough to tackle food poverty. Stockton-on-Tees has a thriving VCSE sector and a supportive Local Authority, all with a commitment and desire to strengthen the ability of local communities to reduce food poverty. The Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network (SFPN) is a partnership of community groups, VCSE bodies and the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, aiming to transform the way that communities experiencing food poverty access support, helping people to have long, sustainable lives that are free from hunger.

Our vision is:

Organisations and partners work collaboratively to produce and promote healthy and sustainable food, making the best use of their resources so that food waste and food poverty is eradicated within Stockton-on-Tees

This strategy is supported by the following three key principles:

1. Produce and promote healthy and sustainable food, reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system
2. Build community knowledge, skills and resources that promote healthy lifestyles and financial stability and security
3. Improve catering and food procurement so that more people can access healthy food choices

We are confident that there is a passion and desire within Stockton-on-Tees and its communities to work together to tackle food poverty. We know that there are many groups and organisations that are already undertaking this work, and we recognise that this challenge cannot be met by any one organisation on its own. This strategy aims to bring greater integration of organisations and partners to ensure that within Stockton-on-Tees we work together to maximise resources and avoid duplication.

This strategy provides a framework to bring everyone together to provide dignified food support and a holistic approach to supporting and empowering our communities to be cohesive and resilient.

We want to provide innovative user-led services, which have an eco-friendly bias that moves communities away from food aid and dependence towards dignified and affordable initiatives by creating a healthier food culture that brings people together and improves the health and wellbeing of residents within Stockton-on-Tees.



What do we mean by Food Poverty?

Food poverty is commonly understood as ‘the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet’ (Department of Health and Social Care). Food poverty, or household food insecurity, can be triggered by a crisis in finance or personal circumstances, but may also be a long term experience of not being able to access a healthy diet or afford to eat well. Food poverty, or household food insecurity, has a myriad of faces. It can affect children who lack free school meals during the holidays; parents on low incomes going without food so that their children can eat; working people whose low wages leave them struggling to buy healthy food; or older people unable to prepare meals without support.

The Family Resources Survey introduced a new indicator in 2021 and released data on food insecurity within the United Kingdom, with the North East showing the highest level of food insecurity.

Table 9.1: Households by region/country¹ and household food security status², 2019/20, United Kingdom

Region/Country	Household food security status						Percentage of households		Sample size
	High	Marginal	Low	Very low	Food secure	Food insecure	All		
United Kingdom	87	6	4	4	92	8	100	19,041	
Country									
England	87	6	4	4	92	8	100	13,503	
Wales	88	6	4	3	93	7	100	764	
Scotland	85	7	4	4	92	8	100	2,711	
Northern Ireland	88	4	3	4	93	7	100	2,063	
Great Britain	87	6	4	4	92	8	100	16,978	
Region									
North East	82	7	4	6	89	11	100	748	
North West	83	7	5	5	90	10	100	1,894	
Yorkshire and the Humber	86	5	4	4	92	8	100	1,514	
East Midlands	88	5	4	3	93	7	100	1,266	
West Midlands	85	7	4	4	92	8	100	1,445	
East	91	4	2	3	95	5	100	1,531	
London	86	6	5	3	91	9	100	1,580	
Inner London	85	6	5	4	92	8	100	566	
Outer London	86	5	6	3	91	9	100	1,014	
South East	89	5	3	3	94	6	100	2,073	
South West	89	5	2	4	94	6	100	1,452	

¹ See Guidance tab for Region and Country codes.

² Data in this table should be presented as "87% of households in the United Kingdom have high food security".

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020>



Delivery of the vision

Our vision for collaboration requires us to work together in a number of ways, including:

- Sourcing healthy food, both by growing healthy food and encouraging others to do so, and by sourcing waste food from food suppliers and making it available to households that need it;
- Sharing supplies of food between our organisations, so that it goes to the households that need it most, via the organisations which work closely with them
- Having a mechanism for transporting food supplies between partners in Stockton-on-Tees
- Having an ICT system that all partners have access to, which enables supplies of food to be recorded and tracked, and a record kept of the operation of the different partners within the network
- Having links to partner organisations outside Stockton-on-Tees, which play a part in delivering the vision

The SFPN will support this collaboration and will be coordinated by a Food Power Network Coordinator. The Coordinator will work with Partnership members to support the delivery of the vision. The SFPN has agreed that the Coordinator should be employed by Catalyst, and funding will be sought on an on-going basis to support this half-time post.

How the Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network operates

This strategy will be underpinned and delivered by the Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network (SFPN) whose purpose is to bring partners together to:

- Tackle food poverty
- Promote healthy and sustainable food
- Build community food knowledge, skills and resources
- Reduce food waste
- Create a network of members to share up to date information and areas of good practice

The membership of SFPN consists of organisations or individuals with a current involvement and interest in tackling food poverty within Stockton-on-Tees. The SFPN is structured with three tiers of membership:

1. 'Members' – open to anyone who signed up to the overall principles and agreed to work towards the ambitions of SFPN.
2. 'Project partners' – partners who want to support the partnership with delivery of action plans. It includes businesses, organisations and community groups.
3. 'Partnership Board' – elected by other members on a one member, one vote basis with a maximum of nine members elected. The Board oversees the SFPN, guides delivery, monitors action plans and secures funding.

Current Members of SFPN

- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council - Community Engagement Team, Public Health, Welfare Support, Revenue and Benefits Team, and Family Hubs
- Thirteen Housing Group
- Little Sprouts
- Catalyst
- Cultivate Tees Valley
- Stockton District Advice and Information Service
- Moses Project
- Amal Project
- St. John the Baptist School
- Away Out
- Step Forward Tees Valley
- Five Lamps
- Eastern Ravens Trust
- The Forge
- Party Décor
- Family Action
- Epic Teesside
- St. Michaels Church
- Billingham and Stockton Food Bank
- Billingham Environmental Link Project
- Yarm Business Forum
- Norton Business Forum
- Stockton Baptist Church
- Co-op
- Christchurch Stockton
- Community Partnerships



SFPN is also supported by the seven Community Partnerships, who work to identify and tackle issues in their areas relating to poverty, isolation and loneliness to make the community an even better place to live. A SFPN link has been provided to each Community Partnership to ensure that the benefits of this support and collaboration are maximised.

The three key principles

Principle 1: Produce and promote healthy and sustainable food, reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system

Food is responsible for 20-30 per cent of emissions globally. Combined with habitat loss, our food system is probably the single biggest risk to the health of our planet. At the moment, our diets contain too much meat and not enough fruit and vegetables, pulses and oily fish – this is bad for our health and bad for the planet. At the same time unsustainable farming and fishing are the key drivers of species extinction across the world.

Our diets aren't just about personal choice – the food we eat depends on the options presented to us every day, how much they cost and how attractive they are. Local and national leaders have an enormous opportunity to shape the food we eat and how it is produced, starting with the food served in public sector institutions and the food grown and produced in the UK. A climate-friendly diet is also very good for our health – high in fruit and vegetables and low in meat and dairy, and low in ultra-processed food like sugary drinks.

We want to create a food system that will nourish communities and allow nature to recover, making food in a way that matches a sustainable diet and enables good, real food to be accessible, affordable and promoted.

We believe that to drive a shift towards healthier and more sustainable food requires high public awareness of food issues and widespread participation in food-related activity, by both individuals and organisations.

We believe by changing what we as individuals and institutions choose to eat, we can transform what, how and where food is produced and thus help to minimise any negative impacts on climate and biodiversity. At the same time, by tackling the tragedy of food waste we can balance the need to feed a growing global population while remaining within planetary boundaries.

We want to reduce, redirect and recycle food, packaging and related waste through partnership work to campaign, challenge and influence local policies, strategies and services to support long term healthy and sustainable food businesses and food economy.

We want to enable confident and connected communities through the power of growing food, with a vision to achieving edible town status in the future.

Key to achieving these goals are:

- Communications and events that can inspire people about the role, importance and joy of growing good food;
- Providing opportunities to create community growing areas in unused community spaces;
- Practical engagement opportunities such as growing, cooking and sharing food in every community;
- A facilitated network through which groups and organisations can be part of a local good food movement.

Principle 2: Build community knowledge, skills and resources that promote healthy lifestyles and financial stability and security

Currently, 8.4 million people in the UK struggle to get enough to eat. People experiencing food poverty need adequate incomes and we all need healthier food environments where good food is easily accessible and affordable, and which meets diverse cultural and nutritional needs.

In Stockton on Tees we believe healthy and good food is a right not a privilege and that everyone should be able to eat healthily every day, no matter who they are, what they do or where they live.

We want to work together across sectors to support and empower our communities, ensuring all those in danger of going hungry or suffering malnutrition are able to access nutritious food while working to address the underlying causes of food poverty. We will do this by raising awareness of what constitutes a healthy diet and giving people the skills, resources and support needed to feed themselves well; and change people's food environment – from institutional settings to high streets – to ensure affordable healthy food is available and accessible to all.

We want to draw on the lived experiences of people affected by food insecurity to identify and tackle the issues that contribute to food poverty in a joined up and strategic way, ensuring we provide an holistic approach to supporting our communities from food aid, and providing dignified and affordable options whilst building resilience. Within Stockton-on-Tees we want to help ensure the availability of high quality, culturally appropriate social food provision and ensure take up of Healthy Start Vouchers, Free School Meals and holiday enrichment.

We want to educate professionals and workforces within the public, private and VCSE sectors so they can effectively support and direct those experiencing food poverty and welfare support to emergency food aid at times of crisis.

We want to provide and promote a range of healthy eating initiatives including cooking skills, social prescribing and training at a grassroots level.

Principle 3: Transform catering and food procurement

SFPN aims to review the Stockton-on-Tees approach to food, looking to develop a more sustainable and secure food future – not just for residents but for its businesses too.

We want to create a local cross-sector sustainable food procurement group to bring together caterers, suppliers and other decision-makers to drive, track and promote better catering and procurement policy and practice.

We want to enable procurement officers and catering businesses to source more of their ingredients locally and sustainably through using local supplier directories.

We want to hold and support local food events across the Borough, and support and promote healthy and sustainable food entrepreneurs and independent businesses by identifying training and support to help food businesses improve their sustainability across all aspects of their business.

We want to see local businesses signed up to the SFPN food charter pledging to make small (or large) changes that will help to address locally important priorities.

How to find out more or get involved

If you would like to find out more about this strategy or would like to join the SFPN please contact The Food Power Network Co-ordinator at Catalyst at:

Email: enquiries@catalyststockton.org

Telephone: 01642 733906

