Community Food Services Map

The Community Food Services Map is a valuable resource for members of the public, volunteers and frontline workers, signposting people to services near them. It includes summary information about the type of service offered, eligibility criteria, opening times, etc.

You can find the Community Food Services Map at goodfoodoxford.org/foodmap or by scanning the QR code below.

Extent and causes

Food insecurity ranges from worrying about the ability to obtain food, to hunger and skipping meals (FAO, 2021). We estimate that 8-10% of households in Oxfordshire experience food insecurity, that is between 55,000-69,000 people.

Groups with higher levels of food insecurity include those with health problems or disability (six more likely to experience food insecurity), those severely clinically vulnerable (2x), food sector workers (1.5x) and BAME residents (2x) (Food Foundation, 2021). Average incomes in Oxfordshire are higher than national averages, but this masks severe inequalities. Five of the 86 Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOA) in Oxfordshire are among the nation’s 20% most deprived and seven MSOAs have higher than national benchmarks for child poverty (JSNA, 2021b).

Existing work

Oxfordshire has a long history of community food support and COVID-19 drove a surge in activity to support those experiencing food insecurity. Over 100 community food services, including foodbanks, community larders and fridges and prepared meal delivery services provided support to over 6,000 people countywide (IFGO, 2020). Over 15,000 volunteers have supported neighbours and local communities.

Community food services have worked tirelessly, enabling people to access the support, advice, knowledge and skills that they need to alleviate their struggles and feel a sense of community.

Food poverty is a complex and multi-faceted problem. Working in partnership is key to building strong and resilient communities that can support those vulnerable to it. There are many people and organisations in Oxfordshire working to alleviate its symptoms and tackle the underlying causes. But there is more to be done. If you or your organisation would like to find out more and get involved, please get in touch at mail@goodfoodoxford.org and follow us: @GoodFoodOxford


A Food Poverty Action Plan for Oxfordshire

Report Summary

This summary of Good Food Oxfordshire’s report on food poverty briefly outlines its extent and impact on the county. We touch upon some of the fantastic work already happening locally to support people experiencing food insecurity, and offer a glimpse of the collective action proposed through pledges.

Collective action

Over 40 organisations and individuals have made nearly 70 pledges to tackle food insecurity in Oxfordshire. These focus on three key areas: emergency provision, building resilience and preventing food poverty.

Pledges can be read in full at goodfoodoxford.org/oxfordshire-food-research and at goodfoodoxford.org/food-poverty-pledges

Some of the pledges we have received:

**Emergency provision**

Whilst we began in response to the pandemic, OMA recognises that food poverty in Oxford existed before Covid-19 and that there is an ongoing need for emergency parcel and meal support. We also recognise that multiple barriers exist to accessing support and that statutory provisions may not meet every need. We therefore pledge to continue our emergency food response and to ensure that our service is always free, accessible and non-means tested. We also pledge to build this into a longer term, sustainable model. To ensure that we can be a long-term source of sustainable and inclusive support, we aim to improve our fundraising strategy by applying for more grant funding opportunities as well as working to increase our individual monthly donations.

**Building resilience**

We are grateful for these commitments to collective action. We will continue to celebrate and promote the work already being done to tackle issues around food and to highlight the gaps that the pledges have identified.

**Preventing food poverty**

We pledge to set up a Community Larder in Wantage to increase access to affordable food, making this an open offer and a sustainability choice rather than ‘charity’. We will measure effectiveness by gathering number of larder members and having conversations with / feedback from larder members.

**“The root cause of food poverty is poverty.” – Sustain**

Eight MSOAs in Oxfordshire have a shorter life expectancy than the England benchmark (JSNA, 2021b). In Oxfordshire, health inequalities persist. There is a 15-year gap in male life expectancy between North Oxford and Northfield Brook.

We touch upon some of the fantastic work already happening locally to support people experiencing food insecurity, and offer a glimpse of the collective action proposed through pledges.

Like Sustain, we believe that “the root cause of food poverty is poverty.”

Councils also provided emergency support via community hubs and cash-first solutions via a range of light-touch grants programmes, targeting it where most needed through extensive work with the community and voluntary sector.

Organisations and people across Oxfordshire are keen to support a planned and sustained response to tackle food insecurity, through the pandemic and beyond.

You can find the Community Food Services Map at goodfoodoxford.org/foodmap or by scanning the QR code below.

To make your own Food Poverty Pledge scan the QR code or visit goodfoodoxford.org/food-poverty-action-plan-oxfordshire

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Key recommendations to improve food poverty responses:

- **Commit to adopt a standardised approach to measuring food poverty in the county.** Measure, monitor and report uptake of support to show data, knowledge and experience.
- **Support the development of the Community Food Networks and other informal collaborations and partnerships that promote systems and networks to share data, knowledge and experience.**
- **Continue to fund emergency food services,** acknowledging that ongoing requirements to self-isolate and a complex web of individual situations, including poverty, mean that healthy food retail options are not accessible to all.
- **Support the development of affordable community food retail options.** Support the development of larders, planning and growth agendas that are affordable, sustainable food businesses that are accessible to all.
- **Provide access to more growing spaces and provide resources and training to help residents and communities to grow their own food.**
- **Support and invest in community hubs that are community-led, where people can come together to access food, wrap-around services and advice, share cultural experiences and engage in enriching community activities.**
- **Support the expansion of community-led cooking skills training programmes through access to spaces, support to projects started and funding for coordinators to provide residents with the opportunity to learn and share skills in their locality.**
- **Continue to invest in tools and systems to support access to food and support services** e.g. the Food Larder App, leaflets, recruit support in a variety of formats to ensure inclusivity and reduce discrimination.
- **Expand the roll-out of food poverty training to ensure support is delivered in a non-stigmatising and dignified way, providing choice and upholding autonomy, ensuring culturally appropriate food, ways to access services and communications.**
- **Promote and adopt a living wage** that reflects the real living costs in Oxfordshire and enables people to both live with dignity and buy healthy food.
- **Promote ‘cash-first solutions’ (cash-grants)** as the preferred route for emergency aid, acknowledging that food poverty is just poverty, and when treated with dignity and given appropriate support, people make the best decisions for themselves. This promotes dignity and empowerment, reduces food waste and supports the local economy.
- **Lobby central government to measure food insecurity nationally and to end discriminatory practices, policies and regulations such as No Recourse to Public Funds, benefit cuts, caps and sanctions and elevated thresholds for services.**

What can organisations and individuals do?

- **Pledge an action** You can make a pledge of action to reduce food poverty in Oxfordshire that will be featured on the Good Food Oxfordshire website. To see actions already pledged or to make a pledge visit goodfoodoxford.org/food-poverty-action-plan-oxfordshire.
- **Join the Good Food Movement** If you are an organisation, sign up by signing the Oxfordshire Good Food Charter at goodfoodoxford.org/network. If you are an individual, sign up to the mailing list to receive the Good Food Oxfordshire newsletter: goodfoodoxford.org/get-involved.
- **Join the Community Food Network** Organisations and community groups can join the network in their district to connect with other people working and volunteering in community food projects. Email mail@goodfoodoxford.org.
- **Participate in growing schemes** You could start a neighbourhood growing scheme or support one that already exists in your area. For example the Cherwell Collective’s Harvest @ Home would welcome your support: visit www.cherwellcollective.com email info@cherwellcollective@gmail.com or call 01865 817766. To find a community garden near your workplace you can grow food and meet like-minded people visit the Good to Grow map at goodtogrowuk.org/map.
- **Donate surplus food** Share your allotment or garden surplus with your local community food suppliers. Visit: goodfoodoxford.org/foodmap.
- **Support community larders and foodbanks** Support your local community larder or foodbank with donations of surplus food, money, or through volunteering. You can also make a cash donation whilst shopping online at most supermarkets. To get involved with Fairshare visit: fairshare.org.uk/get-involved.
- **Go to community cafes, lunch and breakfast clubs** Get involved with or start your own community café. One community café that could use your knowledge, time and financial support is Flo’s Café goodfoodoxford.org/cafes.
- **Campaign for change and sign petitions** Sign up to support local and national campaigns to reduce food insecurity such as eENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY, the Russell Trust’s HUNGER FUTURE FUTURE, 5WeeksTooLong, Bite. Back 2030, Children’s Food Campaign, Oxford Living Wage Campaign, Older People’s Food Campaign, Feeding Britain: A Hunger Free UK. Sign petitions on websites such as change.org and 38degrees relating to fair access to food and income security.
- **Fundraise and/or awareness raising events**

In the UK, hunger isn’t about food supply, which is plentiful. It’s about the significant national and local income inequality (Loogstra & Lalor, 2017, Sustain 2021). Food insecurity is anything from ‘worrying about the ability to obtain food’ to ‘reducing quality and quantity of food and skipping meals entirely’ (FAO, 2021).

**Food insecurity:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food insecurity level</th>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Severe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at risk</td>
<td>Worrying about the ability to obtain food</td>
<td>Compromising quality and variety of food</td>
<td>Experiencing hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At risk</td>
<td>Reducing quantities, skipping meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 5,000 people regularly access community food services across 76 locations in Oxfordshire. This includes foodbanks, community larders and community fridges (GFO, 2020). We conservatively estimate that 8-10% of households, or 55,000-69,000 people in Oxfordshire are experiencing food insecurity.

An estimated 15.3% of all adults find meeting monthly bills/commitments a heavy burden or are regularly in arrears with bills (LG inform, 2018). This equates to 85,725 people (JSNA, 2021).

7 MSOAs in Oxfordshire have higher rates of child poverty than the national benchmark (JSNA, 2021b).

From January 2020 10,127 children were eligible for Free School Meals (JSNA, 2021a).

After housing costs 21% of children live in poverty (JSNA, 2021a).

In 2019 there were an estimated 131,400 people living with disability or long-term illness who are significantly likely to experience food insecurity and 61,100 unpaid carers (JSNA, 2021).

Groups with higher levels of food insecurity nationally:

- Limited a lot by health problems/disability x5 compared to those with no health problems/disabilities
- Severely clinically vulnerable x2 compared to average
- Food sector workers x1.5 compared to non-food sector workers
- BAME x2 compared to white British (Food Foundation, 2021)

**Causes and impacts of food insecurity:**

- **Struggling in school & work**
  - Absences
  - Concentration and focus
- **Economic**
  - Job losses/Insecurity
  - Low wages
  - Debts
- **Food insecurity**
  - Quantity over quality
  - Skipping meals
  - Reduce fresh food to avoid waste
- **Health problems**
  - Mental and physical health
- **Poor nutrition**
- **Hard choices**
  - Heat or eat
  - Bills or food

In Oxfordshire the average house price is almost 26x that of the National Living Wage and most rentals exceed monthly income of the National Living Wage.

Oxford is the least affordable city in the UK with regards to housing (Oxford City Council, 2020)

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