



Food in Norfolk.

Welcome to our first 'Spark' report.

We chose to focus this first edition on food because it is our most basic of needs.

Sparks shine a spotlight on a subject in Norfolk.. From this small but mighty publication, we hope to inspire conversations and action in our community.

This Spark captures our work and the work of our partners in a moment of time.

A huge thank you to all of our contributors, and especially to Norse Group for bringing our words to life by printing this.

We are always delighted to hear your thoughts or answer any questions you may have.

All we ask of you is you enjoy and share with those who may also find this of interest.

Claire Adams.

SPARK

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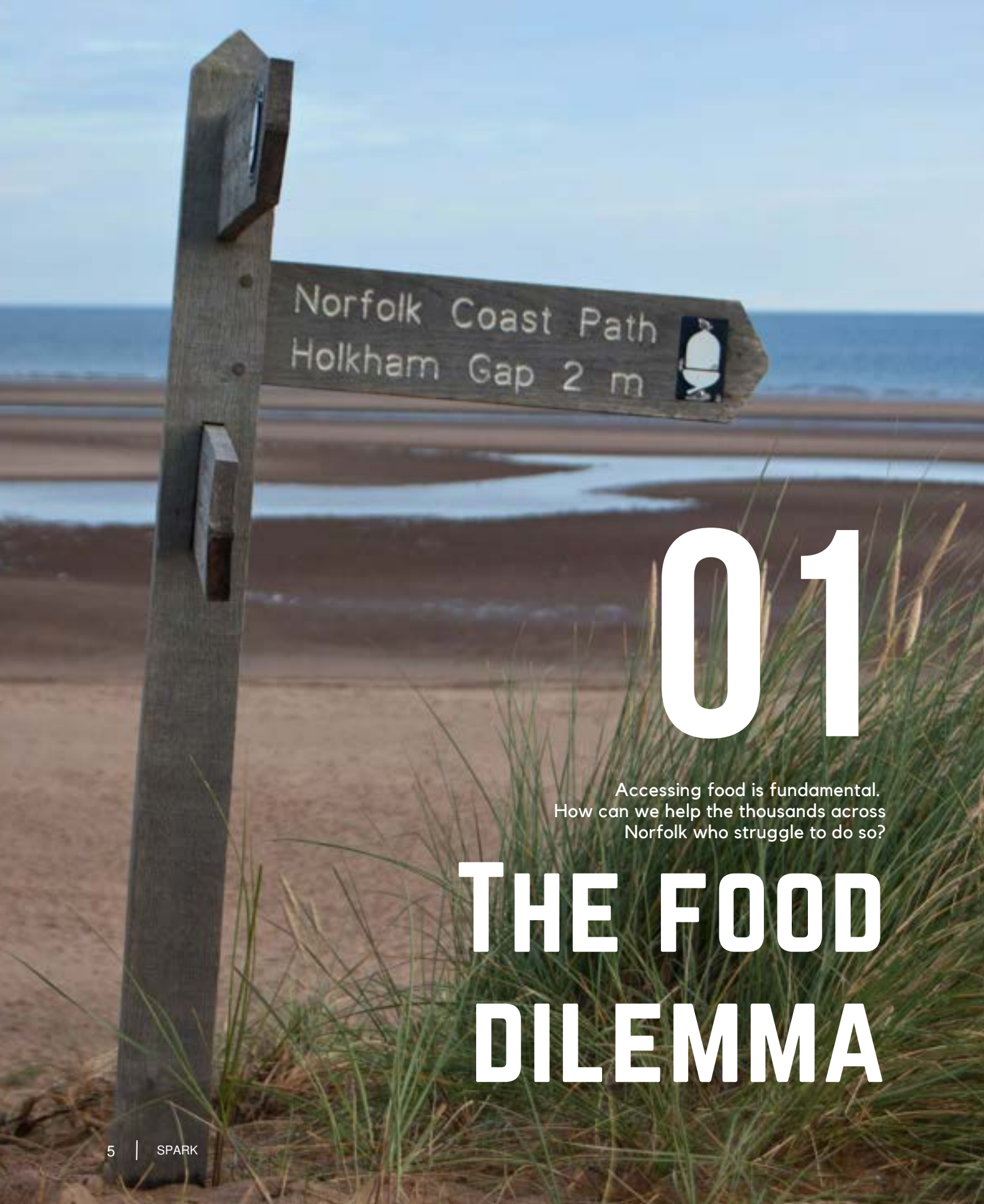
1. a quality that makes something interesting, successful
2. an action that causes something larger to happen

A 60-SECOND GUIDE TO THE RUDIMENTS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN NORFOLK

When a person is without reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious, healthy food, they are experiencing ‘food insecurity’. The primary causes are:

- **Income:** Norfolk has a low-wage economy. Healthy foods are often the more expensive option compared with processed foods, which can make it difficult for people on a tight budget to buy them. This is especially true for low-income families, who may have to choose between buying food and paying bills.
- **Location:** Most people in Norfolk live in rural areas, often far from supermarkets. This can make it difficult to buy affordable healthy foods and makes them more reliant on frozen or shelf-stable ultra-processed foods.
- **Capital costs:** Cooking requires technology even at the most basic level. A significant number of people lack basic appliances, such as cookers, freezers, and fridges, due to financial constraints.
- **Culinary skills:** Knowledge of how to cook has diminished since convenience food became widely available, and they are still diminishing as one generation after another grows up without seeing or trying cookery at home.
- **Risk of waste:** people, especially parents, will stick to foods they know can be consistently prepared and are less likely to be wasted.
- **Mental “bandwidth”:** People from the poorest households are much less likely to plan and cook healthy meals from scratch because their mental energy can be taken up with coping in the short term.





01

Accessing food is fundamental.
How can we help the thousands across
Norfolk who struggle to do so?

THE FOOD DILEMMA

Britain at the crossroads

Is it too late for an exit strategy to food insecurity?

The UK's first food bank was created in 2000. Today, there are over 2,500.

Feeding Britain was established in 2015 with the mission of showing that hunger and its causes can be addressed, with a mission to advocate for systemic change to eliminate hunger in the UK. Director Andrew Forsey is advocating for a radical shake-up of how we approach food insecurity.

Contributor
Andrew Forsey



Ten years on from the early growth of the food bank movement in Britain, our country has reached a crossroads.

With so many families and individuals – both in and out of work, above and below retirement age, with and without children – struggling to meet their essential living costs, are we to follow so many other advanced Western economies down the path of entrenching on a colossal scale the use and operation of food banks?

Or are we to take a different path through which good quality, healthy food is provided with a dignity of choice and purchase – thereby showing other similarly placed countries how we can pursue an exit strategy from food poverty?


Over the past 12 months, the same number of people nationally have accessed an affordable food hub as have accessed a food bank. In some regions, more people now access the former than the latter. As a result, they are able to choose from a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, bread, eggs and dairy, as well as long-life and household goods – all in return for a manageable contribution which frees

up vital monies to pay for other essential living costs.

Had it not been for the development of these affordable food hubs – of which there are now 300 across the Feeding Britain network – the queues for crisis food parcels from food banks would have continued lengthening at a mercilessly fast pace. With donations of food and money drying up across the sector, such an outcome would have spelt disaster for our communities.

That said, if we are to build successfully on these early reforms in the teeth of a cost-of-living crisis, and provide a truly sustainable and dignified alternative to food banks while ending the dependence upon crisis food provision, we need to draw upon the collective firepower of food businesses and their suppliers. Whether it is the offer of goods that have become abundant in the supply chain, or the offer of a regular supply of core products at the right price, we would love to explore mutually beneficial partnerships which can help us eliminate food poverty for good. ♦





Feeding Norfolk

A COMPLEX PUZZLE WITH NO EASY PIECES

In the 14th century Norfolk was the most densely populated and most intensively farmed region in England. It was one of the first areas to introduce crop rotation, which revolutionised food production, and even today the Eastern region produces still around 30% of the edible crops in England. The rich agricultural heritage of Norfolk stands at odds with the fact that in Norfolk right now, almost 60,000 people struggle to get the food they need, with an additional 20,000 at risk of losing their food security. In just over a

decade, Norfolk has gone from 0 to 80 food banks.

To understand the root causes of this problem in Norfolk and to identify potential solutions, Norfolk Community Foundation has been working with grassroots organisations to investigate food insecurity at the local level. I sat down with Claire Cullens, Chief Executive of Norfolk Community Foundation, to find out about how she began formulating a response to the issue of hunger in Norfolk.

So, Claire, why has the Norfolk Community Foundation ended up so involved in hunger in Norfolk?

We play a critical role in understanding the needs of our community. Each year, the Foundation receives thousands of grant applications from grassroots charities working on the ground to support their communities. From this, we gain a real-time view of the funding demands in the community, which means we're often the first to notice emerging patterns of need in our

county and respond to them. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic caused many organisations to pivot to emergency food distribution. Coupled with increased demand for hunger-related funding in previous years, we identified addressing food insecurity as a key funding priority.

What was the problem with how food insecurity was being approached?

Simply, it was the size of the gap between needing emergency food support and being food-secure. There is a huge gulf between being referred to a food bank because there's nothing in the cupboard and buying groceries from a normal supermarket. The problem was that people who were approaching crisis point couldn't bridge that gap, and so they just fell into relying on a food bank. Through consulting with those running food projects, we picked up on a lot of reasons why people didn't engage with support. Some were not aware of what was available to them, others felt uncomfortable using food banks due to the stigma surrounding them. Some people didn't (or believed that they didn't) meet the criteria for food banks. Others live in rural isolation, far away from supermarkets and without reliable transport. We shared these thoughts with our partners and reached a consensus: going forward, we knew that ensuring people living in food insecurity felt comfortable and confident that the offer was 'the right one for them' would be vital in overcoming these barriers and getting people the help they needed.

Did you come up with the solution by yourselves?

We did a lot of the groundwork, but we also looked nationally to explore possible solutions. We knew this wouldn't provide all the answers, but we were open to anything that could address the food insecurity we were

seeing in Norfolk in a way that married up local needs. One solution to food insecurity was social supermarkets, sometimes called 'affordable food clubs'. Unlike food banks, which give access to set amounts of free food on a means-tested basis, they aim to provide support without stigmatizing those who need it. Operating on a charitable not-for-profit model, they offer an ordinary shopping experience but with greatly reduced prices. This approach was being championed by Feeding Britain, a national charity spearheading the effort to ensure that no one in the UK goes hungry.

So you were inspired by this model? What did you do next?

That's where the Burrell Centre came in. We decided to try the model provided by Feeding Britain. Working with Billie Lawler at the Centre in Thetford, we launched a pilot program, 'The Burrell Shop', at the end of 2020. We were fortunate to have a community group wanting to take action and a district council and local funders wanting to help us to make this happen. From this connection, we chose Thetford's Burrell ward as the place to apply what we had learned and the Centre was the obvious partner. We were proud to open the first social supermarket in East Anglia together. It represented a major step not only for support around food in Thetford but also as an opportunity to see how a program could be rolled out more broadly across the county.

Did the pilot go well?

The pilot was a huge success. We learnt a lot from it. We found that community supermarkets work best when they are created by local people. The Burrell's established relationships with local residents and understanding of the specific needs of their community, followed naturally



that they were the best people for the job. Billie was the key to this; her motivation and creativity were as crucial as her community connections and knowledge. We also realised the need for funding to get the projects off the ground, as well as continued financial and development support to grow the offer. But our biggest learning was the opportunity to offer additional support outside the realm of just food. Hunger was usually symptom of wider issues people were facing. Until the basic need of being able to eat is tackled, it's really hard to address those wider challenges that many people face and help them build themselves up to a point where they don't need the support any more.

So, what happened next?

From the pilot, we developed our own concept of what a social supermarket should look like in Norfolk. We created the idea of a 'food hub'; a place where people could access affordable food and support to help them escape food insecurity for good. Working with Norfolk County Council's Norfolk Office of Data and Analytics (NODA), we identified 10 key locations where food support would have the biggest impact. From here, we began to build the UK's first centralized affordable food hub network. ♦



Greater than the sum of its parts

How the Nourishing Norfolk network is achieving more together

Tackling food insecurity in Norfolk is a big job. Norfolk is one of the largest counties by area, so getting quality local food support to all who need it is a challenge. The Nourishing Norfolk network aims to provide affordable groceries to thousands of people in Norfolk, whether they are in a densely populated city or a sparsely populated village. It now boasts 22 social supermarkets, community pantries, and larders that support their communities. I spoke to Billie Lawler, who explained how and why this network was formed, how cooperation has created new opportunities, and why the network is here to stay.

So, Billie, how did the Nourishing Norfolk Network come about?

The Nourishing Norfolk Network was created about a year after the launch of the Burrell Shop. It was a first and foremost a response to the growing number of social supermarkets. Whilst I was still working at the Charles Burrell Centre, people from all over Norfolk were coming to me for advice on how to set up a social supermarket-

as we were the original. Some found out about the project through the news, others were sent by the Norfolk Community Foundation. Either way, we helped them. The network came about as a way to provide ongoing support and shared learning for all the food hubs in the local communities. We believe that by working together, we can create a sustainable and inclusive food system that benefits everyone in the community.

Who joined first?

Burrell was first, and was soon joined by the Food Pantry Feltwell. They had set up during Covid to do emergency food parcels, and they wanted to address the same problems that the Community Foundation did, so they came on board. Next was Shrublands Community Supermarket in Gorleston, followed by Sally's Store in Great Yarmouth. Then they started coming thick and fast, with over 22 members as of today.

How did you end up coordinating the network?

I was already used to supporting the food hubs at the Burrell Shop. We were a mature organisation and had worked out all the kinks with pricing, supply and membership models so I naturally became to go-to. In time, I was asked by the Norfolk Community Foundation to step on board and be the Network Coordinator full-time. It just made sense.

How does the network encourage cooperation among the food hubs?

That comes easily and readily to the food hubs. Community organisations are used to

collaborating and sharing resources, so it came as second nature. The network offers a platform for regular meetings and training to help each hub with their development. We encourage the sharing of resources among the food hubs, including not only surplus produce and equipment, but expertise and advice too. The network encourages the active participation of all food hubs in the programme, allowing members, both big and small, to magnify their voices and affect change. For small groups especially, being able to shape conversations gives them greater agency and influence that they would struggle to achieve on their own. This not only helps in building a sense of ownership but also ensures that the food hubs remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the communities.

How many people is the network supporting?

There are now 22 social supermarkets, community pantries and larders operating as part of the Nourishing Norfolk network. They are supporting over 8,500 households across Norfolk with affordable groceries – that's about 22,000 people.

Do you think the hubs will always be here?

With a new household signing up every 2 hours, it doesn't look like the hubs will be going away any time soon. People will always find themselves at points of crisis, and knowing that there is a nearby place where you're welcome, where you're not a burden, and where you can find the help you need from friendly faces that you trust – that is an invaluable community resource. ♦

Demand for supply

Why is supplying food so challenging?

Supply has always been a challenge for the programme, but working together as a network, Nourishing Norfolk has found ways to overcome the issues that affected hubs in the early days.

Supply and Logistics manager, Tori Lewis, explained that “people make the assumption that actually all food is donated, and it is then passed on through the food hubs. It's a really small amount that's donated and it's usually donated quite locally.” From the very early days of the programme, local growers have been essential in ensuring fresh produce is available from their local food hubs. Allotment holders have been supplying their local hubs since day one. Larger producers regularly donate, too. Farmer Melinda Raker from Croxton gives potatoes and onions to her local food hub, The Burrell Shop. She said: “It doesn't take much to load a few potatoes onto the back of a truck. It's an easy gift. Sometimes there is surplus. Sometimes there are crops the supermarket don't want and the community shops welcome them with open arms. We're pleased to do it; no-one should go hungry and these are difficult times.”

Similarly, local suppliers have always been keen to get involved. Rather than seeing food hubs as competition, local businesses are usually the first to offer their support, providing the hubs with food or cleaning





products, or offering customers the chance to donate via an in-store collection point. Food hubs also source free food from redistributors, such as Fareshare, which distributes bulk products close to their 'best before' date. Nevertheless, supplies have been more limited lately as the cost of living crisis continues to bite. Richard from Soul Foundation illuminates this point further: "There seems to be a lot less surplus food around. So whereas we have had anything up to 25 tonnes a week coming through, when we're delivering boxes at scale, now we're not getting anywhere near that."

Furthermore, donations are often random and key things that food hubs need for all members, such as rice, pasta, tinned food and other basics are not always guaranteed. Tori said that in order to overcome this, "the hubs need to purchase food in order to offer a really meaningful range of products. The vast majority of things that are sold through the affordable food hubs are actually bought in through an association with someone like Bookers or Morrison's wholesale for charity." This ensures that essentials are available to members, but to get the full range of goods at the right price, staff and volunteers must spend time chasing deals and opportunities, which reduces the time that they

can spend helping their members with other support. Ensuring a reliable and guaranteed supply of basics to food hubs at affordable price was therefore critical to ensuring the sustainability of the network. Carla, volunteer at Feltwell, said if there was a central warehouse, "we wouldn't have to spend so much time getting in contact with companies to see if they are able to support us, because even though we're here on set days, our work doesn't stop when we shut these doors."

The real revolution in this programme is the Nourishing Norfolk warehouse. The space and logistics to operate it have come as a result of a partnership with Norse Gorup, a local firm determined to make a difference. Nourishing Norfolk is the only affordable food network in the UK that has its own bespoke supply and distribution model, and the impact is immense. Andrea Auburn, manager at The Feed Social Supermarket, described it as "the final piece of the puzzle". She went on to praise the benefit of "having that really reliable, affordable supply of food. It's revolutionary for the shop, really, having that really easy way of working together and knowing that the food is going to come to us. The food is obviously the centre of the project, and it has been one of the challenges, you know, trying to access affordable stop that we

can kind of buy in a sustainable way being able to have that does mean that we can focus on making sure that people using the shop can eventually move into other things."

Brian Hopper, who manages the Warehouse, described how this has also opened up other opportunities: "We can now receive larger donations into the warehouse, like from the country food trust that recently donated a couple of pallets of ready-made Bolognese which was just amazing to be gifted on." Recently, Thetford-based firm Easy Cleaning Solutions has been able to offer a manufacturer-direct supply of household products to the network through the warehouse. This opportunity to receive large volume donations has only been possible thanks to the Norse warehouse. Something that the project is really excited to experiment with, explained Brian, is "capturing waste products. The wonky veg; the cans with misspelt labels; the weird-coloured washing-up liquid from when they change colours and scents. Anywhere where we can save a business time, money or resources by capturing a product that would have to be decanted, relabelled or disposed of – not because it was defective, but because supermarkets wouldn't accept it – that's where we want to be." ♦



02

Right food,
right now

Convenience is killing us

BUT WE CAN FIGHT BACK.

“IT MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE TO BUY A BOX OF CHICKEN AND CHIPS INSTEAD OF TOILING AT THE STOVE. ESPECIALLY AS YOU CAN BE SURE THE KIDS WILL EAT IT, SO THERE’S NO DANGER OF IT GOING TO WASTE.”

Henry Dimbleby published the National Food Strategy in 2021. It sets out a vision of a world where food is not just a source of sustenance, but a tool for social and environmental change. It pulled together information on every aspect of food production and consumption in the UK, including the impact of inequality on diet and health. The report’s analysis of the yearly National Diet and Nutrition Survey reveals that individuals with lower incomes tend to consume diets that are rich in sugar but lacking in fibre, fruits, vegetables, and fish. Children from the least well-off 20% of families consume approximately 29% fewer fruits and vegetables, 75% less oily fish, and 17% less fibre every day than their counterparts from the wealthiest 20%. The effects of this disparity are not surprising.

People in the most deprived decile are almost twice as likely to die from preventable causes compared to those in the wealthiest decile. They are 2.1 times more likely to die from preventable heart disease and 1.7 times more likely to die from preventable cancer. Their children are three times more likely to experience tooth decay by

age five and are almost twice as likely to be overweight or obese by age 11.

In Norfolk, recent research from the University of East Anglia has thrown more light on the eating habits of children. Only around 25% of children in primary and secondary school were eating the recommended 5-a-day portions of fruit and vegetables. The study notes that “higher combined fruit and vegetable consumption was significantly associated with higher mental well-being... fruit and vegetable consumption by secondary school pupils showed a linear pattern of association with mental well-being scores, such that those consuming five or more portions had higher well-being than those consuming three or four”. Their research also revealed that around 7% of primary and 14% of secondary pupils were not eating breakfast at all, and that 1.2% of secondary pupils were having an energy drink for breakfast.

It is tempting to lay blame at the feet of the individual, but as Dimbleby states starkly: “The fact is, we live in a completely different food landscape from

that of our thrifty grandparents... unhealthy food is cheaper per calorie than healthy food. This is especially true when you factor in the opportunity cost of cooking from scratch. If you’re tired and short of time – and especially if you’re not a confident cook – it makes economic sense to buy a box of chicken and chips instead of toiling at the stove. Especially as you can be sure the kids will eat it, so there’s no danger of it going to waste.”

The National Food Strategy has brought to light the pressing need for immediate action to tackle inequalities in our food systems. Fortunately, we can make positive changes in Norfolk to combat this issue. We can ensure individuals from low-income backgrounds have the right support so they can access healthier foods within their communities. We can help open the door to more choices and inspire people to try cooking from scratch. By taking positive steps to improve access to healthy food, we can help to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy good health and wellbeing.♦



Breaking the health/wealth divide

How can you afford to eat healthily when you can barely afford to eat?

It is no secret that healthy eating costs more. Recent research from the Food Foundation has shown that lower-income families would need to spend 50% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government-recommended healthy diet. Even if healthy ingredients can be accessed, the ability and confidence to cook healthy food from scratch is limited,

with one in six Britons saying they lack confidence in cooking with fresh ingredients, a number which rises to almost 1 in 5 for young adults. NCF Programmes Advisor Lizzi Barker talks about how overcoming barriers to accessing healthy food and changing the way that people view food can make all the difference.

Loddon Parish Council are using

funding to address the lack of fresh produce available at the Chet Valley Community Larder. Lizzi said that “the Parish Council applied for the grant as they were aware of the limitations that the larder has. Fresh food is some of the most difficult to come by in the context of community larders and pantries - which rely on donations - and purchasing is often the only way to overcome this. These items are often the most expensive for community larders to stock, but they are the healthiest and most beneficial for their community by a long way. By providing a better and larger variety of fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthy fresh foods, it has encouraged residents to try new foods and extend the variety within their diets. The Parish Council has also encouraged this by providing support such as recipe card ideas to educate and inspire about new healthy food items.”

Lizzi revealed that a big barrier to people trying new foods is the risk factor when buying food. “One of our colleagues, Sharon, went on a visit to the Coastal Community Supermarket, a Nourishing Norfolk food hub,” Lizzi said, “Sharon told me about a little girl who’d come in with her parents. The day before, she had watched Disney’s Ratatouille, and she convinced her parents to take fresh tomatoes, onions, and other vegetables to make the film’s signature dish. If the hub hadn’t been there, it’s something that they may not have tried. Fresh veg can be expensive and it’s a big risk for families to try something new, knowing that their child may not like it. Because the veg was free, they could take that chance and are eating more healthily because of it.” Confidence in cooking is also key, Lizzi explained, “which is why groups like the Federation of

Spixworth Schools and Top Banana have been investing in cookery classes for their community members.” When people know they are able to cook tasty meals from scratch from simple ingredients, they can begin to engage more with healthy eating. “Top Banana told us about one man who had an eating disorder. After attending classes, he was more able and motivated to cook for himself and has now reached a healthy weight thanks to the programme we funded,” she said, “and another particularly successful Top Banana session was the introduction of vegan chilli to older residents. Apparently, they were at first very reluctant to try it, but the feedback has shown how much they enjoyed the meals and how keen they were to explore more meat-free dishes – it’s not just the young people who are learning to love their veg!” ♦

“After attending classes, he was more able and motivated to cook for himself and has now reached a healthy weight thanks to the programme we funded”



03

“You are what you eat”, as the old saying goes. But do you feel how you eat, too? We explore how food and environment go hand in hand when it comes to mental wellbeing.

Cultivating wellbeing

Food for thought

The link between eating well, growing food and mental wellbeing.

We have seen how poor nutrition can lead to physical illnesses, but what about wellbeing as a whole?

The pandemic further amplified rises in mental illness, especially among young people. Compared to the rest of the UK, young individuals in the East of England experienced the most considerable nationwide spike in sadness, anxiety, and the highest rate of young people with autism or Asperger's seeking assistance. These rises are due to a wide variety of factors, ranging from stress or trauma, to genetics or disease. Increasingly, however, it is clear that diet and exercise also play a key role in how we feel.

Diets high in processed, nutrient-poor food can lead to deficiencies in key minerals, fats and acids, which can impact brain function and mental health. For example, a lack of omega-3 fatty acids, which are found abundantly in pricy foods like salmon and walnuts, has been linked to an increased risk of depression. Looking

at nutrition at this scale is important, but can sometimes make us miss the big picture. For example, the later consequences of a poor diet include obesity and diabetes, which have well-documented associations with poorer mental health. The simple answer is to eat healthily to maintain good mental health, but of course: it's not that simple. Household income plays a crucial role in determining what adults and children eat, particularly as household income decreases. Poverty is therefore one of the key risk factors that affects both mental health and diet.

Similarly, exercise also plays a key role in mental wellbeing. As well as helping to prevent obesity and diabetes, which are linked to poor mental health, it has been shown that just 30 minutes of daily exercise is sufficient to improve and maintain wellbeing and mental health. This is especially true for outdoor exercise, particularly gardening and growing food. A number of studies from the University of Essex on so-called 'green exercise' has demonstrated

reductions in stress and depression, increases in self-esteem, mood and wellbeing in children, adolescents and adults who participate.

Community growing projects are vital to widen participation in growing. Many people on limited incomes cannot afford the equipment or have the outdoor space to spare. Similarly, those with disabilities are often denied the opportunity to participate in this mood-boosting and health-improving activity because of cost or because of the need for adapted tools and landscapes. Community growing projects help to overcome these barriers, meaning people can benefit from this beneficial activity. Furthermore, these projects also provide an opportunity for social interaction, which can be especially beneficial for individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions. These projects offer an added social context to the beneficial exercise, counteracting feelings of loneliness and social isolation. ♦



Good mood food!

How a focus on food in communities brings benefits to body and mind

Increasingly, food is being linked with mood. Physical and mental health are intertwined in ways we are only beginning to properly understand, but what is clear is that having access to nutritious food benefits both body and mind. By choosing whole, unprocessed foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains, individuals can provide their bodies with the nutrients they need to function optimally. The act of growing food affords people access

to nutritious foods that are vital for health and wellbeing, but also has the added benefit of bringing people together. Catrin Hamer, Senior Programmes Advisor at Norfolk Community Foundation, points to the Greening Our Communities grant programme as the prime example of how communities can feed their bodies and minds together.

“The fund supports communities in Norfolk to take action to improve

their local environment while providing people with the benefits of connecting with nature,” said Catrin. “Along with environmental projects, many groups have funded community allotments and growing projects – with great success.”

One grant recipient was Norfolk African Community Association, who ran an organic growing programme at their community allotment for children and parents. Project leader Dr Eshetu



Similarly, grant recipient Billie-Jean Croll from iFarm said “Our goal has been to reduce social isolation and connect people with their local environment. By running these sessions we hope to have provided our volunteers with the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and eat fresh and healthy food together. All our volunteers have been able to benefit from our plants and produce, taking home with them after volunteer days young plants for their own gardens and produce that has been grown. We always provide healthy and nourishing food for our volunteers... this gives people the opportunity to try things they might not have been able to before.”

“A major benefit of many of the growing projects that we have funded through Greening our Communities is that they bring people together,” Catrin explained, “this can help reduce social isolation and improve mental wellbeing.” Last year, the Foundation compiled a report for the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board by working with community groups to identify how people from migrant and traveller communities interacted with mental health services. Most groups reported stigma around mental health within the communities they work with but demonstrated how important community groups were for supporting wellbeing. New Routes participated in this research, and they also received a Greening our Communities grant to develop a community allotment. Gee Cook from New Routes said “the allotment has become a part of their weekly routine, providing a sense of community, an opportunity to disconnect from



daily stresses, and a means of cutting their weekly food bills... [one woman] told us that the allotment has given her a sense of purpose. She can feel isolated when her children have gone to school, and the allotment gives her a feeling of providing for her family. She is really proud of the produce that she is taking home and so happy that others are benefiting from her work.”

Catrin also relayed a story from Simon Floyd, Director of The Common Plot programme, which also received a grant. “There was a young man who started coming to the allotment. He had no confidence and very few friends. His small part of the plot yielded some lovely spuds, garlic, some curly kale and a row of small but tasty carrots. This delighted him. Gradually, over the course of the last 18 months, he has become much more able to make eye contact with others and has even begun to initiate conversations - almost unimaginable when they first met him. He has found a real love and feel for nature, especially for trees and arboriculture. He now comes without fail every weekend and has changed his course of study to undertake a course in wildlife management at Easton College. He also announced he had been given a Saturday job at a local garden centre, where he cited The Common Plot as a major influence – what a success!” ♦



Escaping food insecurity

How hubs are getting to the root of the problem

A few months ago, we had the chance to sit and talk to Andrea Auburn and Mally Berry at the Feed's Social Supermarket about how The Feed's approach was supporting people beyond just food. Both were proudly dressed in the staff uniform: a blue apron emblazoned with The Feed logo. Based in the Lakenham ward, one of the most deprived in Norwich, The Social Supermarket was the 7th to join the Nourishing Norfolk network. We asked Andrea about the impact of the cost of living crisis on local families. She replied that recently, The Feed has been seeing "people from all walks of life. We're seeing people who previously might have relied on food support who are in deeper poverty than they were previously, but also a whole new group of people who haven't had to access services like this before, who suddenly are thrown into that really challenging situation of not being able to feed their families. We're seeing people who are working full time suddenly unable to make ends meet; a big energy bill one month might mean that their food budget is completely out the window. About two-thirds of those tell us that is down to the cost of living crisis."

Food is a fundamental need. Along with shelter, warmth and water, it forms the most basic level people can exist at. Hunger is a symptom of

other problems individuals are facing, and food is the key to breaking down barriers to address these deep-rooted issues. Food brings people across the threshold, and as staff and volunteers build rapport with customers, they feel safe enough to open up about their bigger challenges. Support can then be offered or referrals be made. Customers are referred to services by someone they already know and trust, making them more likely to engage with the support. That's exactly what The Feed are doing.

Mally busily carried boxes of food through to the back room, stopping in between trips to eat the stir-fry he prepared as part of a cookery demonstration in the adjoining Community Café that morning. He told us about what his life was like before the Social Supermarket opened: "I was living at home with my wife and kids and we started struggling for food, so this is when I first found out about community fridges. Then my circumstances changed, so I no longer lived with my wife. I became homeless and then I then had to use the soup kitchen. Unfortunately because COVID then struck, that shut down the soup kitchen, so the only option I had for food at the time was Prince of Wales Community Fridge from The Feed. When I went in there, the first thing I saw was them offering work experience, training and mental health support, so I got some help. I got some good advice."

Community organisations often have connections to other community resources. This can be as simple as helping someone apply for a fuelbank voucher on their phone to referring someone to a domestic abuse service. In Mally's case, The Feed was able to connect him to support to make positive changes after a difficult few years. It wasn't until the Social Supermarket opened

that Mally saw his life completely transformed.

"I got told this place [the Community Supermarket] was opening up and my brain was like, 'I want to help. I really want to help,'" Mally said excitedly, "I thought 'as soon as this opens, I'm going to try and get in'. I started as a customer, then a volunteer, and now I'm assistant manager." Mally finds his personal experience comes in useful when speaking to new customers: "I've got some similarities from being there myself, you know? I know what it's like to struggle to provide food for a week. And I can show them there is a way it can be done."

The Feed has opened a Community Café next door to their food hub. Andrea explained that "it's designed to be a community hub. You can get your groceries, but then you can also get that advice on the spot [in the Café]. We have a weekly drop-in with Citizen's Advice, where you can speak about all manner of things: health, housing, money, family, all sorts of things. Then we have a number of other organisations like Your Own Place, who organise a series of workshops around money skills. So it's kind of looking at those things which are making people need the shop and hoping that we can help to change things long term."

The Community Café goes beyond signposting; it brings the support to supermarket itself. Providing more direct links with housing assistance programs, job training, or mental health services in-house makes daunting first steps easier for people who wouldn't otherwise be confident seeking or accessing help. By referring people to these services, food hubs can help them address the root causes of their food insecurity and build a stronger foundation for the future. ♦

04

TOGETHER, NORFOLK SHINES BRIGHTER.

WORKING TOGETHER



Business for good

When we all bring our gifts, Norfolk shines brighter

On every letter we send, every banner we fly and every page on our website, Norfolk Community Foundation lists our motto: 'Together, Norfolk shines brighter'. There are perhaps no other programmes which encompass this as much as Nourishing Norfolk does. Everyone has a gift, and by bringing these gifts together, we have helped Norfolk build an innovative solution to a very real community problem.

Local businesses have, since the start of the programme, been instrumental to its development and to the development of individual hubs. Norfolk ProHelp, a

scheme for businesses to give their professional time to communities that is managed by the Foundation, has supported the development of multiple hubs. For example, the Coastal Community Supermarket received support from Nurture Marketing to create branding for the project, and from Welbourne & Co to provide tax advice to help the project move forward.

At the macro scale, benefitting the entire network of food hubs, is our relationship with local firm Norse Group Ltd. Norse has been instrumental in the programme developing at pace. They have been





Foundation sat down with Justin Galliford, Chief Executive of Norse Group and Steve Atkins, a Project Manager at Norse Group, to talk about how Norse Group have been supporting the programme:

Justin, why is it important for Norse Group to be working with local charities and organisations like Norfolk Community Foundation?

able to provide at no cost a central warehouse space and deliveries to the food hubs. Whilst this forms the cornerstone of Norse's support for the charity, they have gone beyond this, also providing vehicle maintenance for the two mobile food hubs (The Breckland Mobile Food Store and the Coastal Community Supermarket) as well as supporting with project management expertise. Victoria Lewis from Norfolk Community

JG: Well, Norse Group's aim is improving people's lives, so we've always had a big social streak to everything that we do, and when I first heard about the Nourishing Norfolk network, it was such a great initiative. It was an immediate fit for us... to really help what is a project grounded in the fundamentals of making sure that everybody eats well in Norfolk and no one goes hungry.

So can you tell me a little bit about the support that Norse have been providing so far to the Nourishing Norfolk initiative?

JG: It pretty quickly emerged that we can help with Logistics. So we have one of our businesses called n-able which does disabled adaptation, but actually it's got a large vehicle fleet that moves all across Norfolk. The next part on that has been that we have the store here at Fifer's Lane where we've got some spare capacity. This is a good place for it to be. It allows us to tie just one step closer to our Logistics.

So, Steve, Norse is helping and supporting Nourishing Norfolk in so many different ways; can you tell us a little bit about how you're helping?

SA: Yep. So, I was responsible for



the warehouse. I knew that we could probably relieve some of the space, which we've made available for the programme. I'm a qualified forklift driver so, we help lift some of the heavier items around...

Very handy indeed, actually!

SA: Yeah! We're also helping with setting up the logistics and the administration of the project. So any which way we can support you, naturally we will.

There's no end of assistance that you and your team and many of the other teams at Norse have been able to help us with so it's absolutely fantastic and we're so grateful for that support. What kind of difference do you think we can make by working together with a company like Norse in our community?

SA: We've got a good, robust base for Logistics. We've got a lot of experience in supporting wide scope projects and I think that sort of experience leads to the type of synergies with those types of roles of what you do here, disseminating product to various people.

JG: So Tori, can I ask you: how does Norse's aim of improving people's lives fit in with ethos of the Norfolk Community Foundation?

Well, I think so far, I've worked with so many individuals in the Norse Group from n-able, to the Catering team, to here at the warehouse. And what I found is a really passionate drive to just get stuck in and get involved. And everyone's been very willing to help with really practical advice, which is exactly what we need to be able to provide support to

communities right across Norfolk and so much of the time Norfolk Community Foundation wants to be able to enable passionate community-minded people to achieve something brilliant where they are and I think that's exactly the same ethos that I've found here. And again, we couldn't be more grateful for that support. ♦





WEAVING NATIONAL RECOGNITION WITH
A LOVE FOR THE LOCAL TO MAKE CHANGE

The Foundation, Fundraising and the Future

As the Head of Philanthropy at Norfolk Community Foundation, I am proud to say that our Nourishing Norfolk programme has been successful in bringing together different sources of funding to support our initiative. We have combined local support from individuals, fundraisers, businesses, and borough councils with County Council funding and national funding, too. This blended funding model has created a sense of shared ownership and community, which is essential for the long-term success of our programme.

When starting the pilot hub in Thetford, seed money from Breckland District Council was vital to getting the project off the ground. When a donated chiller broke, support from the national organisation Feeding Britain was critical in replacing it and expanding the number of chillers available to provide fresh foods. This early investment was key. It demonstrated clearly that there was faith and momentum in what was trying to be achieved. It paved the way

for more people to throw their support into this groundbreaking initiative.

Many individuals were inspired to give to the programme, either through monthly donations, through a salary sacrifice scheme called 'Payroll Giving', or through family trusts or personal funds. Likewise, many have been inspired to mobilise either by themselves or as a group and fundraise for the initiative. As Judy puts it: "It feels good to give, but inspiring others to give to a cause you're passionate about; that feels even better!"

The Norfolk Superhero Challenge mobilised North Norfolk to support their local food hubs through an epic day-long quadrathlon fundraiser, raising over £200,000 for 5 hubs. Similarly, Chestnut Hospitality's 'Safari Cycle' raised £21,000 for the initiative across the county. Nourishing Norfolk was also chosen as Jarrold's charity of the year. The Jarrold team took part in a host of events across their 3 stores, engaging their staff with the programme and its

goals. They brought staff on board with activities like fashion sales, curry nights and raffles, and encouraged those participating in Run Norwich to direct their sponsorship towards Nourishing Norfolk. They raised almost £20,000 for Nourishing Norfolk.

Norfolk Community Foundation has also brought inwards investment into the county to support the network of food hubs. Feeding Britain has been a partner from the beginning, but more recently, funding secured from The National Lottery has meant that the long-term security of the programme has been assured. The success of Nourishing Norfolk would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of our community. Community Foundations are transparent and trustworthy, and donors are confident that their contributions will be used effectively to address the most pressing needs in the community. The programme has resonated with people locally and nationally who want to make a difference to those who need it most. ♦



“THERE WAS FAITH AND MOMENTUM IN WHAT WAS TRYING TO BE ACHIEVED. IT PAVED THE WAY FOR MORE PEOPLE TO THROW THEIR SUPPORT INTO THIS GROUNDBREAKING INITIATIVE.”



I am deeply impressed with the Nourishing Norfolk food programme. I am a passionate believer in people and that they are at their best, and flourish most when they are a community. The Norfolk Programme absolutely affirms that belief. When Claire Cullens shared her vision of "when you ask but don't tell communities what they need, you unlock huge amounts of energy and innovation to tackle the problems we are facing today". That is pure truth and how I wish those in charge of our world today could understand it.

The Norfolk Community Foundation's Nourishing Norfolk programme is an amazing example of community in action, supporting 22,000 to access affordable food through a network of food hubs in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Norfolk. These food hubs allow people to shop with dignity, giving food at a price they can afford. It allows them to choose the food they want to eat and encourages people to try fresh, local in season products so that cooking might become a pleasure and not a worry about how you can provide for your family. Keeping communities in the driving seat has inspired hundreds of local people to bring their time, talent and gifts to work together for a better future.



We hope you were as inspired reading this as we were





Please share this Spark with those who you think would also find this of interest, and continue to work with us to achieve even more.

Together, Norfolk shines brighter.



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