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Food Power

Final Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Food Power was a four-year programme led by Sustain and Church Action on Poverty, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). It aimed to strengthen local communities' ability to reduce food poverty through solutions developed locally with the support of their peers from across the UK, and a focus on tackling root causes. The approach centred on local alliances, giving voice to those experiencing food poverty, influencing practice on the ground and levering in additional resources.

This report presents findings of evaluation of the final year of Food Power, presenting insights from a survey of alliances and interviews with case study representatives. It also looks back over the whole programme to provide a picture of progress and cumulative impact of Food Power's activity.

What has Food Power delivered?

Food Power has delivered beyond initial expectations in terms of number of alliances supported and range of support engaged with.

- 85 alliances around the UK have registered with Food Power.
- 88% of alliances report having a food poverty action plan in place or in progress demonstrating that organisations are cooperating locally to develop collaborative activity.
- All activities delivered to share resources and facilitate learning continue to have high levels of participation, including 33 regional learning networks supported by peer mentors.
- 76% of alliances report they have been influenced to involve experts by experience in their work; experts have also been involved at a national strategic level via Food Power.

How has Food Power supported alliances?

Local alliances have consistently reported that Food Power has been of value in supporting their work. Across the programme, alliances have drawn on the support and resources provided by Food Power and reported that they find the activities they engage with to be valuable.

- 94% of alliances report that Food Power has impacted at least one of their activities, demonstrating that the approach and advice it has promoted is having local influence.
- 63% of alliances say Food Power has been 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' valuable for them.

In a context where alliance members face constant pressures on their time and struggle with capacity it is significant that they continue to engage with Food Power activities – they would only opt to do so if judged worthwhile.

What has been learnt about core activities?

Each year the evaluation has looked in detail at experiences of engaging with support offered through Food Power. The most recent case studies considered three areas of activity.

Experts by experience

This has become one of the defining achievements of Food Power, with an impact more than the sum of its parts. It has helped shift ways of 'thinking' and 'doing' work on food and poverty among academics, policy makers and practitioners. The presence of experts by experience has led to greater reflection about whose voices are recognized as valuable in policy discussions. Key findings are:

- For those involved as experts by experience, participating in Food Power has been highly rewarding, particularly in terms of personal development and accessing new opportunities.

- Success has been driven by key individuals going 'above and beyond' and reliant on voluntary labour. Future projects involving experts by experience should be fully resourced and offer routes for payment-in-kind.
- As Food Power draws to a close, the relationship between local alliances and experts requires reflection, with support needed to realise longer term opportunities for collaboration in local and national networks.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring offers a space for like-minded people to share alternative approaches to common challenges. It brings structure and greater visibility to existing networks, making them more accessible to newcomers. Key findings are:

- Learning through peer mentoring has value for project design and delivery and also for supporting organisations' broader motivations for tackling food poverty.
- Alliances involved in mentoring were concerned about the programme ending and the network losing valuable experience, knowledge, and momentum.

Local Evaluation Pilots

Food Power supported 7 local alliances to pilot local monitoring and evaluation, with activity tailored to their level of progress and priorities. Resources and tools have been shared to enable other areas to apply similar approaches. Key findings are:

- The evaluation pilots demonstrate tangible impact on understanding and relieving food poverty in certain areas.
- Financial support for staff time to consider their approach to evaluation and develop skills was highly valued by alliances.
- Alliances gave very positive feedback about networking and learning opportunities.

Food Power supported alliances with provision of an Impact Tracker that can be easily implemented and learned from, which encouraged reflection on partnership working, in turn helping alliances progress local action on food poverty.

What impacts have Food Power and alliances had locally?

The model of local food poverty alliances has been adopted widely, with Food Power supporting local actors to collaborate effectively. Alliances have consistently reported that Food Power has influenced how they work to address food poverty, offering inspiration and learning for innovative solutions. Whilst it is difficult to trace the direct impact of Food Power's influence on levels of food poverty, there are clear examples which suggest the benefits of more coordinated local action.

The impacts of Covid-19 pandemic created additional pressures on those working to address food poverty. Food Power funding enabled alliances to make a difference during the pandemic, particularly in cases where staff had dedicated time to develop a project or aspect of the partnership. Food Power supported alliances in developing alternative models for tackling food insecurity, a particular challenge within the emergency aid context of the pandemic. Reflecting on these experiences revealed particular lessons about the local alliance model:

- The nature and scale of the emergency response led to new alliances being formed and existing alliances being re-formed to best respond to changing local contexts and food poverty landscapes
- Food Power supported alliances with advice and best practice to navigate national guidance and a range of concerns around food provision and coordinating responses.

- Local alliances can respond well in times of acute crisis; ongoing support will be needed to maintain the value and potency of this infrastructure.

What impact has Food Power had nationally?

Food Power's national impact is perceived to relate to driving work on lived experience, creating a network which facilitated exchanges, being a collective voice for organisations, and awareness raising on food poverty. Food Power is considered to be central in the landscape of national action on food poverty, distinguished by the impact of its partnerships approach and work with people with lived experience. Food Power has created a specialist niche through its strength in combining grounded knowledge of local responses to food poverty and a broad perspective capable of influencing national action.

How can Food Power support future action on food poverty?

Local alliances and other actors agree a need for support akin to that offered by Food Power to continue in future. In particular, mechanisms are required to ensure that valuable learning built up across the network is retained and shared further.

- Future financial support is needed to enable alliances to continue to operate in alignment with their core values. Alliances would appreciate funding that allows for staff time for aspects of a project or partnership to reach greater levels of impact.
- Other activity aiming to tackle food poverty is ongoing across the UK but lacks the specific focus and strengths of Food Power. This leads stakeholders to perceive a need for continued activity of the type it has delivered.
- The exact nature of future delivery is to be decided; it could usefully focus on groups or locations under-represented to date, or take a more campaign oriented approach.

Conclusions

Findings reported here suggest good progress across all outcomes identified at the initiation of Food Power. Alliances give wide ranging examples of how Food Power has enabled more effective and coordinated activity in their areas. In particular, the programme has supported exchanges of learning and ideas between parts of the UK, and encouraged local actors to participate in this capacity building. Attention to engaging experts by experience and delivering evaluation has also influenced local action in many alliances.

It remains challenging to demonstrate impact on the most fundamental need - levels of food poverty in the UK. However, there is reason to be confident that Food Power has contributed positively to this. Food Power's work at the national and local level demonstrates characteristics of an approach likely to generate collective impact on a complex systemic problem. Food Power has acted as a backbone organisation, coordinating action to tackle root causes of food poverty. A collective impact perspective highlights that to continue having an impact, the exchanges and coordination enabled by Food Power entails considerable work of coordination and communication which depends on an adequately resourced backbone organisation.

1. Introduction

Food Power was a four-year programme led by Sustain and Church Action on Poverty, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. It aims to strengthen local communities' ability to reduce food poverty through solutions developed locally with the support of their peers from across the UK. The approach centred on local alliances, giving voice to those experiencing food poverty, influencing practice on the ground and levering in additional resources. The four-year programme aimed to support the development of more coordinated, long-term and sustainable approaches to tackling food poverty. For details on Food Power delivery and theory of change see the Year One Evaluation Report.

Researchers from Cardiff University were appointed as external evaluators for the project. The evaluation team take a collaborative approach to working with the project partners and beneficiaries, whilst maintaining independence as academic researchers able to provide credible evidence of impact. This report presents findings from the final year of evaluation, reflecting on Food Power's progress across the programme. The report aims to answer three fundamental questions about Food Power's impacts:

- How has Food Power supported alliances?
- What impacts have Food Power and alliances had locally?
- What impact has Food Power had nationally?

It also considers what is revealed about future needs for supporting action on food poverty in the UK beyond the life of Food Power. Additional case studies and themed reports from the evaluation team can be found here.

2. Evaluation Methodology

The aims of this evaluation remain as detailed in Year One. Key evaluation activities delivered for Year Four were limited by Covid-19 related restrictions on travel and meeting in person so included:

- Survey of lead contacts for local alliances – the fourth annual survey was completed online, targeting all registered alliances participating. A summary of findings are included here with comparison across previous years to track change across the programme.
- Case studies – sample alliances have been investigated to understand in greater detail the impact of working with particular aspects of Food Power. These were researched through interviews with key stakeholders.
- Stakeholder perspectives – Food Power's national impact and position were investigated through two focus groups with the staff team, and interviews with representatives of other organisations working on food poverty in the UK.
- Supporting pilots of monitoring and evaluation – the team supported Food Power staff and local alliances completing pilot activity, and investigated the impacts of this through a workshop with participating alliances, and interviews with two case study alliances.

The evaluation team also revisited data reported in previous years in order to identify trends across the programme's life.

3. How has Food Power supported alliances?

3.1. Food Power Activity and Progress

This section summarises the programme's key outputs, as indication of the progress made against ambitions agreed at inception. Across the targets set Food Power has made good progress with many significantly exceeded. By June 2021 there were 85 alliances registered with Food Power, compared with the original target of 32. However, some alliances contacted by the evaluation team in spring 2021 reported that since registering they have ceased activity. The high number of active alliances – remains well above the target number, demonstrating the overall scale of achievement. Of particular note are:

- 88% of alliances report having a food poverty action plan in place or in progress demonstrating that organisations are cooperating locally to develop collaborative activity.
- All activities delivered to share resources and facilitate learning continue to have high levels of participation, including 33 regional learning networks supported by peer mentors.
- 94% of alliances report that Food Power has impacted at least one of their activities, demonstrating that the approach and advice it has promoted is having local influence.
- 76% of alliances report they have been influenced to involve experts by experience in their work; experts have also been involved at a national strategic level via Food Power.

Table 1: Summary of progress against programme outcomes

Outcome	Outputs	Indicators (Target)	Key Achievements
1. Local alliances have greater skills and capacity to develop coordinated community-based plans to reduce food poverty	Local cross-sectoral alliances established and/or supported across the 4 nations of the UK and local food poverty action plans developed	Number of alliances supported through the programme (32) Number and type of members and partners within each alliance	85 registered alliances around the UK, against a target of 32
1a. Local alliances report improved levels of collaboration between local food poverty projects and develop coordinated food poverty reduction plans		Number of alliances report increased levels of collaboration and/or produce an area-based food poverty action plan or equivalent (6/yr) Number and type of members and partners within each alliance	88% of alliances report having a food poverty action plan in place or in progress. 45+ food poverty action plans are hosted on the Food Power website
1b. Local alliances report that their increased levels of collaboration have had a direct and positive impact on people in food poverty		Number of alliances report positive impacts of collaboration (5/yr)	31 of those surveyed in Year 4 report that Food Power has impacted at least one area of their activity.
2. Local alliances are able to apply learning from other projects or initiatives from across the UK to	Local project partners are made aware of other relevant projects around the UK	Number of downloads, website views, newsletter recipients and webinars attendees	All those surveyed in Year 4 report using at least one form of resource.

enhance their own ability to reduce household food insecurity locally		Positive feedback from users Number of local alliances using these resources (100%)	The programme has delivered a total of 28 webinars, 8 national workshops and 4 national conferences, 33 regional learning networks 10 peer mentors have offered 1-1 support during the programme 1671 subscribe to the newsletter 844 people registered for the Food Power Festival in May 2021
2a. Alliances report they have improved their own services as a result of learning derived from the project		Number of alliances reporting specific examples of service improvements and the impact this has on selected households/ individuals (2/yr)	94% of alliances said Food Power positively impacted their progress.
2b. Alliances are able to implement and showcase specific interventions		Number of alliances implementing a high-quality exemplar intervention (100%)	Alliances have delivered over 85 projects with National Lottery Community Fund financial support
3. Individuals with direct experience of food poverty play an active role in identifying, and advocating for, long-term solutions to the issues they face	People experiencing food poverty are enabled to play an active role in setting the agenda and priorities for their local alliance	Pathfinder programmes, involving grassroots people in each area delivered and evaluated (15 local alliances, 8 people each)	Alliances report experts by experience were involved in 120 activities across the 4 years. 76% of alliances report that they have been influenced by Food Power to consider how to involve experts by experience.
	A network of people with personal experience of food poverty are able to play an active role at both local and national level	Number of individuals enabled to play an active role locally (120) Number of. with an engagement at national level (30)	Experts by Experience have worked with Food Power at a strategic level speaking at national events and providing evidence to policy makers and politicians.
3a. Individuals report they are more active within their local alliances		Number of individuals reporting increased activity within alliance (5/ alliance x3)	73% of alliances report Food Power has helped progress more collective working with alliance members/partners

4. Local food poverty partnerships are better able to monitor, evaluate and improve the impact of their interventions on both crisis food needs and long-term household food insecurity	A range of monitoring, evaluation and learning tools for use by local food poverty partnerships developed and made available	Number of alliances testing new monitoring, evaluation or learning tool (4 alliances / year)	7 alliances concluded pilot projects to develop approaches to local evaluation. The Food Power Collective Impact Tracker was developed and shared.
4a. Local food poverty partnerships can evidence the impact that they are having on household food insecurity locally		Number of local partnerships able to reliably evidence the impact they are having at town or borough level (30)	91% of alliances report that they are collectively evaluating their work.
4b. Local food poverty partnerships evidence increased effectiveness in addressing household food insecurity locally		Number of local alliances reporting improvement in their impact at household level (8)	67% of alliances report Food Power has helped progress collaboration to have positive impacts on food poverty

The next table presents results from Year 4 with those from the first year of Food Power activity. Findings suggests there has been sustained engagement with the programme core activities and that alliances continue to find value in the activities and support it leads. Although some indicators show a decrease in levels of perceived impact or influence these are not significant given the relatively small sample. Such a pattern might also be expected given that alliances influenced by the initial phases of Food Power activity embedded this in their work so may not have had scope for further improvement.

Table 2 Comparing outcomes in Years One and Four

Outcome	Indicators	
	Year One	Year Four
1. Local alliances have greater skills and capacity to develop coordinated community-based plans to reduce food poverty	1. 49 alliances registered. • All alliances surveyed have engaged with some form of support offered by Food Power. • All alliances surveyed are working on at least two core activities suggested by Food Power 2. 76% of surveyed alliances have a food poverty action plan in place or in progress. 3. All alliances surveyed report that Food Power has impacted at least one area of their activity.	4. 85 alliances registered 5. All alliances surveyed have engaged with some form of support offered by Food Power. 6. All alliances surveyed are working on at least two core activities suggested by Food Power, with 65% working on half of the activities or more. 7. 88% have a food poverty action plan in place or in progress. 8. 94% of those surveyed report that Food Power has impacted at least one area of their activity.

2. Local alliances are able to apply learning from other projects or initiatives from across the UK to enhance their own ability to reduce household food insecurity locally	• 93% of surveyed alliances stated that Food Power has had some impact on their progress. • 90% of surveyed alliances stated that Food Power has helped them learn from others. • 89% of surveyed alliances stated that Food Power has influenced how they tackle food poverty.	• 94% of surveyed alliances stated that Food Power has had some impact on their progress. • 88% of surveyed alliances stated that Food Power has helped them learn from others. • 79% of surveyed alliances stated that Food Power has influenced how they tackle food poverty.
3. Individuals with direct experience of food poverty play an active role in identifying, and advocating for, long-term solutions to the issues they face	• 4 alliances are piloting activity to involve experts by experience with support from Food Power. • 79% of surveyed alliances have considered how to involve experts by experience as a result of Food Power.	• 94% of the alliances surveyed have made steps towards involving experts by experience. • 75% of surveyed alliances have considered how to involve experts by experience as a result of Food Power.
4. Local food poverty partnerships are better able to monitor, evaluate and improve the impact of their interventions on both crisis food needs and long-term household food insecurity	1. 89% of surveyed alliances have planned, commenced or delivered collective monitoring and evaluation.	2. 91% of surveyed alliances have planned, commenced or delivered collective monitoring and evaluation.

This year's survey asked alliances to report on their development across the past four years or since they registered with Food Power. A majority of those surveyed (n=33) indicated a change in their structure, membership or mode of operating. Seven new alliances are still working out their mode of operating. Some alliances felt they are more established now, either through having a food poverty action plan or having a coordinator in post. Some have expanded or changed the type of their membership. Some of these changes arose in response to Covid-19 as local organisations were pushed to collaborate in different ways or partnered with new networks which developed as part of the crisis response. When asked how Food Power has helped alliances in their development, responses were: enabling learning from others (n=9), producing online resources (n=4), providing financial support (n=2) and inspiring them to involve people with lived experience in strategic work (n=1). These developments suggest that the local alliance model is flexible, capable of adapting to suit varied membership and in response to changing circumstances.

The following vignette illustrates how Food Power has influenced activity in one local area, to give a sense of how activity has evolved the lifetime of the programme.

Food Power in Blackburn with Darwen 2017 – 2021

Over the 4 years of the programme, Food Power has helped build local capacity in Blackburn with Darwen by bringing together organisations which had not previously worked together in a practical way to address food insecurity. These include Public Health bodies, hospital trusts, housing associations, mental health groups, children and youth support services, growing projects, and primary and secondary schools.

The process of developing a food poverty action plan, for example, has acted as *"the catalyst to building the relationships, and trying to just raise the level of conversation about food poverty and our relationship with food generally."*

Thinking in terms of food poverty alliances in Lancashire began county-wide but over time became focussed on alliances focused on different parts of the county:

"In this area it is not very effective to bring together all stakeholders for collective discussions, so instead specific groupings are convened, or key individuals are consulted for their links to particular communities".

Governance structures in each locality evolved to fit the issues and stage of development. Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance formed in 2017. It took a focus on working with young people with lived experience of food insecurity, and built on existing local relationships to further develop the approach and practices around tackling the root causes of food poverty.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, an existing sense of trust and understanding built up over the 4 years of partnership, meant that relationships were not being formed from scratch to respond to the crisis:

"What the Covid crisis has done has brought organisations within Blackburn with Darwen together that weren't natural collaborators. And they've looked at how they together respond to crisis. And many of those are now involved in the Food Alliance".

The alliance has "*given a banner for everyone to work under and together*". *"[It] has grown in strength and numbers during the pandemic and has helped manage the transition out of crisis mode effectively".* The effort entailed has proved worthwhile:

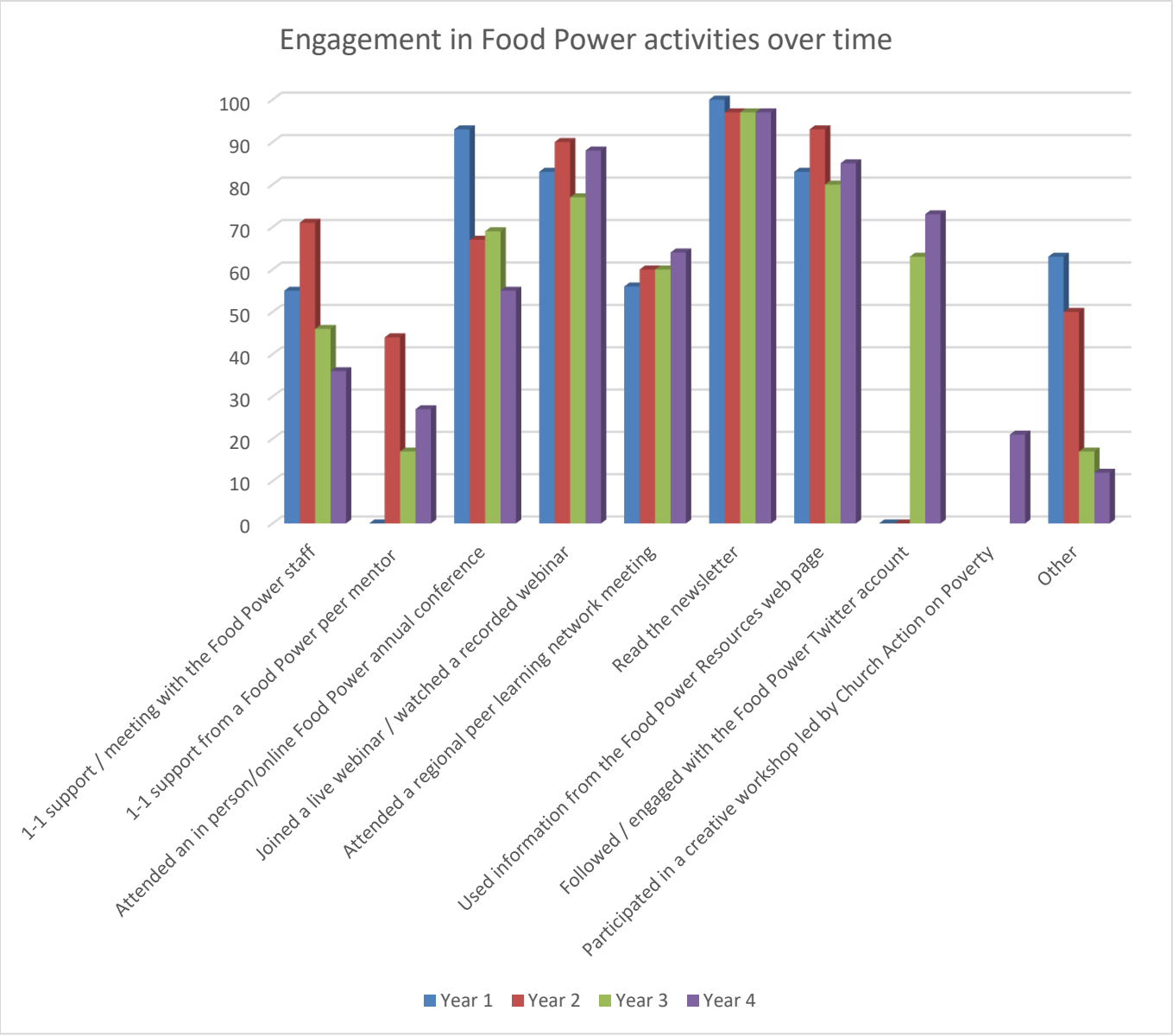
"Forming a new alliance is never easy, but co-producing a film of the young people has made an immediate impact on key audiences and has encouraged key contacts to join the alliance. We never imagined how powerful this work would be. Support from Food Power has helped us to develop effective and appropriate methodologies to engage young people".

The alliance, now re-formed as the Blackburn with Darwen Food Resilience Alliance, emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic with new leadership from a local councillor and with engaged young people alongside a range of alliance members. Food Power has helped guide the search for an appropriate food alliance structure for the locality. The programme has supported testing different models, building capacity and relationships locally, and building on existing activity to further the approach and practice of tackling food poverty within and beyond Lancashire.

3.2. Supporting local alliances

The scale of Food Power's achievement is indicated by consistently high levels of alliance engagement with its activity and the support offered over the four years of the programme. In the Year 4 survey, 97% of those surveyed reported reading the newsletter. A high proportion also participated in offers requiring more active engagement: 88% reported joining a webinar and 85% said they have used information from the website. These levels of engagement suggest alliances find the resources provided by Food Power to be accessible and useful. It may also be that alliances have been encouraged to engage as they hear how others have found this support valuable.

Figure 1 Engagement with Food Power activities across 4 years



Survey findings suggest alliances value the Food Power resources they have engaged with. It is notable that some reported the difficulty participating in activities due to the lack of time or capacity. This is particularly significant given a recurrent theme across the evaluation research: that people in

local alliances are constantly struggling to manage workload and pressures on their time. That they make time to engage with Food Power in such a context illustrates that they find it a valuable use of scarce time.

Summary:

- Food Power has delivered beyond expectations in terms of number of alliances supported and range of support engaged with.
- Across the programme, alliances have drawn on the support and resources provided by Food Power and reported that they find the activities they engage with to be valuable.
- In a context where alliance members struggle with capacity it is significant that they continue to engage with Food Power activities – they would only opt to do so if judged worthwhile.
- Programme flexibility was critical so that the team could effectively support alliances across their evolution and as they responded to the impact of Covid-19.

4. What has been the value of Food Power support?

Across its delivery Food Power has implemented a range of focused initiatives designed to meet particular needs or support specific dimensions of alliance development and working. The evaluation has worked to understand how each of these supports alliances, and to gain some sense of their relative strengths and impacts. Reflecting on Food Power's approach, a Food Power team member said the programme's "general objective around learning and sharing information around the network…has gone well." The diversity of programme offerings has enabled a wide range of alliances to build capacity, networks and exchange knowledge. The team are conscious of the need to provide information in a range of modes to enable sharing across the, whilst balancing this with the importance of avoiding overwhelming local alliances with too much information.

This year's evaluation case studies focused on two areas of support Food Power have focused on: peer mentoring, experts by experience and local evaluation.

4.1. Peer Mentoring

Peer mentors are available to all registered alliances, offering advice and support, and facilitating peer learning in their region. Mentors work with established and emerging alliances to overcome challenges, support on-going development, and build upon success after initial consultation to understand their specific needs. Most meet quarterly through Regional Learning Networks (RLN). In Year 2, 44% of alliances surveyed had received 1-1 support from a peer mentor, 17% in Year 3 and 27% in Year 4. This level of participation reflects the intensity of this mode of support and that mentors only have time to engage with a relatively small number of alliances. In terms of involvement in regional peer learning networks, levels of engagement went from 52% of alliances surveyed in Year 1, 60% in Years 2 and 3 and 64% in Year 4, indicating growing involvement across the programme. Those that have received peer mentoring support have found it highly valuable: participation in peer learning networks received the most responses when asked which support had been most valuable.

Peer mentoring focuses on coordination, connection and collaboration, and draws on well-established networks of contacts. One of the peer mentors involved in the programme suggested the role is about making connections between alliances to support exchange of resources and good practice.

> "X asked me about a cascading diagram that I remembered Brighton and Hove doing which is where it says if you are in food crisis and you are a refugee, go here; if you are so and so go here. It's one of those flow charts – if yes go here, of no go here. So I was talking about this and that meant she was interested in that cause they were trying to do something themselves so I said no need to reinvent the wheel, here speak to X she knows what she's doing. So I see my role a bit more as a coordinator than a mentor. I don't feel they really need mentoring in that classic sense but at the same time if anyone just wants to vent or just go oh my god what's going on I'm there for them. So that's how I'm doing my role."

Mentoring sessions were tailored to suit alliances' needs, respond to their time constraints, and aimed to remind alliances that they do not face challenges alone. Meetings were especially helpful for connecting new organisations with others with particular expertise, geographical proximity, or common challenges, and sharing experience across a range of political contexts and rural and urban places. The network is not only about sharing ideas; it also increases visibility and can lead to different forms of collaborative activity.

The peer mentoring programme has developed over the four years, to better respond to the ways peer mentors and the Food Power team are supporting alliances' efforts and to improve how information is communicated between them. Food Power was highly praised for the collaborative culture across the network, of which peer mentoring is an element. In some ways it is difficult to distinguish the impact of peer mentoring as a discreet element within the range of formal and informal peer support processes facilitated through Food Power. Exchanging learning between alliances is a feature of many activities, for example webinars and the annual conference, making peer learning a core part of how Food Power supports action. The added value of peer mentoring is a regional approach which draws on shared understanding of particular regional challenges, and how ongoing relationships allow trust to develop meaning organisations are more open about difficulties they face.

Summary:

- Peer mentoring offers a space for like-minded people to share alternative approaches to common challenges.
- Peer mentoring brings structure and greater visibility to existing networks, making them more accessible to newcomers.
- Learning through peer mentoring has value for project design and delivery and also for supporting organisations' broader motivations for tackling food poverty.
- Alliances involved in mentoring were concerned about the programme ending and the network losing valuable experience, knowledge, and momentum.

4.2. Experts by Experience

Food Power has been central to the wider turn towards participatory justice in food and poverty debates. Experts by Experience activities have been developed across the UK, with particularly visible engagement focused in the North West and North East of England, (Blackburn and Darwen and Newcastle respectively), Oxford, and Plymouth. For the 33 local alliances that completed the Year 4 survey, Food Power is shown to have been integral to involving experts by experience. There remains considerable variation in how experts by experience have been involved in discussions, activities and

decision making across alliances, with 30% of respondents saying their alliance has made significant progress working with experts by experience while 21% have made little progress or remain in early stages of development. Here we identify key achievements of Food Power's work with Experts by Experience and identify a series of challenges and areas for reflection.

4.2.1. Experts by experience: Key achievements

A series of key achievements were highlighted by experts both within and beyond:

- Influencing national conversations through media exposure (e.g. Channel Four, Radio Four), film (e.g. Darwen Gets Hangry, Edgelands) and written articles (e.g. Joseph Rowntree, Human Rights Watch), and through the Children's Future Food Inquiry young ambassadors;
- Attending and speaking at academic, activist and policy conferences, including theEnd Hunger UK conference, ENUF conference, Church Action on Poverty events, Food Power conference (Cardiff), Charitable food provision as an emergency response conference (Birmingham), and Why Hunger conference (North Carolina);
- Media training and codeveloping the Leapfrog tools that were used to initiate conversations about food poverty;
- Sharing knowledge, skills and ideas for projects with those in other areas; and
- Engaging directly with policymakers and politicians, including, giving evidence at a House of Lords Select Committee and speaking at the Conservative Party conference.

They noted some of the achievements associated with Food power:

> 'I think the profile of the Darwen Gets Hangry campaign has been a massive massive thing. That has gone across the country. They've been over to the States for goodness sakes. We didn't think that when we were stood outside Darwen market. With a banner.' (Alliance in the North of England, 2021)

> 'I'm so proud of the girls! X is like a world famous media star now. She's been a Young Food Ambassador. She's been on TV with Emma Thompson, met Marcus Rashford. Been to Pittsburgh. What those girls haven't done (Alliance in the North of England, 2020)'.

> 'Media stuff going around with… I mean when we went to the House of Lords X sat next to Heidi Allen [MP] and invited her to Newcastle. Yeah, so she's finally coming to Newcastle, but X turned around and said "you have no idea how we have to live", now Heidi Allen quoted that in the Houses of Parliament.' (Expert, Alliance in the North of England 2019).

> 'Now it took us a while. But we actually got her to come up to Byker. Her and Frank Field. Had a look around stuff in Byker, and we took them to the pantry, which is something we have that's run by the Church, and they were impressed. Now Heidi Allen actually turned round off the record to X and said "I'm really sorry cause I was part of the Universal Credit gang that wanted it. I didn't realise that this is how bad it would make people live."' (Expert, Alliance in the North of England, 2021).

For people with lived experience, involvement with Food Power has boosted confidence, developed skills and created opportunities:

> 'I can public speak now, where I could never before. At the first conference we did I was a shell … [in a conference last year] we had to run two workshops because the first one was so full … Because everyone wanted to listen to us. And that is massive. It wasn't a very big group, we only had maybe 30 people, but that's 60 people that actually wanted to come and listen to

what I had to say. When you're not used to this type of thing you're thinking, f*** me! These people want to listen to what I've got to say!' (Expert, Alliance in the North of England, 2021).

They also understood their involvement in Food Power as encouraging others with similar experiences to speak out:

'researchers and everything are great but unless you know... walk a mile in my shoes, you know, you don't know what it's like and this is where we benefit because we've done it, we've been there. We know how hard it is to share stories, you know, we know how proud people are which is why us being an expert it's not just about sharing our story it's also helping other people share their stories' (Expert, Alliance in the North of England, 2019).

4.2.2. Experts by experience: Learning and Challenges

A key message from the evaluation research was that developing strong relationships between alliances and experts takes considerable time, skill, and resource. Interviewees pointed to the central role of Ben Pearson of the Food Power team who supported and coordinated this work:

'It was a success in Darwen because of [Ben's] previous relationship with the school. He was a trusted party, he believed passionately in what he was doing therefore went the extra mile for it … But it was never going to be a stand-alone programme with the level of funding [the alliance in total had received £20k from Food Power over four years] … Absolute credit to Ben, he's been marvellous with it. This wouldn't have happened without Ben. But similarly he needed the raw materials. And in those girls in particular, he's had them. And I think the whole of Food Power has benefitted from the profile of those girls' (Alliance in the North of England 2021).

'I think they should have employed two of Ben' (Expert, Alliance in the North of England 2021).

There was an impression among interviewees that alliances 'successful' in this work had full time paid staff, whilst in reality most are run by part time workers or volunteers. Funding arrangements made it difficult for alliances to employ a dedicated person to work with experts by experience long term:

'I think people underestimate the amount of energy that goes into creating strong relationships. You've got to keep them warm and that takes time and it takes energy … ideally, it needs someone who can drive it and you'd be looking at a total cost of 40-45 grand. And that's my sort of charity reckoning, to get somebody reasonably competent in a local authority it might be more. (Alliance in the North of England 2021).

'My time was entirely given voluntary, and that's what I chose to do. And if it was fully resourced it would have been completely manageable. But [alliance member] was being funded but she was kind of underfunded really … Because invariably it always takes longer than you think: emails, communications, speaking to people in person ... I thought Food Power was an incredible programme. We have small amounts of funding. It's quite a faff. The time to submit another funding bid. But in fact the amount we achieved with a very shoe-string resource was phenomenal really and I guess this is the case across the food space really, more often than not, people are not being fully recompensed for the time and effort them put in, and they don't always want to because people volunteer and there's that funny tension' (Alliance in the South of England 2021).

One option future support is to concentrate resources in fewer places ensuring time and energy for experts by experience.

A second issue emerging was that incidental costs incurred during activity involving experts by experience were not always covered up front. This led to worry about unexpected costs (e.g. missed train, delays, food and drink). They suggested a pre-paid credit card topped up for hours contributed to Food Power would avoid this. Cash payments are difficult for those experts in receipt of Universal Credit and other legacy benefits, so future programmes might explore renumeration that does not count as income or is not paid into a bank account. On rare occasions, experts were expected to travel significant distances for meetings and conferences, leaving people physically drained. Budgeting for overnight accommodation as the default would help avoid such impacts or avoid long travel in a day.

A third challenge is the issue that experts were well received nationally but on a local level felt like 'prophets in your own land' where it has **'**taken too long for their voices to be heard'. Tensions also remain as to the extent to which the priorities of people with lived experience actively shape local alliance 'decision making, and at an equal power level' (Alliance in the South of England 2021). For example, one expert initially felt they had a strong voice in setting the agenda in some local alliances, but this was complicated by a round of funding related to Covid:

> 'I didn't even know there was more funding coming out. I wasn't even asked … And it was £2,500. What for? Not something new [name] was going to do, or [name] was going to do. You were going to ask someone like me to do. So you were getting £2500 for doing it. And I was doing the work that wasn't paid for. You know what I mean? … You've always got the ones at the top who pass everything down and down and down. I mean the Council do exactly the same. Because they say… do you know anyone who can do this… or do you know anything about this one?' (Expert, Alliance in the North of England 2021)

The combined difficulties of funding, access to organisations such as schools, and shared vision within Local Alliance tempered the potential of involving Experts by Experience in some areas:

> 'And latterly it's been more difficult to get into schools [since Covid] … So I think as the alliance has been reforming … frankly it was like pushing a bolder up the stairs. We had the initial money, it worked for a while, but it's been tough. And its only through Covid and coming together, and [alliance member] seeing the light, it's taken me 2 years, so once she's seen the light and grabbed it, it's ok. And its motored. And so the two are slightly out of sync. If [alliance member] had grasped it when I really wanted her to two years ago, then there would have been much more input from a stronger gang of young people.' (Alliance in the North of England 2021).

Finally, Covid has led to retention problems among experts by experience given lack of access into schools and other community groups and the difficulties of fostering cohesive group dynamics virtually:

> 'I mean one of the challenges has just been Covid and not being able to have access to the schools, so that really has been an issue, where we haven't made as much progress as we might have liked, keeping the momentum going in schools, and keeping the food poverty discussions going in different groups in schools.' (Alliance in the North of England)

Redirection of energies into Covid emergency food provision and bids for new funding has meant for some 'experts by experience has had to take a bit of a back seat' (Alliance in the South of England 2021).

As alliances consider options beyond Food Power there are questions about how work with experts by experience is retained or grown in new institutional and funding arrangements, recognising that short term grant funding might compromise their vision and way-of-working. This is important given the initial difficulty alliances faced in recruiting experts by experience and overcoming project fatigue:

> 'I don't recall an issue other than comments made by community members asking well what's this going to lead to? And why should I make an effort? And I've seen things before and nothing changed as a result. And it's that fatigue aspect and it seems to be the same people turning up

> for things and it's that exhausted feeling of asking the same person questions or slightly different questions, I guess that's the worry (Alliance in the South of England 2021).

If expert by experience activities come to end, it might reproduce the very sense of weariness and suspicion Food Power sought to address.

The Food Power team also reflected on the impact of this activity. Underestimating the resources required and over-reliance on certain individuals to support alliances in working with people with lived experience was felt to limit its depth. One Food Power team member reflected on the need to involve people with lived experience within organisations from the beginning – including in design and governance, rather than 'sub-contracting out':

> 'I think some of the other places saw it perhaps as a separate additional thing, I think that's when it becomes problematic, if it's not core to what you do, whereas in X the alliance was started, I think, with people with experience and then they invited professionals to join them, rather than the other way around, so I think that's probably quite a powerful lesson.'

As they reflect: "I think it's a classic thing where you... say we wanted to empower people to talk about food poverty, you've already set the agenda so that's not very empowering is it?" However, in cases where working with those lived experiences has been successful, it has made significant impact: "we know empowering people with lived experience has an impact in some form, whether that's individuals, but potentially to the local response to food poverty, if not national."

Summary:

- Experts by experience programme is one of the defining achievements of Food Power, with an impact more than the sum of its parts. It has helped shift ways of 'thinking' and 'doing' work on food and poverty among academics, policy makers and practitioners. The presence of experts by experience has led to greater reflection about whose voices are recognized as valuable in policy discussions.
- Sharing advice among peer mentors and direct support of Food Power staff has been invaluable to alliances seeking to develop and expand work involving experts by experience.
- For those involved as experts by experience, participating in Food Power has been highly rewarding, particularly in terms of personal development and accessing new opportunities.
- Success has been driven by key individuals going 'above and beyond' and reliant on voluntary labour. Future projects involving experts by experience should be fully resourced and offer routes for payment-in-kind.
- As Food Power draws to a close, the relationship between local alliances and experts requires reflection, with support needed to realise longer term opportunities for collaboration in local and national networks.

4.3. Local Evaluation Pilots

Food Power financially supported seven local alliances to pilot evaluation activity over two years. Alliances were able to plan how they wanted to evaluate their work, with approaches varying according to their stage of development and current priorities. All were asked to engage with specialist expertise such as an academic partner. They participated in three workshops run by Food Power and the evaluation team which provided advice on potential methodologies and tools, and facilitated knowledge exchange between alliances. During the pilot period the evaluation team developed a tool focused on understanding the collective impact of local food poverty alliances. This was explored at several points with the alliances to gather their feedback and inform refinements.

The final version is now available for any alliance to use: Food Power Collective Impact Tracker. Other tools and resources used by the alliances have also been collated and shared between alliances. This year's survey found that 91% of alliances are working to collectively evaluate their work.

As a key element of support provided by Food Power to local alliances, the Tracker proved to be adaptable according to capacity or priorities, was easy to use and share, supported alliances' action planning by identifying gaps in activity or delivery, and was used alongside a range of other evaluation tools. The Tracker has a clear, systematic methodology which can be used for individual project evaluation, and supported professional skills development for those engaging with it. It was successfully used to demonstrate impact to participants and funders. For example, in Middlesbrough, the evaluation framework helped progress local action by identifying gaps and informing action plans:

> "So the time we spent doing the evaluation, was this amount of time looking at this data, analysing this data, evaluating your alliance... But what it did was it gave me tools to go back into the other role, which was funded to run the Food Power alliance and make changes within the alliance, and with the alliance, that actually impacted people. So just having that allocation of time, and that outline of what I needed to do, and a toolkit that advised me of gaps, so when I worked through the toolkit I would find that I didn't have any evidence for one particular point. So why haven't I got any evidence, have I missed that point? And then it helped me build the action plan, and amend action plans, because actually we weren't looking at this. We didn't know we weren't looking at it until we worked through the toolkit".

Sharing local evaluation approaches and tools through the network was shown to build alliances' capacity and the network as a whole, in particular in relation to understandings of lived experience of food insecurity. Brighton and Hove Food Partnership reported that as part of the group of Local Evaluation Pilot alliances they made progress developing their thinking on how to evaluate the impact of their strong partnership approach. This partnership used elements of the Tracker alongside ongoing monitoring and evaluation including an Emergency Food Network Survey which has been run annually since 2014. They use these results to better understand and support organisations distributing emergency food and those who are experiencing food poverty. Data collected during the Covid-19 response was used to demonstrate the nature and scale of the additional support delivered.

Despite the huge challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, progress made through local evaluation pilots is notable. Local alliances, and the Food Power team, adapted to a new level of crisis and new ways of working. Alliances were positive about the support received from Food Power, appreciated the resources and advice, and noted the value of learning from around the UK. The local evaluation pilots built successfully on feedback from previous years, with the Tracker proving to be a valuable and flexible resource. Questions remain about how to measure the impact of strength of partnership.

Summary:

- The evaluation pilots demonstrate tangible impact on understanding and relieving food poverty in certain areas.
- Financial support for staff time to consider their approach to evaluation and develop skills was highly valued by alliances.
- Alliances gave very positive feedback about networking and learning opportunities.

- Food Power supported alliances with provision of a Tracker that can be easily implemented and learned from, which encouraged reflection on partnership working, in turn helping alliances progress local action on food poverty.

4.4. Which Food Power activities have been most valuable?

Across the evaluation, alliances have given consistently positive feedback on how Food Power deliver support, and its value to their work. This year 63% of alliances reported Food Power has provided 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of value for them. All elements of the programme and modes of activity have had positive feedback. The team have also been consistently praised for their ways of working and expertise. It is perhaps not surprising that alliances particularly welcome financial support received from Food Power, given that most report struggling with resources and capacity. However, it is clear that this is not the only support valued and that those who have not applied for or received funds still value their involvement with the programme. Each year some alliances approached for the evaluation have reported that they have not been very engaged with Food Power, or do not regard their organisation as very connected with it. It is difficult to assess the extent to which this is due to inadequacies within the programme rather than preference or context of less engaged groups.

Across the four years, evaluation findings have found the most valuable activities identified by alliances include: regional peer networks; one-to-one support; webinars and conferences; resources on the website. Many alliances mentioned that all resources were very useful and they were unable to select the most or least valuable. Resources and activities have enabled alliances to work and learn at different scales and across themes, with peer-to-peer learning and mentoring particularly enhancing local alliance capacity. Key areas in which Food Power was felt to assist alliances to achieve impact include: opportunities to exchange and implement good practice; opportunities to work collaboratively to have positive impacts, and inspiration for innovation. Participating in the programme was also felt by some alliance members to provide impetus to work strategically. It was particularly noted that drawing attention to gaps in public health and council policies and strategies can help drive action forwards.

The majority of alliances agreed that participating in the programme has created new networks and enhanced credibility and power to influence and lobby. As one alliance member noted:

> "The support has been much more than financial and we have developed the network and also raised our game in terms of best practice and increasing our connections and partnerships."

As may be expected, those alliances not receiving financial support or mentoring found Food Power less valuable to them.

According to the Food Power team financial support, learning and sharing amongst alliances, peer mentoring and empowering people with lived experience are found most useful for alliances. As a team member noted:

> "I think people have found… financial support very useful, unsurprisingly, I think especially where it's brought in a bit of match funding or helped them just achieve something…you can get 10k and actually deliver something together, that's been good…the regional learning

networks…have really worked where they've worked, being able to support people together virtually and face to face worked better in some areas than others."

The team member does acknowledge the difficulties at times in matching supply and demand for one-to-one support from peer mentors and from the Food Power team:

"sometimes it's been hard to match supply and demand, you know alliances want some one-to-one advice just when we might find it hard to do or peer mentors have found it hard to understand who needs what, when."

A further point noted by the team member was the idea of having a clearer set time in the year for taking new alliances through the programme so that there is a more structured approach – "making sure we are genuinely on the same page".

Summary:

- Local alliances have consistently reported that they find support offered by Food Power to be valuable, and that programme activities are well designed and delivered.

5. What are the impacts of Food Power's support on local alliances?

Evaluation data suggests a good range of impacts arising from engagement with Food Power. Consistent across every year is the finding that the strongest effect relates to implementing good practice and being more innovative (Figure 2). Working collaboratively with members has also steadily increased, as has involving experts by experience. Numbers of alliances citing impact on attracting new members/partners and developing a food poverty action plan have decreased, as may be expected given that these activities would be more significant in early stages of alliance development.

5.1. Benchmarking Alliance Progress

For Year 4 we repeated a benchmarking exercise to gain a picture of all alliances' progress relative to each other and as a total cohort of Food Power beneficiaries. Alliances were asked to give self-assessment of progress across a range of activities which might be considered typical for them to work on, or which are known to be ways such groupings seek to achieve collective impact. Their degree of progress was indicated on a scale from 'not considered at all' up to 'delivered'[1] (Table 2).

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[1] These responses are grouped to into three stages which indicate relative progress:

- Stage 1: not considered or planning to start
- Stage 2: starting or in progress
- Stage 3: making good progress or delivered.

Figure 2 Comparing Food Power's impact across the programme

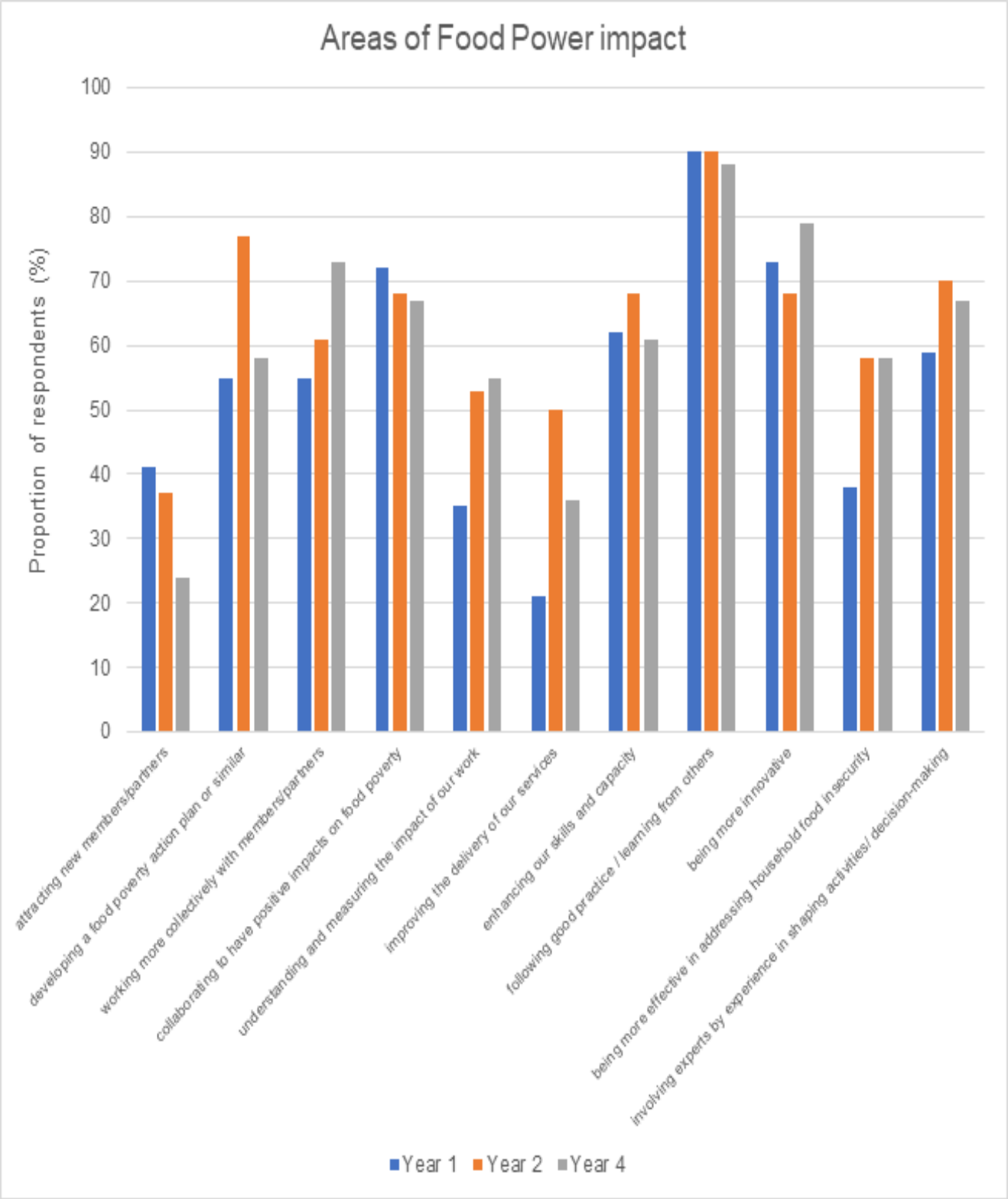


Table 3 Alliances' progress on key activities (Year 4)

Statement	Progress (% of alliances)			
	Stage 1 (Least progress)	Stage 2	Stage 3 (Most progress)	NA
We have a collective food security / poverty action plan or similar	6	36	52	6
We work to mentor other local alliances	39	18	24	12
We work to involve experts by experience in our discussions / activities / decision making	21	48	30	0
We monitor and evaluate our work as an alliance / progress with our plan	9	64	24	3
We participate collectively in external networks or groups	6	21	73	0
We work collectively to seek to influence local policy	12	30	55	3
We work in partnership or strategically with statutory groups or structures	3	21	76	0
We have an agreed set of principles/approaches for tackling food poverty/insecurity	9	42	48	0
We produce collective communication materials	24	30	45	0
We work collectively to measure local food poverty/insecurity.	15	39	42	3

What this benchmarking exercise reveals is complicated by two factors: a relatively high proportion of new alliances registering during 2021, and the impacts of the pandemic on what alliances have aimed and been able to deliver. Unlike in previous years, statistical testing found that alliances' score *did not* increase with age as may be expected. Equally, there does not seem to be an association between score and whether an alliance has received financial support from Food Power or elsewhere. Even alliances less than a year old achieved scores that put them into the 'developing' range. This may be explained by effects of a pandemic, where many new groups were quickly established and may have become rapidly involved with local policy making and partnership with statutory organisations. It could also be a result of Food Power and the alliance model being more established nationally, meaning younger alliances are more quickly establishing systems and activities by applying good practice shared from more established ones. We also know that the pandemic has placed considerable pressures on all alliances and their members, in many cases resulting in focus on core emergency response. Restrictions on in person meetings and zoom fatigue further curtailed the extent of peer-mentoring for fledgling alliances in Years 3 and 4. This could also explain why 'older' alliances have been less involved in activities which would have increased their score, hence a more even spread across age groups.

Across the evaluation, it has been apparent that a focus on experts by experience has emerged as a particular feature of Food Power, regarded as a strength which has had considerable impact on local activity. Taking an average across the four years of evaluation, 73% of alliances report that they have been encouraged by engagement with Food Power to consider how to involve experts by experience. By this year, 94% of alliances reported at least some progress with involving experts by experience in their activities and/or decision making.

The survey asked for self-assessment of how each alliance is progressing its specific ambitions. Of those who had maintained a goal from previous years, four alliances have delivered on their

ambitions, which included establishing an alliance, creating their action plan or delivering some actions from it. The remaining alliances felt that they are making progress towards their goals, with only one 'starting out'. All were hopeful that in the next year they will make even more progress.

5.2. How has Food Power supported alliances' work?

Comments from alliances explain how Food Power has benefited alliances work and progress. Funding was highlighted as key factor, as many stated that without it they would not be able to achieve the majority of their aims:

> "We wouldn't have developed a food poverty action plan without the support and funding available."

> "The obvious one is funding - projects like the Food Related Benefits training which has been rolled out to 150+ frontline workers is hopefully making a huge impact. But the support e.g. knowing what to focus on, coming up with ideas, holding us to account was also fundamental."

Many alliances also stressed that Food Power provides more than financial support, including information and contacts, which is equally invaluable:

> "Food Power really have given us the tools to lift our Partnership up and allow us view the best practice and make life long useful contacts."

> "It's important to be part of a network and to be able to call upon support when we need it. The information and advice we receive from [Food Power] is really useful."

Many highlighted the positive impacts of being part of a network. It allows them to collaborate and forge stronger partnerships, which results in high level of confidence and support:

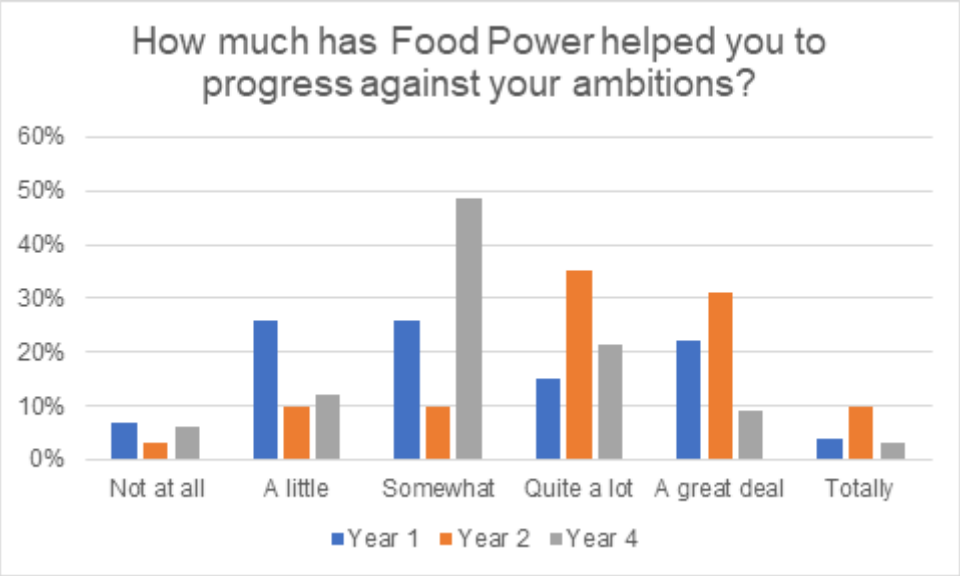
> "Resources made available by Food Power has helped us get others on board with developing an action plan and thinking about how to collectively address food insecurity. Having central 'standards' for measuring progress helps when encouraging partners to collect data and look at the bigger picture/ impact of our work."

Again, this type of assessment may indicate that Food Power attracted organisations already inclined to working collaboratively, rather than converting them to the value of this approach. However, the continued growth in number of registered alliances and recent influx of new ones suggests rather that over the course of the programme the value of collective action has been promoted convincingly. Some alliances in early stages of development said it is too early for them to ascertain the impact Food Power has had for them. It is worth noting that to some degree it may be inevitable that alliances engaging with Food Power report enacting the programme's priorities – those not aligned with its approach are less likely to engage.

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on how much they attributed progress against their objectives to Food Power with results suggesting they have made a difference: 48% of respondents felt that Food Power has somewhat impacted on them progressing their aims, with another 30% believing the impact 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal'. Overall, 31 alliances declared that the programme has impacted on their progress. As Figure 3 shows, in Year 1 and 2, a greater proportion of alliances said Food Power has helped to advance their goal 'quite a lot' and 'a great deal' compared to Year 4. Similarly, in Years 1 and 2 more alliances noted that the overall value of Food Power has been 'a great deal' or 'totally' helpful in progress towards their ambitions compared to Year 4. This may reflect that in early years Food Power helped a number of alliances make substantial progress (e.g. setting up an alliance and developing a food poverty action plan) whilst in Years 3 and 4, support for was geared

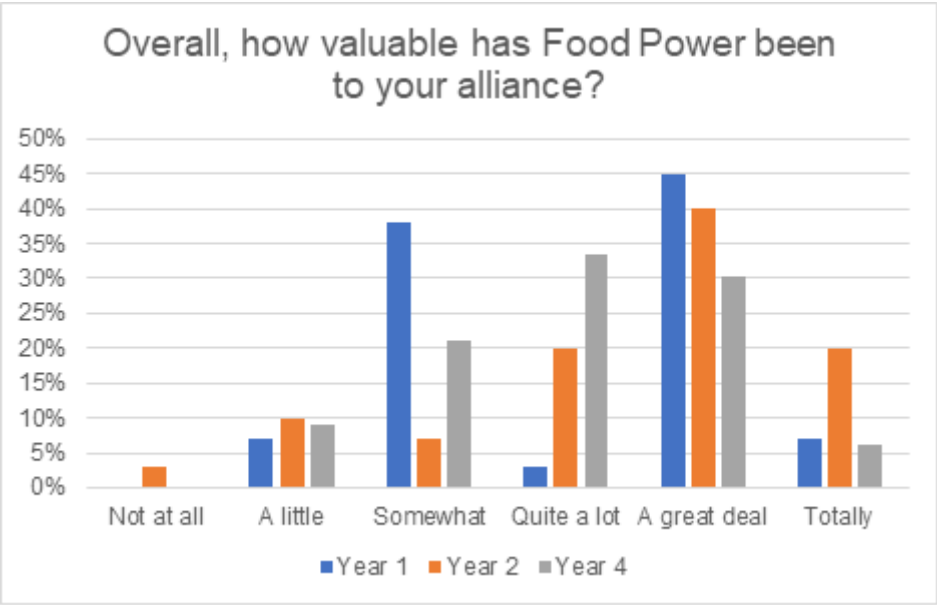
towards capacity-building within existing alliances, whilst support was disrupted due to the pandemic. Local activity shifting to focus on emergency responses could be a further reason why fewer alliances were able to progress their ambitions in Years 3 and 4.

Figure 3 Proportion of alliances stating various levels of impact of Food Power on progressing their ambitions



In Year 4, when reporting on the overall value of Food Power 63% alliances said Food Power has provided 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of value for them (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Proportion of alliances reporting various levels of value of Food Power overall



Overall the Food Power team are positive about the outcomes of the Food Power programme. As one of the team members reflects, “what has worked is the idea of forming local alliances”. Food Power exceeded the original target of 32 registered alliances, with 85 alliances now registered. Whilst acknowledging variation in how local alliances work, they are confident that there are cases where local alliances are working successfully together to make joint decisions and develop joint projects. They do however note a current evidence gap regarding why some local areas haven’t adopted the local alliance model.

The Food Power team recognise the benefits of information sharing across alliances although this is hard to quantify. As one of the team noted: “we've definitely seen how people sharing information with each other has had a positive impact in terms of them feeling like they've learnt from other people…but again it's then slightly hard to track the actual impact on food insecurity in their area because that's just beyond our scope in a way.” The Food Power team acknowledge the difficulty of quantifying impact – especially when unexpected events such as the pandemic will have further skewed any data collected.

Summary:

- The model of local food poverty alliances has been adopted widely, with Food Power supporting local actors to collaborate effectively.
- Local alliances have consistently reported that Food Power has been of value in supporting their work.

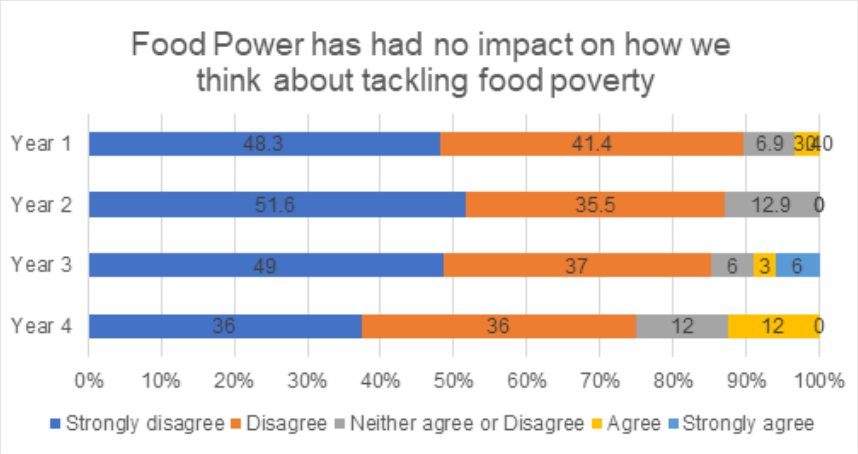
6. What impacts has Food Power had locally?

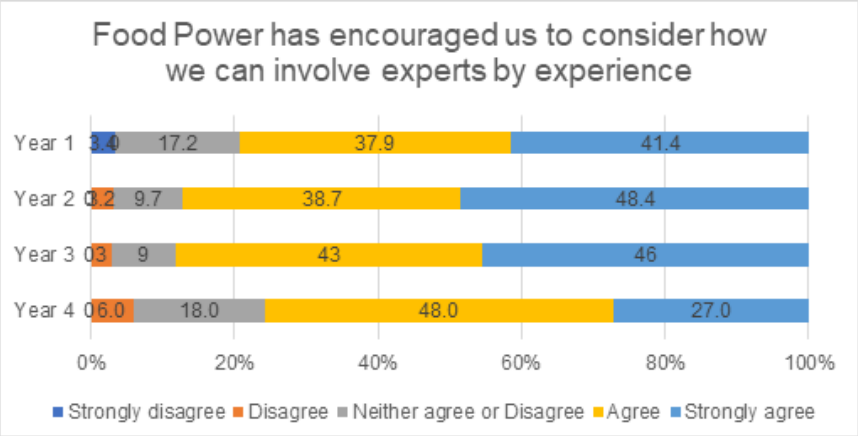
6.1. How has Food Power influenced local action on food poverty?

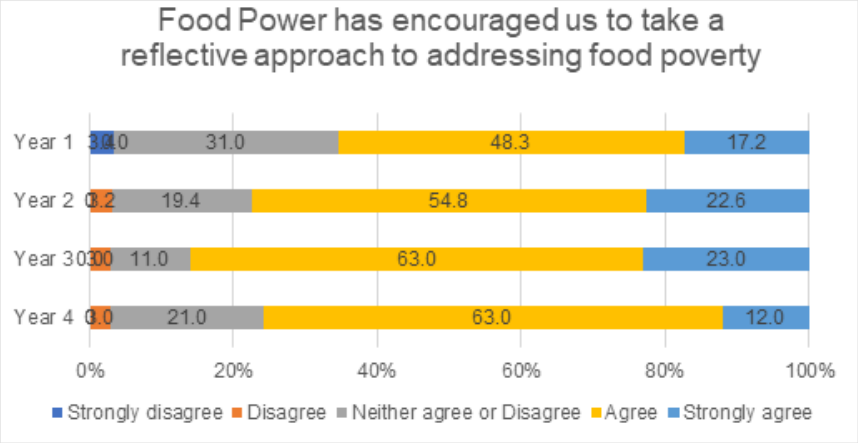
Central to Food Power’s aims is to encourage action on the root causes of food poverty through changing discourse and practice. There are good indications that this has been successful and that the ethos promoted by the programme has been taken up by alliances (Figure 3). This year’s survey confirms that Food Power has continued to have an impact on how alliances tackle food poverty. The strongest area in which they identified Food Power’s influence is in relation to involving experts by experience, with 76% of respondents agreeing (and third of those ‘strongly’) it has made them consider how they might do this. Similarly, 78% alliances agreed that Food Power has encouraged them to pursue activities to address the root cause of poverty and take a reflective approach.

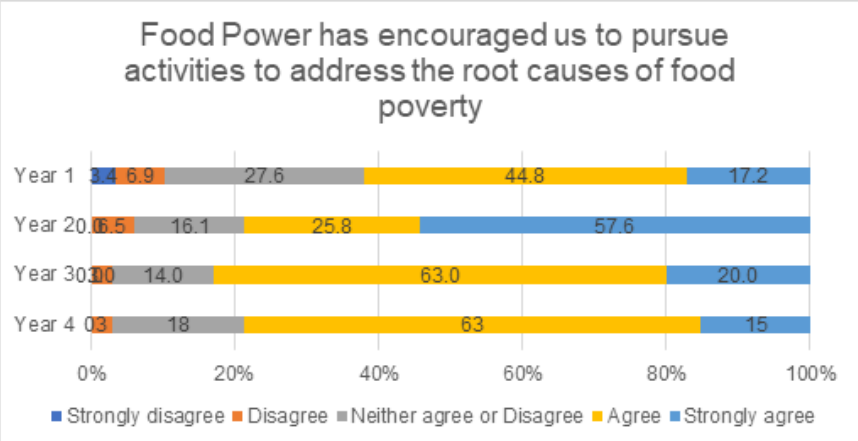
Across the life of the programme there is an overall increase in reported impact of Food Power on alliances’ ways of thinking and working, as Figures 5 –8 show. For example, 78% now agree Food Power has encouraged them to act on root causes of food poverty, compared with 62% in Year 1. However, it seems that across the years the strength of responses regarding Food Power’s influence has decreased. For example, in Year 2 48% of alliances ‘strongly agreed’ that Food Power encouraged them to consider how to involve experts by experience whilst this year just 27% stated this. Perhaps if alliances noted a strong impact in early years, the influence decreased over time as they would have already adopted the changes.

Figures 5-8 Comparing Food Power's impact on tackling food poverty across the programme









Alliances continue to report that Food Power has enabled them to address challenges which make it difficult to act on food poverty. The two mentioned most often this year (n=11) was a lack of resources (funding and staff capacity) and structural inequalities at the root of poverty. For practical examples of how Food Power has helped to overcome barriers see Table 4. More generally, alliances appreciated support in sharing learning, guidance and other resources and having Food Power core team as a 'critical friend'.

Table 4 Example of barriers and how has Food Power support helped to overcome them

Barrier	Examples of Food Power support
Lack of awareness of food poverty	Food Power team member attending a local event; raising public and political profile nationally
Rural challenges	Resources on rural issues; webinar with the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN)
Lack of capacity, funding	Financial support for a coordinator or a key project
Lack of joined up thinking	Webinar on triaging
Covid-19	Flexible approach to financial support

Alliances have been encouraged by Food Power to focus on working to tackle the root causes of food poverty and have taken a range of approaches to this, including cash first, healthy eating, education, co-creation, mutual aid, and community participation models. A good example of Food Power's influence in this regard is the Eco-shops in Middlesbrough. These were created by combining the alliance's local knowledge with learning from Sustain's sustainability guidance and Food Power's anti-poverty resources to create Eco-shops that address unmet need for affordable healthy food:

> "Probably the biggest change we've made is the ability to develop Eco-shops, a stigma-free poverty intervention. We're massively proud of it. […] people tell me how invaluable it's been. And how much they're supported. And that's what it's about. And them not feeling lesser of a person for it. That's the biggest achievement from Food Power" (Middlesbrough Food Partnership representative).

It is true that other initiatives have also been encouraging action beyond the food bank during the life of Food Power, but for alliances which have engaged with the programme it is likely to have been an influence.

6.2. What has been the impact on levels of food poverty locally?

Across the evaluation research alliance members reported that Food Power has enabled a more strategic and focused approach to addressing food poverty. However, alliance members noted the difficulty of evidencing the difference it makes to work collectively as an alliance:

> "I think statistically, it's going very difficult to measure any impact because there are so many things that are driving the situation in the opposite way of how we would like it to be".

This year survey respondents were asked to identify how Food Power had made a difference in their area. Roughly a third of those answering identified impacts on ways of working or influencing the approach taken to working on food poverty. Four of those replying said the greatest local impact related to raising the profile of food poverty through the existence and work of an alliance. Three alliances specified delivery and support mechanisms supported through Food Power which directly improved things for people in food poverty. For example:

> "In the last year the Unicef funding [supporting Food Power for Generation Covid projects] has made a really big difference locally. Families have benefitted from free fresh fruit and veg. This food has also helped to engage food banks in thinking about how they run their service and the range of food they provide. Our monthly food bank meetings are now well attended and we are starting to see more interest in working to adapt services to better support people (and perhaps move beyond the foodbank)" (Survey respondent).

Of those answering this question, two suggested there was no specific impact to report either because it was too early to say or as a result of a conscious decision to emphasise engagement with other networks.

Alliances have provided examples of how they think working collectively has made a difference to those experiencing food poverty in their area. For example:

- In Luton the alliance led to a more collaborative approach to liaising with retailers to collect surplus food.
- In Dorset Food Power helped the alliance become "more robust, to think more creatively" which sped their progress and enabled them to secure additional funding through Public Health Dorset, therefore expanding their reach.
- Newcastle Food Poverty Group helped service providers become more aware of each other's programmes, avoiding clashes and meaning each organisation could provide coherent advice which reinforced to potential beneficiaries the opportunities available.

Such enhancements may not be visible or tangible to people in food poverty, but alliance members suggest that they help ensure people receive more coordinated and consistent support.

Looking across the evaluation findings there are signs that engagement with Food Power has had an impact on food poverty in local communities. This has typically come through:

- Identifying unmet needs and coordinating a response. For example, Knowsley Kitchen are moving towards co-creating community food hubs in Knowsley:

  > *"[We want to] run some workshops in each of the 12 wards, with a view to having those conversations with community organisations and individuals, to see what they want as a food landscape, and what it is that's missing in their spaces, so that we can try and run a bit of a pilot in maybe one of those wards and see if we can create food hubs that actually work for the community*"

- Making service provision more efficient and effective. For example, one alliance suggested Food Power's biggest impact locally was "supporting us to develop the Building Resilience: 5 Year Food Security plan as lots of our work has stemmed from that. I think having a strong and connected network also enabled a much better and more co-ordinated Covid response" (survey respondent).
- Responding to issues identified through working with experts by experience. For example, developing partnerships to respond to holiday hunger (Newcastle) and working with Tyne & Wear Citizens on local campaigns to allow free school meal cards to give change so children do not lose money if they do not spend the full amount.
- Securing additional resources through advocacy and presenting evidence to decision makers. For example, the food partnership in Middlesbrough used their local evaluation evidence to report to Public Health on the strengths, successes, and limitations of alliance activity. This demonstrated their value to decision makers, secured access to meetings and additional local authority funding, and led to integration with the Council's Financial Inclusion Unit.

A consistent finding across the evaluation has been that alliances are working in a challenging context where they see increasing levels of food insecurity in their areas. National and structural factors which tend to push people into poverty mean that local actors can struggle to make headway in reducing levels of food poverty. The approach preferred by Food Power emphasises tackling root causes rather than providing emergency relief, meaning the impact achieved is rather intangible and that changes in levels of food poverty are difficult to associate directly with activities delivered. The approach to evaluation co-developed with local alliances recognises this: the Collective Impact Tracker guides reflection on what is preventing progress and what the pattern of food poverty might look like had the alliance done nothing. Some local alliances *have* worked to monitor change in levels of food insecurity, for example through incorporating questions in annual local authority household survey. Even where such monitoring does suggest changing levels of food poverty it would be difficult to attribute this to the alliance given the complexity of factors involved. This means that tracing impact to Food Power is even more difficult as they only act indirectly on local food poverty, via alliances and their members.

Summary:

- Alliances have consistently reported that Food Power has influenced how they work to address food poverty, offering inspiration and learning for innovative solutions.
- Whilst it is difficult to trace the direct impact of Food Power's influence on levels of food poverty, there are clear examples which suggest the benefits of more coordinated local action.

7. What was the impact of the pandemic and how did Food Power help?

The past year has been hugely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. This has directly impacted the operations of Food Power and local alliances, at a time when levels of food insecurity and demand for assistance increased dramatically. In some regards, the resulting pressures simply intensified pre-existing ones which saw food poverty organisations working to meet increasing demand without sufficient resources or capacity – a pattern consistently reported across previous years of evaluation. What is also apparent is that in spite of these challenges, local alliances played a significant part in responses to the pandemic, and in many cases found the structures and ways of working developed through engagement with Food Power assisted this. Several reported that the crisis situation served to demonstrate the value of having a coordinated strategy and network of actors in a local area. For example, in Middlesbrough, the alliance was able to deliver food hygiene training for new emergency food aid providers not previously registered with Environmental Health by drawing on established connections, existing knowledge, and known sources of funding. In Blackburn with Darwen, relationship-building over the four years of Food Power helped coordinate a swift emergency response, as well as setting the foundations for the new Food Resilience Alliance:

> "When Covid struck I was able, because of all those networks and personal contacts, to be able to talk to people in many of the local authority areas […] And it's only because of all those networks then when it comes to a crisis it means that we've got those relationships. So we were kind of using those informal, and quite formal relationships, in some way, to say 'right, what can we do'?"

One opportunity during the pandemic however was realising the potential of virtual events: there was budget for up to 200 people to attend an in-person Food Power conference in 2021 whilst hosting it online meant over 800 people could register.

Food Power supported alliances through the pandemic with additional funding, support with networking, sharing best practice and resources, efficiently disseminating national guidance on food provision, and feeding back the experiences of member alliances to national decision-makers. A new Food Power for Generation Covid partnership with UNICEF UK brought additional funding for autumn/winter 2020/21 to support projects for children and their families to access nutritious food. Food Power encouraged alliances to connect with Local Resilience Forums, and provided specific advice on themes such as the Covid Winter Grant Scheme, food provision during restricted school openings, guidance for local authorities on local food resilience, and support with personal resilience and well-being. The Food Power Gathering in June 2020 focussed on what can be learned from responses to food vulnerability during the first few months of the pandemic, and what should be kept from before and during the pandemic. Food Power's focus on monitoring and evaluation supported alliances to evidence and articulate their value, which led to them having greater influence shaping local responses to Covid-19.

Covid-19 has meant that priorities for the final stages of Food Power needed to be reoriented, resulting in a shift of focus away from peer mentoring. As one of team member reflects:

> "we learnt so much, I think, through years one and two and had a plan to implement and, you know, change things quite a bit, potentially, years three and four and then just couldn't really implement most of that because of the pandemic really…We would have liked to have spent much more of … years three and four doing sharing the learning from our networks, and we have done it a bit during the pandemic but obviously not in a way that we would have had. Had there not been a pandemic we would have had much more showcasing-type events… some of the learning we just couldn't really action during the programme as much as I would have liked."

Involvement of people with lived experience was also disrupted by the pandemic. As pandemic restrictions fluctuated in 2020-2021 Food Power has continued to support immediate responses to food insecurity that are still acutely needed, whilst also turning towards the ways in which alliances can lead 'building back better' and provide some early examples and practical advice to other alliances, networks, councils and government around the theme of local food resilience.

Local food poverty alliances generated important outcomes at a critical time during the pandemic, and continue to work hard to establish local food resilience. Alliances made a key difference by bringing a broader agenda to the emergency food response, considering sustainability and longer-term impacts, as well as getting food out to people who needed it. Alliances worked, to varying degrees, in partnership with local food aid and statutory services, and continued to contribute to national policy issues beyond their local areas during the pandemic. The nature and scale of the crisis led to many alliances being formed and existing alliances being re-formed. Overall, alliance-building prior to the pandemic seems to have generated more positive outcomes during the Covid-19 crisis as relationships could be built on and existing action plans were in place. Challenges from lack of in-person meetings included: digital exclusion; zoom fatigue; and loss of informal relationship-building, but online meetings encouraged new attendees and enabled new forms of collectivity. Just as the crisis has further illuminated pre-existing problems with the food system, the responses of local alliances have demonstrated the value of, and ongoing need for, this type of network. Not just in times of acute crisis,[2] mitigate food inequality, adapt to evolving needs, and remain embedded in and

[2] Pivoting Policy, Programs and Partnerships: Food Policy Councils' Responses to the Crises of 2020 (2021) *Raychel Santo, Caitlin Misiaszek, Karen Bassarab, Darriel Harris, Anne Palmer* http://www.foodpolicynetworks.org/food-policy-resources/index.html?resource=1394

responsive to their local communities. Research in the US paints a similar picture of the value of Food Policy Councils (FPCs) in addressing problems and inequalities in a rapidly evolving food system with little guidance or supportive infrastructure. An important conclusion of this evaluation is that local alliances can respond well in times of acute crisis, and that investment in this infrastructure needs to be ongoing to maintain their value.

Summary:

- Food Power for Generation Covid funding enabled alliances to make a difference during the pandemic, particularly in cases where staff had dedicated time to develop a project or aspect of the partnership.
- Food Power supported alliances in developing alternative models for tackling food insecurity, a particular challenge within the emergency aid context of the pandemic.
- The nature and scale of the emergency response led to new alliances being formed and existing alliances being re-formed to best respond to changing local contexts and food poverty landscapes
- Food Power supported alliances with advice and best practice to navigate national guidance and a range of concerns around food provision and coordinating responses.
- Local alliances can respond well in times of acute crisis; ongoing support will be needed to maintain the value and potency of this infrastructure.

8. What impact has Food Power had nationally?

This year's survey asked alliances to reflect across the life of the programme and state what has been Food Power's most significant impact nationally. Of those answering (n=19), three stated that they were not sure. The remainder highlighted work on lived experience, creating a network, being a collective voice for organisations, and awareness raising or campaigning on food poverty. The most common responses highlight impacts relating to creating a network and coordinating activity which allowed exchanges between those acting around the country. For example:

> "supporting a network of social justice driven change makers, and food poverty leaders. The network has been invaluable and I hope it can continue" (Survey respondent).

> "Bringing together the network and enabling the growth of alliances. We are a stronger voice together and more credible as a result" (Survey respondent).

The next most commonly identified impact related to involving people with lived experience and promoting the importance of this as part of action on food poverty:

> "Wow this is very hard to answer as they have done so much. They have really made great progress in reducing stigma surrounding food insecurity as well as show casting how important lived experience is" (Survey respondent).

National awareness and campaigning on food poverty was also noted:

> "Food poverty has shot up the national agenda, I would imagine Food Power has played a role in that (alongside Covid and other organisations such as Food Foundation)" (Survey respondent).

One specific result of the collective voice enabled by Food Power was convincing government to introduce national measurement of food insecurity.

Interviews with alliance members suggested how Food Power has shaped national impacts. In part this is seen to result from power of numbers and delivering a coordinated effort:

> "The strength is that it opens more doors through communicating with others, sharing what you're doing, your knowledge, your best practice, what works in your area. What doesn't work in your area might work somewhere else and its these tips and tricks that other people use that I like to think lead to a better society for everybody. We do our bit here, they do their bit in Hull, they do their bit in Bristol, or wherever, and the idea is eventually we make a bigger difference. I think that's the greatest strength" (Middlesbrough Food Partnership representative).

Synergy between local action and national coordination seems key:

> "[The strength of Food Power nationally is] collective voice. We were able to bring stuff straight from the coal face and through our national links put that in-front of government" (BHFP representative).

By combining contact with local actors and a national overview of context and solutions Food Power played an important part in action on food poverty.

This strength was identified as a unique aspect of Food Power in relation to other activity nationally. Through discussion with the Food Power team and other organisations working on food poverty in the UK we were able to identify what is seen to be its particular contribution, and how this fits within the overall landscape of activity (Figure 9). This found that activity to tackle food poverty is highly networked and collaborative in some areas, but not all. The Covid-19 response had led to more coordinated action in terms of food aid, but there is a risk of this limiting collaboration in other areas, and side-lining work to tackle root causes. Food Power is considered to be central in the landscape, distinguished by the impact of its partnerships approach and work with people with lived experience. Its activity does not significantly overlap with that of any other organisation – it has created a specialist niche.

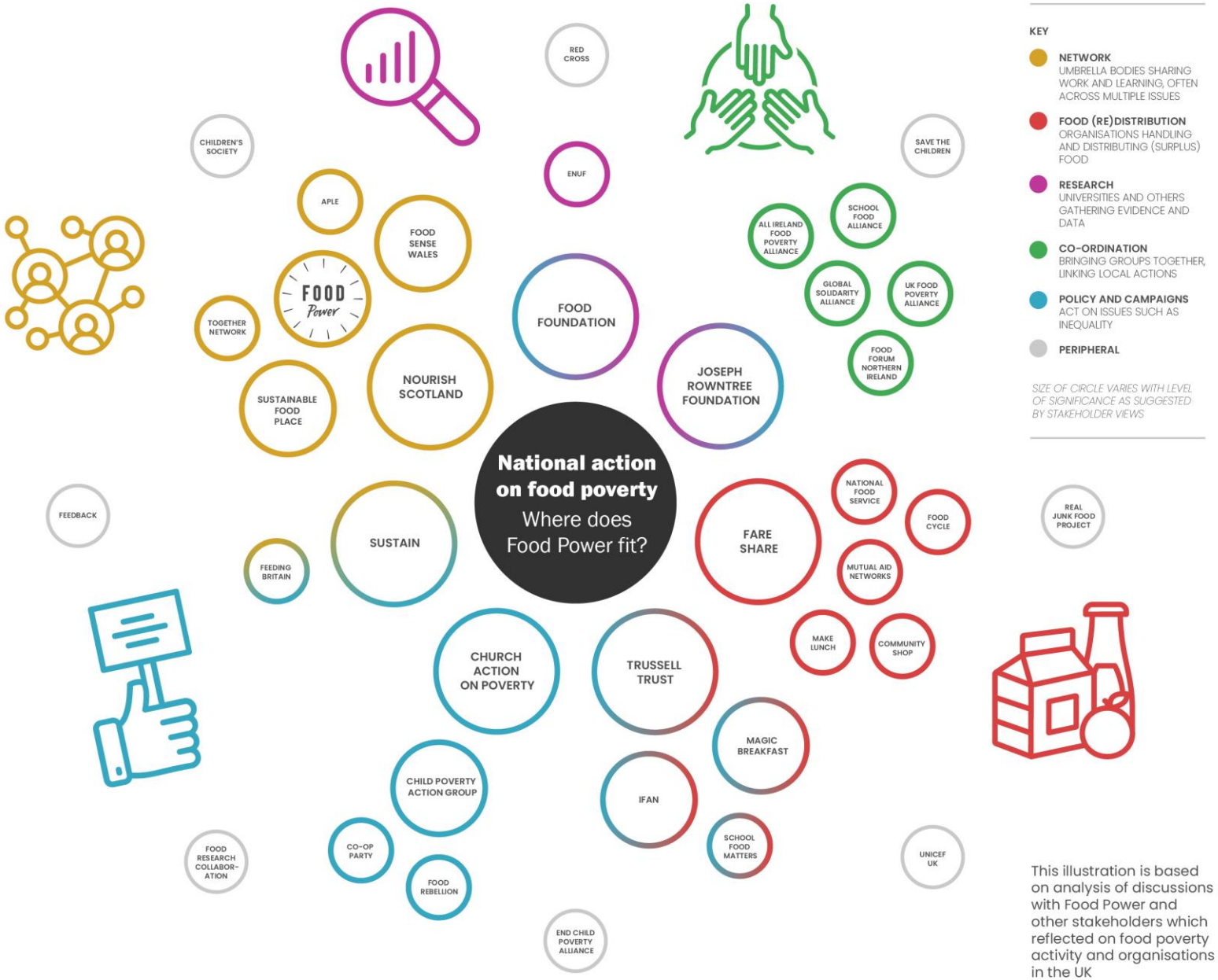
Discussions confirmed that Food Power has established a valuable niche within the landscape of actors, delivering specific activity which would be missed if discontinued. Its unique role arises from both the focus of its activity - tackling root causes - and its mode of delivery - providing national support for local collaboration. A focus on empowering people with lived experience at local and national level was also identified as a unique strength. Food Power's strength is seen to lie in the combination of strong grounded knowledge of local responses to food poverty alongside a broad perspective and ability to influence national action. Its commitment to fostering alliances, and enabling sharing amongst the network is key to this. In addition to strengths gained through the programme's model, it benefits from the team's skills in convening, engaging, facilitating, reflecting, and listening that support a strong culture of collaboration across the network.

Some feedback from alliances suggested an aspiration for Food Power to be more vocal. The team highlighted that this had consciously not been a focus of the programme, due to activities delivered by other organisations, programmes and campaigns but acknowledged the demand for this:

> "I think local areas still find it a bit hard to feel like they're being heard at a national level, know how to have their voice heard in a coordinated way so that's a separate agenda… and I think local groups expect us to try and make it... help them tell their stories at the national level and effect some level of change".

They went on to suggest that the team need to work together with the network to look at options for future activity and decide priorities.

Figure 9 The landscape of activity on food poverty in the UK and Food Power's place within



This illustration is based on analysis of discussions with Food Power and other stakeholders which reflected on food poverty activity and organisations in the UK

Summary:

- Food Power's national impact is perceived to relate to driving work on lived experience, creating a network which facilitated exchanges, being a collective voice for organisations, and awareness raising on food poverty.
- Food Power is considered to be central in the landscape of national action on food poverty, distinguished by the impact of its partnerships approach and work with people with lived experience.
- Food Power has created a specialist niche through its strength in combining grounded knowledge of local responses to food poverty and a broad perspective capable of influencing national action.

9. How can Food Power support future action on food poverty?

It is perhaps not surprising given the value alliances see in Food Power, that they are keen to see its activity or similar continue in future. Considering what else is being done to tackle food poverty, stakeholders also suggested that the need for work delivered by Food Power is not set to disappear soon. Were it to disappear, a particular gap would be the lack of advocacy with national impact to challenge the institutionalization of emergency food provision.

This year's survey found that many alliances would like to see current support continuing in future, with broadly equal support for continued funding, sharing learning and information, creating resources and supporting regional networks. Calls for funding were specified as for 'core cost', 'upstream solutions to food poverty' and also 'work that doesn't seem to be funded elsewhere'. Alliances also mentioned a range of potential activity they would value in future:

- Running local cohorts of 'Speak truth to power' workshops;
  Assisting with collaboration with statutory bodies;
- Helping with accessing and coordinating local data on food poverty;
- Keeping up the focus on prevention and reduction of food poverty, supporting alliances to move away from emergency food aid provision;
- Supporting alliances to better integrate Sustainable Food Places and Food Power work;
- Providing more research or information on the longer-term implications of relying on wasteful food industry practices to meet food poverty needs.

A slight majority of alliances (n=17) would like to see national campaign work raising awareness of food poverty and aiming to change policies behind structural causes of food insecurity. Examples mentioned were linking with Right to Food campaign, cash-first approach, national food insecurity monitoring or the National Food Strategy for England. More specifically, alliances would like to see Sustain and Church Action on Poverty continue to create a collective voice and amplify local stories in national decision-making.

In terms of ongoing needs identified by local alliances, funding is a primary concern, both the availability of funding and providing enough for people to achieve tangible impact. There is also a need for funding that does not compromise the values or ways of working of the alliance:

> "Let's say for instance holiday activity funding, which suddenly brings in a whole level of governance and monitoring and evaluation that you're maybe not set up to do. Which potentially divides those that are on school meals from those that aren't on school meals. When what we want to do is feed everybody equitably. So some government funded schemes maybe appropriate. Others, you actually compromise your core values." (Together Lancashire representative)

Alliances also expressed concern about the loss of the network and questioned how learning would be kept alive beyond Food Power. Acknowledging that one success of Food Power had been showing what is possible, and sharing this learning through the network, alliances suggested that drawing on the knowledge and experience of the peer mentors and staff would be one way of capturing learning. It was acknowledged that this must be balanced with the need for every organization to go through its own learning in a way that responds to the constituency and politics of the local area.
Staff at Sustain and Church Action on Poverty expect to continue working with alliances, members and individuals in some way. A proportion of alliances are now linked into in Sustainable Food Places, so this was identified as one way to ensure they are accessing support. The learning generated by Food Power will be held on the Sustain website. Church Action on Poverty will continue to work with people with lived experience through its Talking Truth to Power initiative. There is a sense that any future programs would have to do more than maintain existing activity.

The team suggest future work could include a focus on specific geographical areas underrepresented to date, or on specific groups such as people of colour, disabled or older people. Alternatively this might focus on alliances receiving less support from other programmes such as Sustainable Food Places. The team would like to explore options for the future with alliances. In their view, these discussions should seek to reach beyond the most active members of the network. It was also felt important to take time to consolidate what has been learnt and reflect on this before taking next steps.

Summary:

- Local alliances and other actors agree a need for support akin to that offered by Food Power to continue in future. In particular, mechanisms are required to ensure that valuable learning built up across the network is retained and shared further.
- Future financial support is needed to enable alliances to continue to operate in alignment with their core values. Alliances would appreciate funding that allows for staff time for aspects of a project or partnership to reach greater levels of impact.
- Other activity aiming to tackle food poverty is ongoing across the UK but lacks the specific focus and strengths of Food Power. This leads stakeholders to perceive a need for continued activity of the type it has delivered.
- The exact nature of future delivery by Sustain and Church Action on Poverty is to be decided; it could usefully focus on groups or locations under-represented to date, or take a more campaign-oriented approach.

10. Evaluation Limitations

The data gathered for the evaluation and reported here can only present the perspective of those who agreed to participate in research activity. It is likely that this is dominated by those with more favourable experiences of engaging with Food Power; more critical opinions may not have been shared with the evaluators. It is also likely that alliances which have been less engaged with the programme were less responsive to the evaluation, although some survey responses were received from alliances identifying themselves as engaging little with Food Power.

A clear message from those who participated in the evaluation research is that they struggle with capacity, meaning such activity becomes an additional burden on their already pressed time. The evaluation team should continue to endeavour to minimise such pressure, and seek ways to hear from those who struggle to participate because of such challenges.

11. Conclusions

Across its life-time alliances have continued to positively assess the support provided by Food Power. Alliances have found the financial support useful, and also value opportunities to make contacts, share best practice, learn from others and be inspired. Alliances indicated that Food Power has had an impact in all areas of activity and aspiration, including on their specific goals, helping tackle local barriers to food poverty, influencing how food poverty is addressed locally and nationally, and contributing to raising the profile of food poverty through providing a collective voice.

The value alliances place on different activities has changed over the years, which is consistent with the varying emphasis Food Power has put on different elements annually, and with variations in support alliances need as they evolve. That said, there is not a linear progress in alliance structure or activities, as in Year 4 there was no correlation between age and a benchmarking score. It is difficult to identify reasons for this given the extraordinary impact of Covid-19, coinciding with a number of new alliances registering with Food Power. Across the evaluation, alliances have given consistently positive feedback on how Food Power deliver support, and its value for their work. All modes of delivery and activity have been shown to have merit. Alliances have also praised the team for their ways of working and expertise. It is perhaps not surprising that alliances particularly welcome financial support received from Food Power, given that most report struggling with resources and capacity. However, it is clear that this is not the only support valued and that those who have not applied for or received funds still value involvement with the programme.

Engagement with Food Power's resources and remote support (e.g. webinars) has been good over the course of the programme. This suggests that there has been sustained engagement with the programme, and that alliances continue to find value in its activities and support. Provision has been consistently useful and appreciated, and perhaps alliances have been encouraged to engage as they hear how others have benefited. Where levels of engagement have remained steady or decreased over time this may reflect that as alliances became more established they looked less to Food Power for support. Findings suggest the local alliance model is flexible, capable of expanding or contracting and adapting to suit varied membership and in response to changing circumstances. It is also apparent that alliances find Food Power supportive through these types of evolution.

A majority of alliances wish to see the support Food Power provides continuing in future - an additional testament to its impact. Alliances would like to also see a national campaign that would amplify local organisations through a collective voice, as well as continued work to raise awareness of food poverty to influence policies addressing structural causes of food insecurity. This sentiment is echoed by stakeholders familiar with other activity around food poverty in the UK: they suggested Food Power has shaped a niche where they deliver useful activity which would not otherwise be available.

Food Power has been guided by the theory of change devised during programme development which identified four desirable outcomes:

1. Local alliances have greater skills and capacity to develop coordinated community-based plans to reduce food poverty.
2. Local alliances are able to apply learning from other projects or initiatives from across the UK to enhance their own ability to reduce household food insecurity locally.

3. Individuals with direct experience of food poverty play an active role in identifying, and advocating for, long-term solutions to the issues they face
4. Local food poverty partnerships are better able to monitor, evaluate and improve the impact of their interventions on both crisis food needs and long-term household food insecurity

Findings reported here suggest good progress in all four areas, with alliances giving wide ranging examples of how Food Power has enabled more effective and coordinated activity in their areas. In particular, the programme has supported exchanges of learning and ideas between parts of the UK, and encouraged local actors to participate in this capacity building. Attention to engaging experts by experience and delivering evaluation has also influenced local action in many alliances.

What is more difficult to identify is the extent to which these outcomes directly impact all the needs the programme was responding to:

1. Increasing numbers of Britons unable to afford healthy diet, rely on charitable provision.
2. Local food poverty projects can be uncoordinated and less effective at meeting rising need.
3. Lack of voice for people experiencing food poverty and hunger within the sector and more widely within society.
4. Limited opportunities for shared learning across the country.
5. Focus on emergency food aid rather than long-term solutions to food insecurity.

Of these needs, numbers 2-5 relate to how organisations work as they seek to tackle food poverty whilst the first describes levels of food poverty. As this report has shown, Food Power has enabled activity addressing the need for greater coordination, to involve those experiencing food poverty and to share learning. It has also promoted a focus on long-term solutions beyond emergency relief, although not the only initiative doing so at this time. The assumption of Food Power's logic is that responding to these four needs will have some impact on the first and most fundamental: reducing numbers of people in food poverty. As noted above, it is difficult to demonstrate that this is the case because of the number of factors influencing levels of food poverty, and inadequate data to track this in different areas. It is also clear that local actors are seeing many pressures tending to increase levels of food poverty, meaning that they are simply running to - at best - stand still. Tackling root causes of food poverty is also slow work which might take many years to yield results.

Despite the challenges around demonstrating an impact on the most fundamental need - levels of food poverty – there is reason to be confident that Food Power has contributed positively to this. Research into complex challenges like food poverty suggests that progress is most likely when actors come together to seek collective impact[3]. Food Power's work at the national and local level demonstrates this approach and has the characteristics which increase the likelihood of achieving collective impact:

1. Common Agenda – organisations connected to Food Power have developed a shared understanding of the problem and vision for the solutions, apparent through shared commitment to a focus on tackling root causes of food poverty.
2. Shared Measurement Systems – at the national level this evaluation demonstrates Food Power's commitment to monitoring and reporting on change, with support for local evaluation spreading this to alliances.
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities – the alliance model encourages stakeholders' to coordinate local activities so they are diverse whilst complementary, whilst at the national level Food Power works to occupy a niche and not replicate other actors.

[3] https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/

4. Continuous Communication – Food Power coordinates regular communication between organisations and operates with transparency which helps develop trust.
5. Backbone Support Organisations – at the national level Food Power provides this Coordination role, whilst supporting the capacity of local organisations to do so within alliances.

A collective impact perspective highlights that to continue having an impact, the exchanges and coordination enabled by Food Power entails considerable work of coordination and communication. This has been found to be depend an adequately resourced core organisation, suggesting that continued progress will require investment in a backbone function from Food Power or an equivalent.