



Building Food Security TOGETHER

**CHURCH
URBAN
FUND** ⊕

CHANGING LIVES AND
COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Interim Report November 2021

**TOGETHER
NETWORK** ⊕



About Us

National Movement, Local Action

The Together Network is a network of Christian charities, large and small, from across England that are committed to tackling poverty and transforming communities.

The vision of the network is to see people and communities all over England flourish and enjoy life in all its fullness. Our mission is to build an ecumenical 'faith in action' movement across England which strengthens civil society.

Find out more: www.togethernetwork.org.uk

Contact Us

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CHANGING LIVES AND
COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Building food security TOGETHER

FOOD HAS THE POWER TO CREATE JOY, BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER, SUSTAIN OUR BODIES AND PROTECT US FROM ILL HEALTH.

But sadly for millions of families across the country food is also a source of worry and struggle, as they question 'will I be able to afford enough food for my family this week?' Many are having to compromise on the quantity or quality of food they eat, skip meals and for some, go hungry. Food insecurity was prevalent before the Covid-19 pandemic, but the last 18 months has created unprecedented pressures on families and systems, surfacing high levels of food insecurity and disproportionately impacting some communities more than others, with health inequalities between rich and poor continuing to widen.

This is not right.

The Together Network are working in partnership with communities across the country to build long-term food security. Supporting households to access good food in dignified ways – food that is affordable, sustainable and nutritious.



Strong foundations

OVER £700,000 HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO DEVELOP LOCAL SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO BUILDING FOOD SECURITY

With the support of the Church Urban Fund, eight Together Network partners have committed over £700,000 across 2021/2022 to develop local, sustainable approaches to build food security. This includes a grant of £172,000 from The Albert Gubay Foundation to support and develop this work.

This interim report shares the progress made during the first six months of the project.

**TRANSFORMING
PLYMOUTH
TOGETHER** ⊕

**TOGETHER
MIDDLESBROUGH
& CLEVELAND** ⊕

**THRIVE
TOGETHER
BIRMINGHAM** ⊕

**GREATER
TOGETHER
MANCHESTER** ⊕

**TOGETHER
LEICESTER** ⊕

**TOGETHER
LIVERPOOL** ⊕

**TRANSFORMING
LIVES TOGETHER** ⊕

**TOGETHER
FOR CHANGE
COVENTRY AND
WARWICKSHIRE** ⊕

Lives already changed

5

New community food spaces

3,482

Households supported by food security projects

483

Volunteers helped deliver food security projects

22

New community food spaces to be opened by April 2022



TOGETHER MIDDLESBROUGH & CLEVELAND[⊕]

Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland has supported 17 groups to provide 28,621 meals this summer through their Feast of Fun activities. They are also supporting a church in Middlesbrough to set up a Community Grocery, and two other churches and a school to establish Eco Shops and food pantries.

Together for Change Coventry and Warwickshire are preparing to open a new community hub for families and young people in Nuneaton, which will offer meals and activities for young people during the week. They are also exploring the possibility of a mobile pantry to reach isolated communities in Warwickshire.

TOGETHER FOR CHANGE COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE[⊕]

TRANSFORMING PLYMOUTH TOGETHER[⊕]

Transforming Plymouth Together is working with two churches, exploring setting up a community food larders.



THRIVE TOGETHER BIRMINGHAM⁺

Transforming Lives Together purchased recipe books for local organisations and has supported volunteers to train as Christians Against Poverty debt advisors to work with families in crisis across the Diocese of Chester.

TOGETHER LEICESTER⁺

Thrive Together Birmingham enabled their existing food pantry network to purchase additional resources so they could cope with the increased demand due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are also working with new settings to establish more pantries in the next few months.

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER⁺

Together Leicester formed a partnership with Your Local Pantry to establish three new pantries in churches and community buildings over the next few months.



TOGETHER LIVERPOOL

Together Liverpool supported the setup of four new food pantries in churches in Wigan and Liverpool; these have collectively saved members £49,330 since May 2021. Over 1000 families attended their Feast of Fun activities this summer: churches partnered with local groups to host holiday play schemes, community food and fun days and family cookery clubs.

Greater Together Manchester partnered with local churches, a housing association and the local authorities to support families at risk of food insecurity this summer. Alongside healthy food, they provided back-to-school resources. Their project worker has also been working to establish a Social Super Market and supporting families and volunteers to transition to this new model.

GREATER TOGETHER MANCHESTER



Case Study

Church Wigan



With support from Together Liverpool, the team at Church Wigan have opened two new food pantries one at St Thomas's in Ashton in Makerfield and another in St Nathaniel's Church in Platt Bridge.

Community members pay a small yearly fee to join the pantries and then are asked for a small contribution each time they shop; often taking home 10 -20 items.

Church Wigan says this is an extremely important part of its ministry and it hopes to eventually have a food pantry in each of the seven worship hubs across the borough.

Alison Brown from Church Wigan, said: "We're delighted to have the two new pantries open. We've got three now and there are others to follow. Our aim is for the people of Wigan to be able to have access to food and we're working with the Real Junk Food Project to feed bellies not bins. We consider this a vital part of our ministry."

**"OUR AIM IS TO FEED PEOPLE BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY"
ALISON BROWN CHURCH WIGAN**

Alison said Church Wigan's own figures showed that the two new pantries between them fed around 285 families in their first month of operation. Eileen Houghton from St Nathaniel's Food Pantry said: "It's running very well. We've got some parents from local primary schools involved as volunteers and they are fantastic. Nobody gets turned away from us at all. We don't ask about people's circumstances so it's not about anyone feeling uncomfortable picking stuff up. We've had a tremendous amount of support from the local community and we've got more and more members coming in every week."



Case Study

Feast of Fun

**TOGETHER
MIDDLESBROUGH
& CLEVELAND** 

Milly attended the Feast of Fun provision at a Middlesbrough Church with her daughter, Sandy who is nine. Milly is a single parent living in one of the most deprived wards in Middlesbrough, she's been out of work since Covid and been struggling to find some since as she doesn't have anyone to look after Sandy. She described the Feast of Fun activities as a 'lifeline' for her and her daughter, after both struggling with the social isolation of the last year during the pandemic.

For Milly, the Feast of Fun activities were something for them both to look forward to, when she knew they were running she put their names down immediately.

The days when the sessions had not been on – Sandy would ask “what will we do today?”



This made Milly's heart sink as she couldn't afford to take her anywhere, but remembered that the Feast of Fun group had provided them with activity packs to also do at home. They spent the days doing crafts.

The Feast of Fun sessions were good for both Sandy and Milly. Milly said being able to sit and talk with another adult over a cup of tea and a bite to eat meant so much to her, and to see Sandy laughing and enjoying herself was amazing.

One of their favourite activities was working with food supplier Quorn – who delivered an interactive workshop. The daughter tried all of the challenges and thoroughly enjoyed it. Milly was even going to make one of the recipes for tea.

Milly could not thank everyone enough for the warmth they were shown and the brilliant experiences they both had.

Case Study

Building trust

GREATER TOGETHER MANCHESTER

The Baker family live just a few doors away from the church Greater Together Manchester are based out of. They are a multi-generational household with granddad, parents and kids living under one roof in a house they rent privately from a relative. They are well known in the community for being difficult and having challenging behaviour, with alcohol abuse a constant problem. They are a family who have experienced poverty throughout multiple generations. Whilst the granddad was known to the church, the rest of the family were not in contact regularly and never really engaged with the activities on offer. Trust was a real issue.

The granddad originally approached the church during lockdown when he noticed that food was being offered to local people; they were struggling to feed the children whilst they were out of school. As a result, we supported them regularly with food throughout the pandemic, and beyond, giving us the opportunity to work with the family to build trust and find other ways to support them. We were able to make sure that the children were eating well, had clean clothes and were even able to provide a new bed for the granddad (who had been sleeping on the floor for a long time). Over the year, we provided new school uniforms, Christmas presents and Easter Eggs.

The church became the place they reached out to for support, and by coming each week, we could follow up with them on other issues and help signpost them to other useful services. We connected them with our partners at a local Debt Centre who supported them in a number of ways, including with the change from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, and who helped them access emergency fuel vouchers.

In the summer of 2021, they received notice that they were going to be evicted. The landlord wanted the property back and so they needed to leave. They immediately turned to the church for help. We were able to signpost them to specialist support, and explain how the local authority could help them too.

Unfortunately the local authority's attempt to mediate with the landlord was not successful. On the day they were evicted, they came to the church and were immediately welcomed in by the parish priest and our volunteers. They were fed, and the kids were entertained, whilst the adults worked out what to do next. We supported them to make contact with the local authority's homelessness team, who were able to find them temporary accommodation and we sent them on their way with food supplies, extra clothing and activities to keep the kids occupied.

They have eventually moved in with a family member in a neighbouring area and we have connected them with a local service who can continue to support them with food and other help. The kids continue to attend the local school so the parents will call in fairly regularly to keep us up to date with their progress and will still reach out if there is anything they need.

Case Study

Little cookers

**TOGETHER
LIVERPOOL** 

Children from inner city Liverpool learned to make Ghanaian and Indian food, and an American pancake breakfast during a 'Little Cookers Club' Feast of Fun event. The three-day holiday club at Glory Worship Church enabled more than fifty nutritious meals to be prepared and eaten by children from BAME backgrounds.

Together with their parents they also learned knife skills to cut a variety of vegetables, and how to prepare beans, potatoes, and plantain to make dishes from around the world.

Blessing Osaghae, pastor of Glory Worship Church on London Road in Liverpool, explained: "They also had fun time. During break time, they played, had games and lots of competitions. There were prizes for kids as well. It was a great family time for those whose parents could come as well as a great time of meeting new people...One of the best things about the activity was that it brought families together. The kids definitely made new friends. They especially loved learning different ways to slice or cut vegetables, potatoes and plantains."

Blessing said the funding helped the church reach out to local people: "This grant made a huge difference in strengthening relationship with our community, especially that we just recently moved to a new neighbourhood....it helped inform our community that we are here to invest and also be a part."

"Three children even began coming to church on a Sunday after attending Little Cookers Club. The children enjoyed it so much – they made friends with another family."

The event also helped the church to establish partner relationships with another church, RCCG Mount Zion Liverpool. Blessing said: "We also loved that we could merge with other organisations to hold the event, and that hosting it 'helped us bond with the other church.'"



TOGETHER NETWORK

For churches

If you would like to be kept updated about the work of the Together Network please visit www.togethernetwork.org.uk

For funders

If you would like to support future Together Network projects tackling food insecurity, or a project in one of our other areas of work, such as community cohesion, homelessness, mental health, loneliness and isolation, asylum seekers and refugees, financial inclusion or modern slavery please get in touch:

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