



A Report into the Feasibility of a Community Food Centre Network in the City of Bristol

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January 2017

A fuller version of this report, including financial details, is available on application.

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Executive Summary

Project Agora has undertaken a six month research project to examine and develop proposals for an innovation in food aid provision in the city of Bristol, UK. We conclude that there is the potential to develop a community food centre network that will significantly augment current provision in the city for vulnerable people and people in crisis. This network will not address food poverty as a standalone issue, but actively engage with the complex personal situations of vulnerable people, with their associated range of public health and other needs, through the development of a local community of health and well-being.

Each community food centre will offer a weekly gathering of a diverse group of people around a meal and a programme of activities focused on food. People in need of food aid will be referred to this meeting by agencies and by means of both peer and self-referral. The gathering will include people who are buying food as well as those receiving food aid and the food will be distributed without making any distinctions between these two types of recipients so as to preserve dignity and self-worth amongst those in crisis. The programme of activities will be based on a 'popular education' model that encourages a grass roots re-imagining of society with associated training in life skills such as cooking, growing, making and repairing and a process of asset-based community development with an interest in meeting the needs of isolated local people.

There will be five neighbourhood community food centres, situated in areas of multiple disadvantage and most will function within existing community centres. One central community food centre will be purchased, largely by means of a community share offer and additionally function to process and distribute foods to the neighbourhood centres as well as providing a full suite of facilities and business advice to a set of food-related businesses. We will also develop a number of land-based community food centres, hosted by existing growing projects in and around the city, where vulnerable people meet in an outdoor location and join in growing and harvesting food. We will encourage volunteering at every level of the network with associated training and accreditation.

The approach will be based on a clear commitment to working for a sustainable, earth-friendly city and will thereby source food from local and ethical producers and will not use supermarket waste. Our education programme will encourage mutual understanding, justice and transparency throughout the food chain, beginning with food's origins in the natural world.

Our business model is based on transformation of the core business of Real Economy Co-operative, which sources food from local suppliers and delivers food to food clubs around the city. This will be restructured with a name change and rules designed for a charitable community benefit society. The development of the community food centre network is envisaged over four years and will be funded by a mix of external grants, a community share issue and public donations.

After the four year development programme we anticipate that the network will have proved its worth to the city and become eligible for publicly funded revenue streams such as social prescribing.

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Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

The ideas contained in this report arose from three distinct activities.

1.1 The development of Real Economy Co-operative, which sources food from producers in the Bristol region and supplies its members through collection points around the city.

Real Economy Co-operative aims to be more than a technique for buying food. It arose from the local currency, the Bristol Pound and is consciously working for a sustainable city by localising the food economy and encouraging its members to become aware of and to respect all aspects of the food chain. Real Economy pays particular regard to supplying healthy food to people on tight budgets and has pioneered 'food clubs' in Avonmouth and Southmead. The core business of Real Economy has grown well through 2016 and looks on course to become financially sustainable by the end of 2017, but the work in disadvantaged areas has proved more challenging with cheap, but poor, food from cut price supermarkets dominating the mindset of many. This proposal offers a new approach to food as a basis for health and well-being in the disadvantaged areas of the city.

1.2 The proliferation of food aid enterprises in the UK, particularly the 'food bank' phenomenon.

This study is a reflection on reports¹ of widespread unease with the current food bank system and makes an attempt to chart a new way forward. Scholars in this area have analysed the dominant food bank model as propagated by the Trussell Trust and noted key areas of concern around the approach to dependency, moral judgement, collusion with supermarkets, the replacement of universal state welfare with charitable provision, undermining political protest about injustice and a characterisation of 'the poor' as 'deserving' and 'undeserving', with associated shame and stigma for those who accept food aid. The proposal outlined in this report is a response to these criticisms of our dominant food aid system and an assessment of the feasibility of a new approach.

1.3 The Community Food Centres of Canada

Canada has had food banks for more than thirty years. Some are now fearful that this process of food aid is becoming institutionalised and is irreversible². A few initiatives have arisen to challenge Canada's dominant model, aiming for a much more holistic, respectful and communal approach to food and food aid that engages with food growing and cooking and with community growth and resilience. These 'Community Food Centres' are experimental, but raise hope for a new way forward. More details are provided in Section 5.6. We are consciously attempting to translate and re-imagine best practice in this area into our home context of Bristol UK.

¹ **Contested space: The contradictory political dynamics of food banking in the UK** Williams A, Cloke,

P, May J and Goodwin M (2016)
Environment and Planning A 1-26 DOI:
10.1177/0308518X16658292

² <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/BFJ-02-2014-0077>

2. Our Community Food Centre Model

We propose to develop a network of Community Food Centres in disadvantaged areas of the city of Bristol.

2.1 Common Features

Each of these food centres will have the following aspects in common.

They will focus around a weekly gathering, where there will be a meal and a programme of activities open to all in the neighbourhood. The gathering will aim to become a community focussed on health and well-being.

The activities and ethos will be based on a 'popular education' model as pioneered in Latin America in the 1970s³, but translated into the current context⁴. It will focus on three areas:

- **Education** – a conversational process intended to reveal the nature of food systems and empower citizens towards recognising good food and procuring it in a manner that respects the earth and all participants in the food chain
- **Training in life skills** such as cooking, growing food, making and repairing;
- **Empowerment** – using a model of asset based community development centred on a food theme to meet the perceived needs of the members and those of the local neighbourhood especially in relation to isolated or vulnerable people.

The activities associated with the gathering will include participation in cooking the common meal.

All participants will be invited to attend regularly and regular attendance will be encouraged by a process of ordering food for the following week.

Vulnerable people and people in crisis may be referred to the community food centre by agencies, or by peers, or they may self-refer. They will be welcomed as full members of the gathering without distinction, but will be entitled to receive, when they first come, and order, for subsequent occasions, some free or discounted food. This distribution of subsidised food will be made using a discount system so that no one is aware who is receiving it.

The overall ethos of the gathering will be one of mutual participation and respect based on looking out for one another on a simple human basis. Recipients of food aid will not be approached as clients with a set of problems to be solved, but simply as people in normal conversation, who may choose, as and when they like, to talk about their situation. There will be no obvious hierarchical distinctions made between staff, volunteers and food aid recipients.

³ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire 1970

⁴ Section

2.2 Types of Community Food Centre

There will be three types of community food centre.

2.2.1 Neighbourhood Community Food Centres

We propose to develop four or more neighbourhood centres located in areas of multiple disadvantage and using existing public spaces such as community centres, or former libraries. These will benefit from existing social networks associated with the venue and will provide a new committed activity with an associated rental revenue. In some cases the establishment of a community food centre will work together with a planned refurbishment.

Evidence – Jac Blacker, manager of Avonmouth Community Centre has welcomed our plans, is wholly supportive of our aims and methods and is very keen to establish a Community Food Centre at their facility in Avonmouth. A planned new kitchen and dining area could work in obvious synergy with this initiative.

- Judith Gardiner, manager of Southmead Community Centre welcomes this initiative and would like to see it implemented in their situation.

2.2.2 Land-based Community Food Centres

We propose a series of land-based community centres which are based at community growing sites around the city through which vulnerable people have the opportunity to learn about growing, harvesting and cooking food, join in a meal outside and take away a stock of fresh and dried food, some of which has been grown on site. These land-based centres will be otherwise similar to neighbourhood centres.

Evidence- this model is now being trialled by Sims Hill Shared Harvest at the Feed Bristol site. A number of agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and existing food banks have indicated their willingness to refer people to this system. A grant has been obtained from Tudor Trust and the first referrals are currently being made. Food is to be supplied by Sims Hill Shared harvest and Real Economy Co-operative.

2.2.3 The Central Community Food Centre

The central community food centre is the beating heart of the whole system. It will be a low-cost space, possibly a converted warehouse in the inner city, St Paul's, Old Market, Easton area and will be fitted out to provide: warehouse space, a dining/gathering/community area, an industrial kitchen and some office space. It will perform all the functions of a neighbourhood centre in terms of food aid, education, training and community organising, but will also perform the following three functions

1. **Process surplus and other bought-in food from local producers into food specifically designed to provide a healthy diet to vulnerable people.** These foods will be made available to all other food centres across the city and form part of a food business based at the centre that also provides meals on wheels and sells other food products through online purchasing using the established Real Economy system.

Evidence – ‘Can Cook’ operate a thriving business providing fresh, healthy meals-on-wheels to customers in Liverpool. This business, supplemented by public donations, supports their charitable work of providing the same high quality fresh take home meals to people in crisis. Twice a week around 500 meals leave their premises to be delivered to five partners in the region who manage the distribution of the meals. This year so far they have provided over 10,000 free meals.

At DC Central Kitchen, Washington DC, students in the Culinary Job Training Programme, who are adults with histories of incarceration, homelessness, addiction and trauma, turn surplus food and food purchased from local farmers into 5,000 meals a day which are distributed to be served by homeless shelters, rehabilitation clinics and after-school programmes.

There are many more inspiring organisations that are using food surpluses, often combined with local produce purchased with donations, to provide healthy meals to those in need, whether in their own communities or as foreign aid in areas of crisis.

2. Provide a complete suite of facilities for a set of other food-related enterprises including warehouse space, freezer and fridge capacity, office facilities and hire of the industrial kitchen on days when it is not in use by our main business.

Evidence – This element of the Central Community Food Centre will be based on the successful culinary incubator model from the United States. In this model a fully equipped commercial kitchen is rented out to start-ups at an hourly rate, removing the barriers of those initial costs and significantly reducing the risk should the business be unsuccessful. Incubators generally support small, low-income businesses; the Hot Bread incubator in East Harlem offers subsidised rates to a percentage of their applicants. The incubators also offer support and advice to the businesses on matters such as accounting, marketing and insurance. At La Cocina in San Francisco, once established benchmarks have been reached, after 4-6 years, the businesses graduate out of the incubator to their own premises to allow new ventures in, whilst remaining part of the community.

Further information about culinary incubators can be found in Section 5.7

3. Provide a community space for hire to other values-led groups in the city who share our objects. This will help to enhance public awareness of the food centre and increase our potential for recruiting volunteers and ensuring social diversity.

3. Why do this?

3.1 Food, community and well-being

‘Food poverty’ is not a straightforward thing to define or understand. In the UK, those in ‘food poverty’ are most frequently caught in a multifaceted web of disadvantage and vulnerability⁵, which will include problems with rent, debt and energy bills that demand urgent financial payment. Going without food, or seeking food aid, is the simplest way to cut down on financial outgoings so as to provide for the other more pressing demands on a limited amount of money. In this sense ‘food poverty’ is a cultural construct.

Food is more than a product and we are more than consumers. Academics and nutritionists list a number of health problems in disadvantaged areas that are not simply related to *lack of food*, such as poor micronutrient status and obesity. Obesity, for example, is a growing problem with major resource issues for the health service. There are many, diverse health deficiencies associated with residence in an area of multiple disadvantage and these are most obviously shown in the measure of longevity whereby people can be expected to live up to 8 years less than in more prosperous areas⁶. Loneliness, for example, might not normally be associated with health, but recent studies have shown that loneliness is extraordinarily common especially among older people and that it can have an impact on life expectancy equivalent to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day⁷. This means that food provision should not be approached as a single and simple resource issue. Food provision subsists within a nest of potential interventions which must address the needs of the whole individual and take into account patterns of eating, the relationships between food, identity and local culture and the general well-being of the area.

*Evidence – Liz Dowler, formerly, Emeritus Professor of Food and Social Policy in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick, recognises the importance of food to the health and well-being of a local culture and says ‘food can often be a means of bringing local people together and building a local economy’...‘by being involved in food in some way or another, even if it is only buying, preparing, cooking and eating it, people can express that bigger sense of health which matters very much’.*⁸

There are therefore no scientific or technical fixes to food poverty and simple handouts cannot get to the root causes. Our approach is to address food aid within a gathering of the local community orientated towards health and well-being, including a deliberate multi-faceted engagement with education about the food system and training in life skills such as cooking, growing, making and repairing, as well as community organising, that will develop a sense of personal resilience and agency and counter isolation. We will also take a particular concern to raise awareness of food growing in the context of our

⁵ Evidence taken from Sue Evans, Director, Citizens Advice Bureau, South West.

⁶ www.healthprofiles.info

⁷ Date from Loneliness: a threat to Scotland’s health – a conference organised by voluntary health Scotland 21 Nov 2016. There is reason to believe that similar impacts will be evident in England as well as Scotland. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/08/keep-working-old-age-good-health-says-top-doctor/>

⁸ From a talk available at <http://tansey.org/news/LDtalk.html>

relationship with the earth, encouraging contact with the natural world and an appreciation of our current exploitative impact on nature.

One of the high level critiques of the current food bank system is that it is colluding in a process of transferring the responsibility for caring for vulnerable people from a state supported universal welfare system to charity.⁹ Evidence for this is particularly strong from the United States and Canada where food banks have been in existence for more than thirty years. Yet the tension between state provision and charity is more complex than many realise.

The unrecognised factor in this conundrum is the general decline in community strength and solidarity across the so-called developed world. Without local family or community networks of support then the only two avenues of recourse for most vulnerable people is the state or charity. But this need not be so. It may be that the real challenge to this generation is the rebuilding of community life so that people sense some level of duty to care for those around them and can therefore help address many of the non-specialist needs of people in their area. Such strengthening of the local community cannot simply be imposed by government, however much they may wish that it would happen, but it may be possible to encourage a deep, renewal of community life by the sort of tactic outlined in this Community Food Centre development. It is arguable that human community, itself, arose in a process of evolution through food sharing¹⁰. What could then be more natural than to reinvent community by a similar means, drawing people together around food sharing, training in life skills and organising to meet one another's needs?

3.2 Popular Education

We believe the moment is right to re-express the pioneering work of Paulo Freire in his approach to 'popular education'. We live in times when many people, particularly the poorest among us, need to be enabled to ask radical questions about the society of which they are a part. Freire's approach particularly suits adult education and we will focus on a food theme. Freire framed the issue of 'liberation' around the relationship between 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' and the potential for a new approach to teaching, or working with, the oppressed to enhance human well-being.

In our current situation, and in relation to food systems, we identify three distinct 'oppressed' groups.

3.2.1. The poor and vulnerable as 'oppressed'

Our poor and vulnerable people in the UK suffer from a general lack of resources, a set of rules and procedures that can be very complex to negotiate, a lack of systematic care, and being corralled, often by accident of history into 'disadvantaged areas', whose very

⁹ See for example <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/the-northerner/2013/feb/19/manchester-greater-manchester>

¹⁰ <http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/faculty/gurven/papers/kaplangurvensharing.pdf>

existence can confirm the oppressed in their situation and exacerbate it by means of communal depression. This group's experience is close to Freire's original description of oppression. Food banks on this method of analysis are inherently suboptimal because they 'subjectivise' the oppressed, identifying them as oppressed and confirming them in that position by an operating structure that clearly identifies givers and receivers in their respective social positions.

By contrast our community food centre approach will deliberately attempt to create a community without distinction, where purchasers of food, food aid recipients, staff and volunteers coexist on the basis of simple humanity in the context of a programme based on empowerment and focused on food.

3.2.2. The earth and its living systems are 'oppressed'

It is now apparent that human beings are oppressing the earth and its living systems in the sense of preventing its natural flourishing, destructively disturbing its ecosystems and altering the great balances of earth systems, like the climate.

We believe that the current supermarket system holds such a powerful place in the food chain that it predisposes to abuse of the soil, destruction of wildlife and maltreatment of animals for food, as well as creating massive carbon emissions through unnecessary global sourcing. It also has an inherent tendency towards poor practice in relationship to farmers and labourers (see also section 3.3).

For this reason our community food centre initiative is committed to a process of localising the food system, with the intention of cutting carbon emissions and making the whole food chain transparent, including its interaction with the soil, wildlife and food-source animals, so that people can work together to make informed ethical decisions about procurement of food.

For similar reasons we are committed to not using supermarket waste, even when it is offered freely by the supermarkets, because we believe this inherently justifies the supermarket system, including its wasteful practices. In Freire's terms accepting food waste from the 'oppressor' affirms the oppressor and their wider practices.

3.2.3. Western Culture is 'oppressed'

Since the advent of 'consumerism' in the 20th century,¹¹ with its deliberate manipulation of human beings by mass advertising, a whole swathe of humanity has been denied its full potential. With the great corporations and financial institutions now dominating national politics¹² many ordinary people sense that they are pawns in a big game over which they have little control. Surely this is a type of oppression? One way of understanding the popular, global political unrest at the end of 2016 is as an expression of frustration with inequality across UK and other Western societies, with an elite group,

¹¹ The Century of the Self – documentary by Adam Curtis, see especially the story about Edward Bernays and the invention of advertising that associated products with positive feelings.

¹² *Captive State – The Corporate takeover of Britain* by George Monbiot. 2000. *The Silent Takeover - Global capitalism and the death of democracy* by Noreena Hertz 2001

such as in London and the South East of England, leading extraordinarily affluent lives while many ordinary people struggle. The neo-liberal economic consensus is clearly under strain as the process has failed to deliver the expected benefits for the poorest. The fact that we have passively accepted the degrading designation of human beings as 'consumers' is testimony to our oppression.

By creating a transparent relationship between citizens and food producers we will enable people to move beyond simple consumerism, so that we have the means and the will to care about every element of the food chain and the development of a just economy that works in harmony with the earth.

This Community Food centre initiative is organised around a charitable community benefit society that recognises that all three of these aspects of oppression need to be addressed at the same time and that the solution to each is dependent on an approach to the others. For this reason, all the members of the society, whatever situation they are in, will be encouraged to combine to address all three of these elements of oppression so prevalent in our society today and each member is likely to contribute to the community benefit society in a number of ways (see section 4.2)

3.3 The national picture

Food poverty in the UK has come to light particularly through the activities of the Trussell Trust. Their business model relies on a very clever bringing together of two sets of motivations. Firstly there are the people in the advice centre or job centre who are presented with someone whose needs they cannot adequately meet for some reason. Making a referral to a food bank allows them to 'do something' for this person. Secondly, there are people in churches who are looking for a way to help people in society and immediately appreciate the value of charitable actions, providing they are easy to operate in practice. Working with these simple motivators, Trussell Trust has created a franchised network of thousands of food banks throughout the UK and essentially control the public voice of 'food poverty', collecting data and making representations to government.

The other factor in this growth of food banks is the development of 'sanctioning' in the benefit system, whereby people who do not, or cannot, fulfil the strict requirements of the benefits system are disciplined by means of a withdrawal of support for a number of weeks.

There has been much public debate about food banks, benefits and sanctioning, but the dialogue between government and Trussell Trust may not always make for the most creative solutions. Real Economy has recently become involved in the development of the Independent Food Aid Network¹³, launched in autumn 2016 and aiming to provide a voice for the many creative and independent approaches being pioneered in the UK in relation to food aid. By the end of 2016, this network already had fifty organisations in membership.

¹³ See <http://independentfoodaidnetwork.org.uk>

Academics have pointed to the moral issues that are embedded in the current system with the charitable model implicitly emphasising the distinction between the volunteer staff and the recipients of food aid, creating a sense of shame and suppressing any serious engagement with injustice and movement for political change. Yet research has shown that the reality on the ground can be far more complicated than this. Evidence has been discovered in North London, for example, showing that there were indeed some stereotypical and reactionary attitudes among food bank volunteers, but most found the whole system quite challenging in a moral sense and were clearly searching for deeper answers to the situations they were faced with. This study shows how food aid can be a route to serious moral engagement around food, the food system and human community life. This community food centre initiative deliberately builds on this insight offering food aid in the context of an holistic, empowering community education process.

The other 'framing' issue around food banks is the implicit assumption that vulnerable people are there to be 'fixed'. The dominant Trussell Trust story about 'ordinary' people going through a hard time, which a few food parcels can 'fix' is very far from the truth on the ground. This also plays into the government's own narrative about unemployment where everyone is cast as a job seeker, unless they can prove they should not be and the 'job' is seen as the panacea solution to the person's problems.

Our evidence suggests that many attending advice centres and food banks may actually be people who are chronically 'vulnerable' in some way. Their need is not going to be 'fixed' by any single intervention, but their needs are multiple and ongoing. One difficulty will follow another whatever is done.

Evidence – Sue Evans, Director of Citizens Advice Bureau, South West, told us of the queues of people outside their central Bristol advice centre every day and said that in her experience many of these people were 'vulnerable' in a chronic sense and that it would be good to recognise this and work to help them in some holistic way to a greater sense of well-being. Sue welcomed our Community Food Centre initiative as one way this could happen.

Our Community Food Centre network is designed specifically to provide non-specialist, ongoing support to vulnerable people by means of the renewal of community life around food.

There is no doubt that supermarkets currently enjoy a dominant position in the UK food sector and that they have driven down food prices significantly over the last fifty years. There is considerably less awareness, however, of the effect of the power of the supermarket sector on the livelihoods of food growers, on animal welfare, on wildlife and on the soil itself. The massive amounts of food waste produced by supermarkets have recently attracted attention, along with a call to make such waste available to charities. Substantial organisations like FareShare have arisen to organise this distribution of food waste, but critics argue that this process ultimately works to *justify* a supermarket system that is inherently wasteful and abusive both to people and the earth. It is also creating a culture where second-class food is deemed fit only for those who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to access first-class food. The contradictions are many.

'For example, the UK's largest food bank provider – the Trussell Trust – relies for a significant proportion of their donations on Tesco – the UK's largest supermarket chain, which continues to reject calls to pay a Living Wage. Whilst many Trussell Trust food banks regularly collect at Tesco stores, in the financial year 2013–2014 12% (£408,000) of the Trussell Trust's annual income came from Tesco 'Top ups': a partnership between the Trussell Trust, Fareshare and Tesco Stores Ltd. whereby Tesco 'tops up' the food collected on bi-annual nationwide Neighbourhood Food Collections events to the value of 30% of the agreed cost of the food. Whilst food collections at Tesco (and other supermarkets) often rely on food purchased and then donated by customers, rather than drawing on surplus food or products approaching their use-by dates, and hence, more obviously simply swell the coffers of food retailers rather than challenge food waste, there is a clear irony that many supermarkets donate food to the very food banks their employees are using...

*...according to one foodbank manager in Cornwall, an estimated 40% of their foodbank clients are currently on a zero-hour or low-wage contracts, including with Tesco, a major source of local employment in the surrounding rural area.'*¹⁴

The Community Food Centre network proposed here is committed to sourcing fresh food from local suppliers and to promoting transparency at every level of the food chain. This will help to create an alternative, resilient food economy that combines justice towards people with best environmental practice.

The other relevant national component is public health. We are living in an era when all our statutory health provision is under great strain. Reasons for this include a burgeoning obesity epidemic and an ageing population with greater social care needs. We believe that the initiative outlined here may enhance grass roots community life in such a way as to increase the non-specialist care to which many older people have access. It will also provide a focus on healthy food and lifestyle, which will implicitly counter obesity. For these reasons we anticipate a strong positive impact on public health.

3.4 The current situation in Bristol

Bristol is well-positioned to pioneer a community food centre network. It was accorded the accolade of Green Capital of Europe 2015 on the basis of its willingness to experiment with new ideas around becoming a sustainable city. It has become famous for its local currency the Bristol Pound¹⁵, new initiatives in renewable energy and for a burgeoning sector of its population that are creatively looking for a new way of living. Evidence for this comes from a permaculture group¹⁶ that numbers more than eight hundred whose members are involved in a massive range of green projects across the city including

¹⁴ Williams A, Cloke P, May J and Goodwin M (2016) Contested space: the contradictory political dynamics of food banking in the UK. *Environment and Planning A* 1-26 DOI: 10.1177/0308518X16658292

¹⁵ <http://bristolpound.org> <https://bristol-energy.co.uk/> www.bristolenergy.coop/

¹⁶ <http://bristolpermaculture.pbworks.com/w/page/11835027/FrontPage>

community-supported agriculture¹⁷, forest gardens, therapeutic growing, wildlife and public space growing¹⁸ initiatives.

We have a wide range of existing food aid initiatives in Bristol. These include several Trussell Trust food banks, the innovative Matthew Tree project and a range of meals and cookery interventions. We have researched this existing provision over a six month period and provide an overview in Section 5.1. Our conclusions are that a community food centre network as described here would provide a useful resource to the city and that it is distinctive in terms of its values, methods and its comprehensive approach.

Values: Our approach to this problem is determinedly holistic, recognising people, not as a set of problems to be fixed, but as valuable members of a community, integrating environmental concerns with social concerns and working through a model of empowerment that is recognised and valued across the world.

Methods: We are basing our work largely on existing community centres, thereby enhancing their general community work and helping them develop as a focus for community life. We are working on a model of food provision developed by a successful food cooperative that deliberately works with food from local and ethical sources. Through our central community food centre we are creating a new facility for food provision for the vulnerable in the city that will resource the neighbourhood centres. We are combining a viable business with food aid in order to minimise costs in terms of grants and donations.

Comprehensive Approach: The current food provision map has valuable initiatives in some areas of the city, but other areas are obviously under-resourced. We shall roll out our community food centre programme by deliberately focusing our first centres on the less resourced, disadvantaged areas of the city, such as Avonmouth.

3.5 A vision for the future

Our vision is to build on the initiatives already in place in this vibrant city and particularly to complement existing food aid provision by creating an alternative model that is based on enhancing human dignity and empowering communities in the context of working for a sustainable city.

The transformation of food infrastructure is an essential component of any vision for a sustainable bioregion. This project will create a local alternative to supermarkets as well as to food aid provision and will be deliberately working in partnership with all those many people and organisations in and around the city, who are seeking a life more in tune with the earth.

¹⁷ Eg <http://simshill.co.uk> www.thecommunityfarm.co.uk/

¹⁸ <http://ediblebristol.org.uk/> www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/feedbristol

Bristol has its own Food Policy Council, which recognised in its landmark ‘*Who Feeds Bristol*’ report, the importance of strengthening regional agriculture and distribution services in order to create a sustainable city.

Our community food centre network aims to contribute to an empowered, inclusive and sustainable city *where no one needs to be hungry and no one needs to be alone*.

4. How will you do it?

4.1 Community engagement

4.1.1 Education and training

We will have an ongoing programme of events at each centre based on an innovative approach to ‘popular education’ using a food theme and using a problem-posing approach (see also Section 2.3). This may also involve a particular use of food mentors and the keeping of food diaries by way of encouraging healthy eating. The programme will include training in cooking, growing making and repairing as a means to personal resilience and an asset-based community development programme¹⁹ seeking to respond to local interests and needs.

We will also seek to engage with those who are isolated in the local community. These people would not normally be present at our gatherings nor would they be heard in a traditional community organising process. We will take a particular concern to hear the voices of those with non-specialist needs eg for meals or company and see whether the local community might want to organise to meet those needs.

We anticipate that such a community organising process might act, at least in part, to address chronic concerns in our society about the isolation of elderly people, their poor nutrition status²⁰ and bed blocking in hospitals.

Evidence regarding community organising from Terry Black, Community Development Team Leader, Bristol City Council - “*Bristol City Council’s new corporate strategy sets out an approach to empower neighbourhoods and communities to do more things for themselves. The community development team for the past two years has been developing an asset based approach to its work and has been asking partners from across the city to be part of this journey. The project proposed by Real Economy fits nicely with this strategic vision of the local authority and has community organising principles which builds on the assets already in a community. This is the type of project we would like to see developed in the city of Bristol.*”

Evidence regarding the potential for volunteering – we spoke to several local service providers who were convinced of the value of this enterprise in regard to its potential to

¹⁹ For more see *The Abundant Community* by Peter Block and Josh McKnight

²⁰ *Huge rise in hospital beds in England taken up by people with malnutrition* by Denis Campbell, Health Policy Editor *The Guardian* 26 Nov 2016

provide meaningful engagement for volunteers, who may not be ready, in a psychological sense, for work. These people may have previously suffered from addictive behaviour and need a relatively safe space in which to function, but they can participate and will grow in self-esteem as a result. (see, for example, Section 5 Ashley Ward – Developing Health and Independence)

‘If your place was up and running I’d love to come and volunteer at something like that, you know, help out. While I’m not working that would be something really good and positive for me. I can come and have a free meal, but it’s not just that, it’s the social connections. I can go there, make some nice food, help other people, with other people. That would be amazing for me, the sort of thing I’d love. For me, I know I’ve got to keep my recovery going and get out and meet new people. I know if I’m sat in a flat on my own I’m likely to get a drink, if I isolate myself. Doing stuff like that is how you get back in society. It’s not just about going back to work, you’ve got to be doing things and that sounds brilliant to me. You’re offering people voluntary work, teaching people to cook and helping people who need food, lots of things at the same time.’ – Paul – a participant in a course run by the Community Kitchen in Hamilton House (Section 5.5)

Peter Gifford, long term volunteer at the Wild Goose Café proposed that ‘the keys for escaping dependency are to let people help and find some way of rewarding them for that help. This is empowerment.’

Evidence from Sims Hill pilot – our current project at the Sims Hill/Feed Bristol site at Frenchay provides participants with an active, outdoor experience focused on learning to grow food for themselves and for others. Taking part in an existing community growing project feeding eighty households on land near the inner city offers effective training in all aspects of food growing and may lead to ongoing participation in that community.

Evidence from Repair Café Repair Cafés are free meeting places and they’re all about repairing things (together). Visitors bring their broken items from home. Together with the specialists they start making their repairs in the Repair Café. It’s an ongoing learning process. The Repair Café was initiated by Martine Postma. Since 2007, she has been striving for sustainability at a local level in many ways. Martine organised the very first Repair Café in Amsterdam, on October 18, 2009. It was a great success. There are now more than a thousand repair cafes in existence.

4.1.2 Food Festival

As part of the launch phase of our community food centre network we will put on an innovative food festival with the aim of attracting public attention to the project and enlisting the wider community in the search for good food ideas for vulnerable people.

Members of the public and professional chefs will be invited to send in their own recipes for meals which meet these criteria:

- Liked by many people including those who are most vulnerable
- Low cost

- Good nutritional qualities
- Some or all of the ingredients are locally, seasonally sourced
- The ingredients or the finished meal are storable in some way eg freezing

There will be four categories of the competition.

Meals which are accessible by those

1. without cooking facilities
2. with a microwave only
3. with a microwave and freezer
4. with an oven, hob, microwave and freezer

They will be judged by three top Bristol chefs who will shortlist the top five in each category. Shortlisted entrants will then be invited to cook their dish at 'The Great Bristol Cook Off' or other title, where members of the public will judge the dishes as to their likeability and winners proclaimed in each category.

The media will be invited to this event and it will function as part of the publicity regarding the Central Community Food Centre and the public share offer to purchase/ equip the building.

Entrants will be entitled to have their name published on any products later sold by the Community Food Centre but will pass on all other rights to their recipes as a condition of entry. Our aim is to create new food products that can be sold by us and which will meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in the city.

This project to be worked up in conjunction with a PR/ media specialist.

4.1.3 How can I contribute?

The community engagement programme will offer multi-faceted opportunities for involvement in the society.

The most important way that all users can take part in the life of the society is through participation in our programme of popular education based on the theme of food. In addition each will have the opportunity of taking on specific roles within the society. Invitations to do this may be styled as follows:

Become a purchaser – order your food online and pick up from a collection point near you as a member of your neighbourhood food club.

Why do this? We specialise in sourcing food from local and ethical suppliers and encouraging our members to take an interest in food and the food system. We are an alternative to supermarket shopping, aiming to work sustainably and respect every part

of the food chain. Purchasing through us also indirectly supports the work of our food centres which meet the needs of people in crisis.

Become an investor – we will be making a community share issue in order to purchase a building in the Old Market, St Paul's, Easton areas of Bristol, which will become our Central Community Food Centre.

Why do this? Our Central Community Food Centre will be the beating heart of our food centre network, not only providing good food for people in crisis, but giving people a community they can belong to that is focussed on health and well-being. At the food centre people can find out about food and the food system, be trained in life skills like cooking and growing food and even start their own food business. A formal community share issue document will be published in due course, but we expect that investors will benefit from security in a building and, potentially, EIS and SISR tax relief. We will aim to raise around £500,000.

Become a donor – we are looking for a whole range of donors to support this project, including donations towards purchase and fitting out of the building through to regular gifts to support the cost of food given to vulnerable people.

Why do this? We believe that the people of Bristol will be inspired by our vision of a city where no one need be hungry and no one need be alone and many will want to support this initiative as a way of making their contribution towards those in need. As a charitable community benefit society gifts from UK taxpayers can be enhanced through Gift Aid.

Become a volunteer – all our food centres will be looking for volunteers to attend the weekly gathering and help with tasks there. We will also be looking for volunteers who want to work together to meet other local needs on a community organising basis.

Why do this? Our food centres are going to be really interesting places, deliberately strengthening local community life through meeting the needs of local people, while providing a programme of interesting events around eating food, choosing food, cooking food, growing food, in fact everything food! There will also be support to develop new community initiatives such as combatting loneliness among isolated people. We dream of a city where no one need be hungry and no one need be alone. Regular volunteers are essential to the realisation of this dream.

Become an entrepreneur – we are looking for people to start local food businesses. Some of these will be based at our Central Community Food Centre, use the kitchen facilities and benefit from business advice.

Why do this? Our Central Community Food Centre will be an amazing resource. With industrial scale cooking equipment as well as office space, warehousing and transport, we can offer new food businesses a complete suite of facilities as well as access to a business support advisor.

4.2 Food Aid and Food ordering

4.2.1 Eligibility for food aid

One of the structural features of the Trussell Trust model of Food Aid provision is the outsourcing to other agencies of any moral discernment about who might or might not be 'deserving' of food aid. The structure of the referral system means that Food Bank volunteers need only enquire if someone has received a valid referral in order to qualify them for food aid. While this is very clear and simple to operate it does raise a number of questions. Are the agencies discerning carefully or are they prone to just give a food bank referral because there is nothing else they can do? Is there a whole tranche of people in serious need of food aid but who are not qualified for referral or too ashamed to use the system?

In our Community Food Centres we intend to operate a multi-faceted approach to food aid which is designed to combine treating people with the utmost dignity while protecting the interests of those who contribute to the food aid and need to make sure that it is well used and not taken advantage of by those who have, or should have, the means to pay for it. One of the less attractive features of food centres in Canada are reports that students regularly access food centres, not because they need to, but because they can. We also recognise an alternative culture in Bristol of people, who are essentially voluntarily poor. Many of these folk are leading creative and interesting lives and searching for a better society, but their food needs would not generally be counted worthy of the attention of grant funding bodies or public donation. With these things in mind we intend to adopt a structured approach to eligibility based on three criteria:

1. Agency referral – in keeping with the current food bank system, we will accept referrals from a range of agencies rendering an entitlement to food aid.
2. Peer referral – our evidence suggests²¹ that there are some people known to the host community who are appropriate recipients of food aid, but not part of any referral system. We will accept referrals from participants in our food centres providing that they have known the person for more than one month, are confident of their situation and are not referring more than one or two people.
3. Self-referral – we want to keep the option open to offer food aid to people who simply come to our centres and ask for it, but this food will be offered on a slightly different basis. On the first visit, people must meaningfully participate in the day's activities and will be offered a smaller variety of food, from what is in surplus that day. They will be encouraged to return, but not offered the option to order free food for the next week. After a period of time (to be tested), when they are well known, clearly in genuine food need and participating in the life of the community, a discount may be offered similar to other referral categories.

²¹ Arising from our Sims Hill land-based food centre pilot

4.2.2 The ordering process

Members of the Real Economy Cooperative currently order their shopping online during the buying period between Friday and Monday. The orders are then processed and placed with suppliers and delivered to a number of hubs across the city for collection on Thursday afternoon. At some of the neighbour hubs members are able to order their shopping for the following week with a paper form and assistance from a volunteer if required. One of the primary advantages of food cooperatives is that they eliminate waste at the retail level, and also to an extent at the household level as shoppers tend to plan their weekly meals more thoroughly and avoid impulse purchases.

Referrals claiming food through the community food centres will be receiving the same quality and choice as members paying for their shopping. On the week of their first referral they will be able to claim a pre-prepared parcel of fresh and healthy food with a value of £20. The parcel will contain ingredients for the communal meal cooked at the centre that day and there will be some flexibility in its contents to avoid waste and ensure the food meets their dietary and cultural preferences. On this first visit referrals will be encouraged to order their shopping using the same system as members; either with the assistance of a volunteer on the day with a paper form, or through our online ordering system.

The constraints of funding require us to be realistic about the quantities of food we can provide and, furthermore, our objective is help people towards food independence, therefore we are proposing a tapering discount model for those receiving food aid from us. We anticipate offering each referral nine vouchers or discount codes: three at a value of £20, three at £10 and three at £5. For many people in crisis their weekly budget can fluctuate and it may be that a £5 parcel is more suitable for their second week, if it coincides with a benefit payment for example, or perhaps they anticipate that they won't need any assistance the following week and would rather save their vouchers for a time when they do. We will distribute the vouchers using a system that allows people to have this autonomy over their budget.

We recognise that some people who find themselves in need of food aid often have chaotic lives and that thinking a week ahead to order food will be a challenge. To help people transition to this new way of shopping we will provide a suggested shopping list that covers essentials and provides rounded meals, and also has suggested swaps so people can tailor it to their preferences. We also offer recipe packs that contain all the ingredients needed to prepare a specific meal with instructions and these would be available. Volunteers and staff will be available to help with orders, as they currently do at neighbour hubs with members, and recipe ideas will be on hand to provide inspiration. This group of people is likely to overlap with those who have limited cooking facilities, so they will also be directed to ordering the pre-made meals prepared by our central kitchen.

We anticipate that there will be referrals returning after their first week who did not pre-order. Concurrently, we expect there will be orders made that are not collected. For the former group the latter could provide a solution and they will be offered to wait to the

close of the collection period to redeem their discount against the fresh produce that will otherwise go to waste. They will be encouraged to order in advance in future to avoid this waiting period and uncertainty.

The current food store system operated by food banks offers an advantage in that referrals are able to choose their produce off-the-shelf as in a supermarket, without requiring any forethought. Whilst adjusting to a new way of shopping may prove too difficult for some it will no doubt be welcome change for others receiving food aid, giving them a more dignified shopping experience; we aim for our centres to provide complete ambiguity over who has been given a discount code and who is paying full price for their shopping. It will also give them more choice than a food store, whose contents depends on donations, normalising their shopping experience.

Indeed, this requirement for behaviour change is integral to the food centre model, which we see as transformative, as opposed to palliative. By ordering shopping in advance people are committed to return; people coming to the food centre to claim food aid will be encouraged to engage in the community and participate in the activities and learning opportunities. For those who truly engage with what the centres have to offer there is the potential for progression to a voluntary work-share and the gaining of skills and training that will help towards employment, providing more permanent food security.

4.3 Development processes

We envisage a dual track development process, that separates the development of Neighbourhood Community Food Centres from the establishment of the Central Community Food centre facility. The reason for this is that the Central facility is a substantial project in itself, including the purchase and fitting out of a building to provide specialist facilities. By contrast the neighbourhood community food centre network project has a structure similar to many community initiatives and expects to work through existing infrastructure.

While it is true that the Neighbourhood Community Food Centres will substantially benefit from food production at the Central facility, the operations at neighbourhood level will not be entirely dependent on such food production and the timelines of the two tracks can vary to some degree without substantial threat to either.

4.3.1 Neighbourhood Community Food Centre development

We propose to develop five neighbourhood food centres over a four year period. This will begin with Avonmouth and Southmead, where we already have an invitation from managers of the community centres and where some existing Real Economy work has already been trialled. In year two we will hope to bring on the neighbourhood food centre functions of the Central food centre and in years three and four we will recruit two more neighbourhood centres, possibly working in partnership with existing food-related

projects. Each food centre will be located in an area of multiple deprivation in the city of Bristol.

During the four year period we expect to demonstrate the potential for this model to provide a new approach to food aid and the support of vulnerable people in the context of strengthening community life. We shall use established social impact tools to demonstrate benefits to health and well-being in the most deprived areas of the city. This will translate into the ability to draw down income from social prescribing and other similar revenue streams to allow the ongoing maintenance of the network.

Evidence – in our pilot study at Avonmouth we are already drawing down funds from social prescription as part of our provision of healthy food to people in this area.

4.3.2 Neighbourhood Community Food Centre Financial

Our financial plan involves the raising of external grant funding to establish our five neighbourhood food centres, supplemented by partnership funding and a public donations arm. We will be approaching three trusts for a sum of around £30,000 per year for four years and will be employing a fund raising consultant to create a public donations platform through which we will raise a further sum. In the latter years we expect to work with existing food initiatives in the city and will raise partnership funding to this work.

These funds will go to support a part-time programme development worker and a community worker at each centre, with the public donations being applied particularly to food aid that is provided to vulnerable people. In addition we envisage the General Manager of the Central facility providing some network oversight and have made allowance for financial management and HR provision. We will also require some technical development in regard to a public donations strategy as well as ongoing technical maintenance of our online systems.

4.3.3 Central Community Food Centre development

During 2017, we will identify one or more potential buildings and work with CDA (BRAVE Ltd) and other professional partners to raise the funds and put in place permissions and plans to purchase and fit out this building. We expect to use a combination of a community share offer, a social loan, grant funding and public donations to support this purchase. Advice from CDA (BRAVE Ltd) has indicated that a community share issue may qualify for Enterprise Investment Scheme and Social Investment Tax Reliefs, which will add considerably to their value from an investor's point of view. In addition we aim to provide a return of 2.5% on loan capital. Loan finance will be secured in the value of the building purchased and shares will be withdrawable after a three year period, subject to funds being available. (see further section 4.1.5)

We anticipate that the Central Community Food Centre will become operational in 2018 and the buildings costs will be met by four distinct revenue streams that proceed from the following activities:

1. Grant funded provision of a food centre programme and weekly gathering as in other neighbourhood food centres (£10,000pa)
2. A food production facility that pays for a professional chef and produces food as food aid for vulnerable people as well as products for sale. This facility will deliberately work with volunteers and food aid recipients in the production of food and will offer relevant training and accreditation. Our modelling indicates that this facility will break even at a relatively low volume, will pay for its own utilities costs and will provide £5000pa towards the costs of the building.
3. A sales and distribution department, working substantially on the same model as the existing Real Economy Co-operative, that receives food from local producers, as well as the Central food production facility and delivers it to our neighbourhood food centres and other food clubs throughout the city for collection and/or onwards distribution by volunteers. This side of the business has experienced considerable growth in 2016 and is on track to become financially sustainable in 2018 and eventually to provide the sum of £8000pa to the premises costs.
4. Hiring of facilities to other food-related businesses and for other community use. We will offer free business advice (under a separate grant) to food-related businesses that share our objects and values, offering a complete package of kitchen use, warehousing, freezer and fridge space and office facilities. We will also hire out our communal areas for community use like other community centres. We expect to raise in excess of £7000pa towards the costs of the premises through these activities.

There will also be some income from hiring out the community space. This will be applied to other support staff associated with this hiring and other food centre activities such as volunteer management, reception and supervision.

The Central Community Food Centre will require grant funding to support a part-time General Manager and Business Advisor.

The utilities costs of the Central Food Centre will be offset by the provision of solar panels in partnership with a local energy provider.

The premises fund will generate an annual surplus of £17,000 that can service the withdrawal of shares in Year Three onwards.

4.3.4 Spatial requirements of the Central Community Food Centre

Kitchen area: 100sqm

Fully equipped community kitchen, with multiple sinks, hobs, ovens.

A bank of commercial grade freezers/fridges

Dining area: 100 sqm

Tables, chairs, bank of tables for laptops, private desk, bank of tables for pre-ordered food delivery and presentation of food choices.

Enterprise Room: 20 sqm

Desks for admin of enterprises

Warehouse: 250 sqm

Shelving and tables

Walk in fridge

Parking

Must have convenient pick up and delivery access

Preferably with parking (three or more spaces)

Location

Central, possibly St Paul's, Easton, Old Market areas, likely adaptation of existing building.

4.3.5 Stress testing the business model

Event	Likelihood	Mitigation
Grant funding for neighbourhood community centres only partially achieved	High	The proposed four year development plan is flexible. It can be extended over longer than four years. It can be reduced to just a few centres. But our vision is comprehensive coverage of the city
Sales and distribution does not grow as expected	Medium	The sales and distribution department of the operation becomes sustainable above £3400 per week. After that point this operation can be up or downscaled freely without impact on the whole business
Food production does not grow as expected	Low	This department becomes sustainable at 230 units of £5 value per week. This is relatively easy target to meet. A similar organisation 'CanCook' is currently making 2000 meals per week.
Central premises are more expensive than predicted	High	We are working on converting a warehouse for these purposes and since no building is yet identified, it is prudent to allow for a greater cost here. The financial model could withstand a purchase price up to £1m. There is also the potential to raise capital for establishment of non-building aspects of the enterprise on a social equity model.
Central premises are not purchased in time	Medium	Our timeline does not anticipate a functioning central facility until Jan 2018. This could be delayed for a further six months without serious impact on the model

4.4 Restructuring the organisation

4.3.1 Proposal to become a charitable community benefit society

Real Economy Co-operative was incorporated on 28th May 2014 as a multi-stakeholder co-operative under the 1965 Industrial and Provident Societies Act. Since then, in August 2014, this Act was updated and renamed the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Under this new Act, Real Economy Co-operative is now known as a 'Pre-commencement Society' or 'Registered Society' as it was incorporated before the new Act came into being.

We propose to adopt a whole new set of Rules, those of a charitable community benefit society, with rewritten objects and a new name and, will apply to HMRC for Exempt Charitable Status although we shall still be known, by the FCA, as a 'Pre-commencement Society' or 'Registered Society'. The rewritten objects are:

The objects of the society are for the public benefit, and in particular but not exclusively for the benefit of people in the region of Bristol, to:

- *promote good health, particularly through good nutrition; and*

- *promote sustainable development for the benefit of the public by:*

(a) the prudent use of resources; and

(b) the promotion of sustainable means of achieving economic growth and regeneration; and

- *relieve poverty by developing the capacity and skills of socially and economically disadvantaged communities in the Bristol region in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society.*

**Sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

Membership of the society will be open to anyone, association or corporate body who supports the objects of the society. We anticipate that the membership will be made up from:

- Investors – who become members by investing in a community share issue to purchase our central food centre building
- Donors – who provide support for the provision of food aid
- Volunteers - who help at the food centres
- Employees – working at the food centres
- Purchasers of food and recipients of food aid – who buy food or are given food through the society
- Entrepreneurs – who are setting up or running a food-related business based at the Central community food centre

All those who participate in any of these ways will be invited and encouraged to join as members and to play a full part in the society in pursuit of our objects. This will include all those who participate in trading elements (purchasers and entrepreneurs), many of whom will also take part in other ways, such as volunteering or making investments or donations. The ability to make donations to the society will be built into the purchasing process and, if we attain exempt charitable status, will be eligible for gift aid. All purchasers will also be automatically enrolled in a food club associated with their nearest food collection point, which will actively rehearse and pursue our objects.

The new name for Real Economy Co-operative is under discussion.

The Process of Restructuring

January 2017

The study is circulated to existing members of Real Economy Co-operative, who then meet to consider the development.

A proposal (Extraordinary resolution) is put to the membership at General Meeting to approve

- 1) Adopting a complete new set of rules (charitable community benefit society) with new objects, and
- 2) Changing the name

The Extraordinary resolution must be passed in accordance with the Rules (Clause 70) by not less than 75% of votes cast at a quorate general meeting where the required notice (Clause 48) of 14 clear days' notice has been given.

Once the Extraordinary resolution has been passed (as above), the new rules and new name are filed with the FCA.

February 2017

An application is made to HMRC for exempt charitable status

4.4.2 Note on primary purpose trading

As a charitable community benefit society we will be restricted to trading that furthers our primary purpose. Our objects are deliberately formed around a holistic approach to food and food provision, including creating a pathway to support economic regeneration and sustainable development, an educative process around the food system, empowerment and community development, in addition to providing food aid.

Our aim is that **all our users will be engaged in meeting these aims, often in several different ways**. Trading aspects of the society will aim to expand our community reach and increase the number of members involved and thereby more effectively fulfil our objects. They will therefore be meeting our primary purpose.

If the society fails to develop in the way anticipated and, for example, most users are, in practice, not actively engaged in the society, but are simply 'purchasing' or the trading elements develop in ways that take them outside of our primary purpose, then we will establish a trading subsidiary whose profits will be devoted to the society.

We recognise that these matters are subject to the judgement of others and include the following notes regarding our trading elements. There are four types of trade envisaged:

1. The provision of meals at neighbourhood community food centres, some of which will be paid for by our users, some will be food aid.

- These are being offered in the context of an educative programme that will further our objects and are an integral part of that programme.

2. The sale of food to our users through neighbourhood food centres and at other food clubs across the city.

- It is of vital concern to us that food aid recipients are not stigmatised by food aid receipt and we therefore aim to make no evident distinction between food aid recipients and food aid purchasers at our food centres.
- All sales of food at our food centres will be offered in the context of an educative and empowering community development programme and will be integral to that process.
- Food clubs in more prosperous areas of the city will be encouraged to take part in our general educative programme and users will be invited to volunteer at our centres and to donate to support food aid etc. The food clubs in such areas of the city are therefore an important means of outreach for the society, increasing the benefit that the society can give to the disadvantaged as well as furthering our broader aims in terms of education and sustainable development and economic regeneration.
- The sale of food also allows our food production and distribution facilities to reach the point of financial sustainability, decreasing our reliance on ongoing grant and other support and so furthering our objects.

3. The rental income from food-related businesses that supports our central food centre premises

- this has been set at a not for profit level with the intention of supporting emerging businesses that share our objects. If any of these develop into significantly profitable enterprises, then this rental would be reconsidered so as to ensure they were not inappropriately benefiting from our charitable status.

4. The rental income from hiring out our community space at the central community food centre

- The community space will be offered for hire to values-led community groups whose work is consistent with our objects

None of these trading elements introduces a significant element of risk to the society.

5. Resources

An appendix of resources and case studies that bear on this proposal, researched mostly by Florence Pardoe and referred to in the main text

5.1. Food Aid in Bristol – a critical appraisal

There are a number of providers of food aid food aid in Bristol: The Trussell Trust has four locations; The Matthew Tree Project also operates from four locations, with their central St Judes centre being the most well used. The Salvation Army has two locations; and there are at least three other independent providers.

For the most part these providers operate a food store system, whereby the client is taken around a 'store' environment and allowed to select their food, within a framework of nutrition. This goes some way to normalising the shopping experience and allows volunteers to help clients think more closely about eating a balanced diet. Some of the smaller independent providers distribute a pre-made parcel, the contents of which may not always be appropriate for recipients' dietary or cultural preferences.

The food is procured from donations by the public, which may be from supermarket drives or school collections, donated by supermarkets from their surplus and waste, or from redistribution charities, namely FareShare and FoodCycle, who primarily reclaim supermarket waste, but also work with smaller local retailers. While supermarkets continue their wasteful practices it seems reasonable that this food should be redistributed; far more logical, however, would be stricter policies and better practices to reduce this waste in the first place. The issue is an extremely complex one, but there is a feeling amongst many that the current increase in uptake of waste is justifying these practices instead of challenging them. As the Fabian Commission write in their 'Hungry For Change' report, 'the use of waste and surplus food is no more a solution to food insecurity than the concept of food banks'²².

Most food aid providers report struggling to source fresh food, due to its short shelf life and issues with transport and storage. Supermarkets will usually only donate this type of food when they deem there is no possibility for them to sell it. Consequently the fruit and vegetables received by food aid distributors is often of a questionable quality and certainly won't last a week until the food store is open again, therefore food banks request non-perishable items which will provide limited nutrition for the recipient. Furthermore, evidence from the Feeding Britain report and from our own conversations with those who have experienced food poverty in Bristol has revealed that some recipients are unable to cook the content of their food parcels at home due to lack of access to basic cooking and storage facilities. Some may only have access to a microwave, others may be unable to afford items such as milk and therefore find themselves eating dry cereal and cold beans.

The Trussell Trust and The Matthew Tree operate a referral only system. This provides a method of advertising the food aid service to the people who need it and makes sure that the staff in the referral agencies, who know their service users better than anyone else, are the ones who authorise the access to food aid. The other advantage of such a system is that it provides an assurance of genuine need to funders, agencies and volunteers.

Yet referral may raise issues about accessibility. One food insecure member of a panel drawn together by the Fabian Society reported, "I was on the verge of it (that is using a foodbank), but what prevented me was the fact that you have to be referred." The report comments that 'The need for referral was seen as "degrading" and "embarrassing" by the panel. It is hard to know how common such perceptions are.

²² <http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Hungry-for-Change-web-27.10.pdf>

For this and other reasons the current levels of food aid provision may not be a good measure of food need in the UK. A recent report by The Food Foundation entitled 'Too poor to eat' surveyed the UK on the basis of a validated United Nations measure of food security defined as

Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g. without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies

The report found that 4.7 million people in the UK are suffering from severe food insecurity. This is many times the number who access food aid provision currently²³.

Having identified that the traditional food bank model was providing a symptomatic response to a national problem of which food poverty was only one facet, The Matthew Tree Project developed the Food PLUS model, aiming to take a more holistic approach to provision by providing a broader suite of services and support that attempt to address the root causes of hunger. Each client is interviewed every week to assess their situation and see how they are progressing. They are also expected to provide details on their household budget on their second visit. As a result of receiving £0.5m funding from the Big Lottery in July 2016, The Matthew Tree Project model has now developed into a full 'wrap-around' range of support services branded ' ReBuilding Lives' and benefits from a full time client Navigation Manager and a full range of strategic complementary service provider partners working very closely with all The Matthew Tree Project Food Plus Centre teams and clients to enable the journey out of crisis to be effective and as short as possible.

The Trussell Trust have recently introduced a similar approach, the More Than Food programme, which aims to 'help food banks develop into community hubs', providing a range of support services, including money management and cookery courses. One independent provider in Bedminster, Refresh Cafe, offer a range of services and courses within the setting of a community cafe. This co-location of services is important to ensure food aid is recognised, not as a solution but, as a temporary aid to food insecurity. It is crucial, however, that every effort is taken to ensure that those attending do not feel treated as a list of problems, but are welcomed as a member of the community whose contribution is greatly valued.

The Trussell Trust identify as an emergency provider, with referrals being limited to three visits in six months, however, this is not strictly enforced as people find themselves needing to return more often. The most common reason people attend a Trussell Trust food bank is a sudden loss of income due to problems related to benefits. According to the Feeding Britain 2015-16 report, on average people need to access no more than two food parcels a year through The Trussell Trust. This type of emergency provision is certainly appropriate for some situations, but it is not sufficient for the many vulnerable people who have chronic issues associated with poverty and mental health. The other providers welcome referrals weekly. At the Matthew Tree Project's

²³ <http://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FoodInsecurityBriefing-May-2016-FINAL.pdf>

locations this has allowed relationships and rapport to develop, creating a more welcoming, friendly environment where people can begin to feel a sense of community. Evidence from the Feeding Britain report suggests 'there is a strong desire for longer-term interaction' and 'an eagerness for these relationships to be embedded within local communities so they can help people overcome the deep-seated causes of hunger'.

With the exception of a small number of food parcels given to members of Bristol Refugee Rights all the food aid currently being provided in Bristol is associated with Christian charities and often hosted at Christian places of worship. This may provide a barrier to some within Bristol's rich diversity of cultures who may not feel comfortable or welcome, or may anticipate a pressure or expectation to engage with religious elements.

It is possible in Bristol to find a free hot meal every day of the week, which speaks volumes for the people of Bristol and their desire to help those in need. For many these are a life line. They not only address issues of hunger, but also provide a space to socialise. Social isolation is inextricably linked with poverty. In the UK the majority of social spaces are linked to the purchase of food or drink and in the home we typically gather over meals. The inability to do this has been described as the hidden face of poverty. A study by The Trussell Trust found depression and anxiety to be extremely prevalent in food banks users; loneliness is a causal and compounding factor. There are stories from all across the country of community cafes bringing people together and providing the opportunity for people to overcome this social exclusion. Bristol is also home to numerous lunch clubs, which are typically aimed at the elderly and offer very low cost meals and a space to socialise. Some also combine entertainment with food. This provides extra incentive for people to attend and helps create an informal and convivial atmosphere.

Once again, in Bristol the majority of free meals and lunch clubs are linked with Christian churches, with just a couple of exceptions. The Saturday meal hosted by FoodCycle is a secular event and attracts a diversity of diners from the local community and further afield, with one diner reporting walking for an hour to attend. Another described how it was this diversity that was appealing, describing it as a place to interact with people different to their normal social circles, where 'the young talk to the old and people learn from each other... it is a place where we can network and be empowered'.

Cooking courses are offered by a number of organisations across Bristol, teaching people to cook healthy meals from scratch on a low budget. Both The Trussell Trust and The Matthew Tree Project offer courses for clients. For some attendees these courses have made a great difference, with one woman reporting a £60 per week saving. Others reported feeling pressured to attend and not having learnt a great deal. Other groups offering free courses in Bristol including the Coexist Community Kitchen, who work with the Bristol Drugs Project and Prince's Trust, The Square Food Foundation and 16:25 Independent People.

Recruitment is typically a challenge for cookery courses and attendance tends to decrease throughout the course as often those attending have chaotic lives and may struggle with time management and motivation. The commitment to a course of a given time is also a barrier to some and people may feel they can't return if they miss a day. There is currently no one in Bristol offering casual, drop-in cookery sessions.

People who have experienced food poverty often have a fractious relationship with food. Trying new recipes or food types is difficult when you can't afford to waste money on food or energy, and often food is simply seen as a means to an end. Simple cooking skills have been lost in all income groups, and in low income families ready meals and take aways are seen as the lowest cost and highest calorie options, also saving money on fuel bills. Damaging health consequences attributable to these poor diets only compound the difficulties those living with food insecurity experience. Cooking courses present the opportunity for people to rediscover food and change their relationship with it; to learn new recipes and skills; to try new things without risk; and to do so in a sociable atmosphere. The sessions open up conversations about food and nutrition, allowing individuals to take control of their health and wellbeing. The importance of the provision of cookery clubs and courses is acknowledged by many organisations and in many reports concerned with food insecurity in the UK.

5.2 Evidence from Foodcycle (supplied by David Grant)

Food cycle is a community kitchen program run on Saturdays. It is organized by dedicated 'hub leaders' with group of both regular and casual volunteers many of which are students, they run the kitchen on Saturday afternoons with food that has been collected, by volunteers with trailers attached to bicycles, from local shops, most of which are mostly small green grocers and cash and carries and one local Co-op. All of this food would have gone to landfill if it had not been rescued.

Once collected the food is deposited with a team of kitchen volunteers who then prepare a 3-course meal from what has been collected. This provides an interesting challenge for the cooking team, as they have no certainty of what food shall be delivered. Given that most of the food that is donated is fresh veg and fruit and in order to cater to all dietary requirements most dishes prepared are vegan.

The meal is free to all who attend and any excess food (usually donated fruit and bread) is free for diners to take with them, as they need. Numbers and demographic vary from week to week with a small core group of regular diners. Including people with low/no income, some homeless people and members of ethnic minorities. This project provides both a nutritious hot meal for its diners but also a valuable social space for some of the more isolated individuals.

The dining room provides a space for the proliferation of advice and information as during the most recent lunch which was attended by a large number of mothers and children leaflets on child nutrition and diet were available for people to take and read,

as well as a booklet on other similar events that happen around the city.

One of the diners suggested that 'If you plan it correctly you can get a cooked meal for free every single day of the week if you need to'

We have carried out a series of semi-formal interviews within which people were asked if they were willing to disclose little about their background/ situation

Why it was they came to the meal today and what they feel about the project is important.

It was felt that the questions needed to be this open to allow the diners to illustrate the diversity of situations and reasons for attending without a structured bias imposing priorities on them by focusing on the preconceived ideas of value of the author.

Five individuals were interviewed in this manner detailing a variety of reasons and backgrounds:

One diner a male in his 40's, had been recently hit by a car damaging his hip and putting him out of work. He explained how he would walk over an hour (taking longer due to his injury) to attend the lunch because he enjoyed the conversations and the company as well of course as the food.

One mid-twenties female talked about her volunteering with other organisations whilst working part time. She explained the importance of the project for her was that it provided a space to meet and talk to people 'what's magic about food cycle is the range of people that come down'. She went on to explain how at a previous meal one of the gentlemen in attendance disclosed to her and his table about the death of his brother in Palestine 'people who need to share things can come here when they have no one else to share with'. She also praised the provision of fresh fruit and veg, as it is healthier than the food that is provided by some other food aid programs.

For one 31 year old male it was his first time to a meal, currently he was a part time website designer on a low income. He previously had had a fulltime job but had been made redundant and so as a result had a very limited income. He had been recommended to come to the meal by a friend who was in attendance and had attended before. He described the food cycle event as a place where you could 'socialise for free and you can eat for free' highlighting how many of our social spaces require the purchase of either food, alcohol or hot drinks. He talked about the importance of being able to get food from places like this as he was mostly reliant of his housemate for food trading his cooking skills to share a veg box with them.

A 50 year old male who lost his job 2 months ago explained that he had no money, and due to the nature of how you are treated when you engage with 'the system' had not signed on for any benefits, he explained that he was finding his feet again but that it was a struggle to find the funds to pay rent. He had attended on the recommendation of a friend 'to get some good food that's vegetarian'.

When asked about what was important about the project he explained that 'everything about the space is positive and has a good energy, the big round communal tables

promote integration. I like integration it draws people back into the community’.

His friend who had recommended he attend was a 35 year old male.

Explained how he was living in a shared house with others he had been self employed but had had to go on to ESA for health reasons, His ESA had been cut in July, due to having an extremely limited income having the ability to get feed well was essential. He also explained how he had recently attempted to sign back on to ESA under a new claim because he had suffered broken ribs from being pushed down the stairs by his housemate in an altercation over domestic affairs in the household. As well as the food the lunch provides a space to be away from a house in which he feels threatened. He currently spends his days finding places to be away from home as much as possible.

When asked what was important about the project he said ‘the food, the socializing and the networking. (on networking:) Going to the pub you might meet the same genera of people where here the young talk to the old and people learn from each other [...] being in a social environment and not getting pissed is important [...] it is a place where we can network and be empowered’

Though the diversity of reasons people attend the lunch is huge, there is consistency in what they gain from attending. It provides a space to be with other people, to connect and learn from each other or even just respite from problems in their lives.

The need for socialization and company can be overlooked when addressing vulnerable individuals food needs, but through community meal services like these both Food aid can be delivered whilst people’s social wellbeing is also enhanced. This model also normalizes the diner’s experience as everyone eats together whether they were volunteering or not there is not expectation or qualification that differentiates between either party in the end they all share a table and a meal as people who are hungry.

5.3 The Community Shop, Kilburn

The much-heralded Community Shop in Lambeth, London, diverts surplus from the UK supply chain away from landfill and instead sells it to members, made up of people from the local community who are on income support, at a fraction of the retail price. Alongside the shop, breakfast and lunch are served in a lively, sociable cafe that also hosts many of the other services available to members. Members are also provided with access to community and personal development programmes, including drop-in advice services, mentor programmes and an employment academy. Services are provided in response to the community’s needs and offered without pressure, to be taken advantage of as members see fit.

The latest development is their Community Kitchen and food mentoring programme, described by Clara Widdison, manager of the Community Shop, Lambeth:

We realised that [many] members coming on site who had either experienced food poverty or lived at risk of food poverty had a fractious relationship with food as a result. For them, food had become a symbol of fear and anxiety and stress. Since we opened our pilot store in Goldthorpe in 2013, we had been running a cook club which was all about demonstrating cooking skills, showing members how to cook certain dishes and introducing them to new foods. We realised that wasn't adequate for what we were dealing with. We were dealing with people who had deep psychological barriers to food as a result of an experience with food poverty, whether it was buying, eating or cooking, and showing people how to chop an onion wasn't going to remove those barriers. So we started thinking let's move away from the idea that our members don't know how to cook, and just make them want to be in the kitchen again, make them fall back in love with food. Make food a source of pleasure and delight and health and joy and community and all these positive things, so going into the kitchen was something they were excited about. Cooking and learning more recipes or showing other people their recipes was something really fun and enjoyable. And eating was a pleasure and not something they just did to fuel up.

The group takes a very low pressure, inclusive approach to cooking, in keeping with the relaxed mood that is tangible in the shop and cafe. They explore food as a group, talk about childhood favourites and eventually build a menu together that reflects the group, which they then cook as a free meal for other members to whom they tell their food stories.

The programme does tend to attract those who love to cook already and the food mentor has a challenge getting those who are more resistant to interacting with food. She creates inspiration cards for the produce available which are placed around the shop and a menu board with recipes and prices, which members report finding really helpful. The chef does demos and tasting on the shop floor and the serving of breakfast and lunch, which are delicious and nutritionally balanced, which opens conversations and slowly increases engagement. The chef has built a great rapport with members; she has their trust and respect and they listen to her suggestions. The relationships that have developed with time are evident in the cheerful and welcoming atmosphere of the cafe; one can feel that a true sense of community has been fostered and realised here.

5.4 Granville Community Kitchen – from interview with Dee Woods BBC Cook of the Year

South Kilburn is a diverse community with 349 languages spoken. It is rated in the top 10% of areas of disadvantage in the UK. Dee Woods and Leslie Barson established the community kitchen in the Granville Community Centre just over two years ago. The kitchen is open to volunteers to help cook community meals, which are available to anyone for a suggested donation or free. They also run workshops and courses and have put volunteers through their food hygiene certifications. The kitchen is run with an emphasis on good, nutritious food, grown chemical free and often vegan. All activities have active participation at their heart. In response to what people wanted

to happen in the space a film night and a salsa night now feature in their calendar, led by members of the community.

In the early days of the project they found that some members of the community were reluctant to attend as they felt the kitchen was a charitable cause from the homeless or impoverished and were offended or proud, but they have come to understand that the project is about people coming together, supporting each other and sharing what is available.

Dee is actively engaged in the UK Food Sovereignty Movement (FSM) and is encouraging the community to engage with the issues surrounding food systems. Posters on the wall pose the questions being asked by the FSM. Dee will then feed back the communities' responses to these questions. This approach, known as community mapping, is a much more inclusive and participatory method than directing people to the online survey. The voices of this community and others will help form the basis of the People's Food Policy, an initiative being led by the Land Workers Alliance, the first draft of which Dee is helping to co-edit.

Dee wants to increase the diversity and inclusivity of the FSM and has recently attended the European Forum on Food Sovereignty in Romania.

I'm going to the European Forum on Food Sovereignty as one of those voices that is missing from the discourse, a person of colour but also a disabled person. You have millions of people in diverse communities that are not engaged. You have a local food movement that focused on growing x, y and z foods but my culturally appropriate food don't figure in that.

Also attending was a member of her community that became engaged in the issue and applied to go as a member of the public.

'So someone who wasn't actively engaged, just from our conversations, just from stuff we had on the wall has joined that discourse as an ordinary person.'

Advice on cooking, nutrition and budgeting are given simply through conversation. Sharing meals and having conversations lead to people making small but powerful changes in their lives, such as cooking from scratch, eating more healthily and shopping locally. Dee was voted as the BBC Cook of the Year 2016 for her work in South Kilburn and as a London Slow Food Ambassador for 2016.

5.5 Go4Enterprises in Colchester - Pete Hope

Out 4 Good was established to help ex-offenders find their feet after release from prison, focusing on housing and mentoring. The project was well received but many were re-offending after a year or so due to lack of employment opportunities, so Go4 Enterprises was established, which currently consists of a cafe and an indoor market.

Volunteers include ex-offenders, adults with mental health issues, homeless persons and local residents, particularly retirees. Volunteers are recruited by word-of-mouth. They work as baristas, servers, cooks etc. in the busy and popular cafe. Currently there are 21 volunteers, who work no more than three days a week and about 16 hours per week. The volunteers are fully supported towards employment once they feel ready to begin applying for jobs. This can include self-employment, for example gardening. There are some staff opportunities within the cafe, but vacancies are rare as staff are loyal to the businesses and don't feel inclined to move on. Volunteers will be offered casual shifts to cover staff absences.

The cafe also operates a 'pay for lunch' scheme, whereby the public can donate money to pay for a full breakfast or a lunch time soup for someone who can't afford it. Both the breakfast and soup are the same as those on the menu for the general public. Those claiming are treated as customers and provided the same service. They provided a warm, safe and social space where all people can sit together to share a meal and a conversation. Initially the scheme attracted a generous stream of donations and they were able to provide enough for 25 people a day, but this has now slowed and they have been forced to limit the offer to street homeless and those known to be in hostels. They are able to give soup to anyone who needs it, as the produce is donated to them, in part from the Out 4 Good growing project, so if they do have to turn down someone for breakfast they are able to invite them for lunch. The community around the cafe is strong and local knowledge allows them to identify those who qualify.

5.6 Evidence from existing food bank referral agencies

Developing Health Independence, a charity located in the South West of England, offer a range of support services to people experiencing homelessness, social isolation and alcohol or drug addiction. They operate as part of the Bristol Recovery Orientated Alcohol and Drugs Service (ROADS) support service, alongside the Bristol Drugs Project, Bristol Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service, Addiction Recovery Agency and St Mungo's Broadway. They are also part of the Golden Key partnership, led by Bristol charity Second Step, which works with those with experience of prison, homelessness, long-term mental health problems and drug and alcohol dependency. The key services that are offered by DHI from their Bristol location are family support and peer mentoring programmes.

We met with Ashley Ward, a Family Practitioner at DHI, to discuss our project. Ashley was fully supportive of our model and recognised the strengths of what we are proposing. Some of the people that use the services at DHI are further along in their journey to independence and are not in immediate food need, while others, being supported by peer mentors, often demonstrate complex needs, of which food poverty is one. Many users are also struggling with a lack of purpose and self-worth. Opportunities for personal development and progression towards reintegrating into society are hugely valuable and highly valued. The peer mentoring programmes at DHI

give participants the opportunity to work towards a position of value and responsibility, and receive recognised training. There are many dedicated volunteers that have been through the recovery journey and are now trained peer supporters who are happy to regularly give their time to help others in their recovery. Ashley believes people would be very receptive to the opportunities offered at the community food centres, giving us confidence that our project will attract a sufficient number of volunteers.

Talking Money

Talking money offer debt advice coupled to a whole set of income maximisation strategies including crisis payment from council, benefits, and an energy set of advice. They see people once only. Tamra, of Talking money saw the value of the food centre model in terms of a trajectory

- Go
- Feel safe
- Take part
- Rebuild life

and argued that it might be particularly relevant to homeless charities. The simplicity of the current food bank offer is part of its appeal to Talking Money.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Sue Evans, SW Director, Citizens Advice Bureau oversees a network of advice centres in the city of Bristol, strongly affirms the vision and strategy outlined here and has helped us draw up the referral procedure in relation to our land-based community centre pilot at Sims Hill. Bristol's advice centres will refer clients to community food centres as appropriate.

5.7 Evidence from cooking course providers

Case Study - The Coexist Community Kitchen

Hamilton House in Stokes Croft, a vibrant area of Bristol, is home to Coexist, a community interest company who have created a hub of creativity, wellbeing and community activity. The first floor is home to the Coexist Community Kitchen. Ari Cantwell and team transformed it from its previous run-down state into a fully equipped and accessible cookery school in 2012. The community kitchen runs events and workshops where they use food enjoyably and creatively, to share knowledge and bring communities together. Their work is to not only encourage cookery skills (recreational and vocational), but also to increase knowledge surrounding living skills, nutrition, politics and sustainability. A main focus of the kitchen is social outreach and their courses and workshops are run in collaboration with operations such as Bristol Drugs Project (BDP), City of Bristol College and The Prince's Trust.

A typical course with BDP will run two sessions a week for six weeks. Each session is three hours long with one day a week focusing on one-pot-wonder style dishes and the other day trying more challenging cuisine like Chinese dumplings. We spoke with two participants from BDP, John and George (names changed to preserve anonymity) They told us how many people in recovery find it hard to cope with cooking and described their skills previous to the course as 'dreadful' and limited to microwaving and boiling pasta. The course begins with the basics, such as prep to build up confidence slowly. Often those in recovery can be insular or anxious so participants are welcome to join in at whatever level they feel comfortable, whether it's peeling carrots or cooking on the stove. The food is all very healthy and almost entirely vegetarian. Both John and George reported discovering how amazing vegetarian food can be. George explained, 'We cooked something different every week, but one of the nice things about it is that next to the kitchen there's a dining room and we sat down and ate together and talked about it and the ingredients.' The kitchen also has an ethical food sourcing policy and conversations are had about the provenance of the produce and why the course leaders choose to shop this way. George told us 'It's not like a classroom setting. It's all interactive and organically run,' 'the teachers' enthusiasm was really infectious.'

For George in particular a 'spark was ignited' and he now cooks regularly for himself and his family and enjoys smoothies for breakfast. He also volunteers with the weekly community meal at Hamilton House. He told us 'I'd happily do that because they gave me a tool box. They ignited a passion in me.'

John's experience of the course was equally positive, but for him the end of the course heralded the end of his enthusiasm; 'I did the course and I thought this is brilliant and then I finished and thought, well I've forgot all that now.' He also told us of his shopping habits: 'While I was on my own one of my problems was I would just go to the supermarket all the time. It was just that mentality and I don't know why. Say I was just buying a pepper, it's all packed stuff. And it's just not stepping out of that. It's all I'd ever done. I'd just go to Tesco. And it's not actually the cheap way of buying food either and it all tastes crap anyway. So I know it all. It's doing it isn't it.' The community food centres will offer the alternative to supermarkets through the Real Economy and as the cooking sessions will not operate as an isolated provision, people are welcome to come indefinitely, helping them to maintain engagement and affect more permanent behaviour change. We will also encourage participants like John and George to graduate on to volunteering in the food-processing element of the project. This would operate as a workshare where those volunteers' time is rewarded with produce from the kitchen. We would offer to put them through their Food Hygiene Certificate. This will help volunteers gain self-esteem and confidence, build on their employability and cooking skills, give them a chance to take part in their community and build social connections, and help them become food secure.

'A lot of people are bored when they stop drinking or using. They're not quite ready to go back to work. If they go to AA meetings or whatever it's only a few hours in the day so a lot of the time they're kicking their heels and a lot of people would like to be

motivated and feel like they've done a day's work. It builds up your self esteem. When you start in recovery your self esteem is basically on the floor so anything they can do to help make them feel better about themselves is good.' - George

'If your place was up and running I'd love to come and volunteer at something like that, you know, help out. While I'm not working that would be something really good and positive for me. I can come and have a free meal, but it's not just that, it's the social connections. I can go there, make some nice food, help other people, with other people. That would be amazing for me, the sort of thing I'd love. For me, I know I've got to keep my recovery going and get out and meet new people. I know if I'm sat in a flat on my own I'm likely to get a drink, if I isolate myself. Doing stuff like that is how you get back in society. It's not just about going back to work, you've got to be doing things and that sounds brilliant to me. You're offering people voluntary work, teaching people to cook and helping people who need food, lots of things at the same time.' - John

5.8 The Community Food Centres of Canada

Thirty years ago a food bank called The Stop was set up in Toronto as a direct response to feedback from a community severely affected by the recession. However, seeing that handing out food hampers wasn't helping people find their way out of poverty or become engaged in their communities, the organisation began to incorporate political and social initiatives such as community advocacy and cooking and gardening sessions into its mandate, in addition to continuing to operate its emergency food program.

In 2001, the organisation took the name The Stop Community Food Centre and moved location to a diverse community with above-average rates of unemployment and low income. Since then, it has further expanded its programming to include targeted community kitchens and gardens, daily drop-in breakfasts and lunches and educational programs. In so doing, The Stop has pioneered the Community Food Centre model, which brings integrated programming in the areas of healthy food access, food skills development and education and engagement together under one roof to address intractable problems of hunger, poverty and poor health. From this first centre Community Food Centres Canada has grown.

CFCC's vision is a Canada where everyone has the means and knowledge necessary to access good, healthy food in a dignified way, and the ability and opportunity to be heard on the food issues that affect them. They envision a robust, diverse food economy that sustains farmers and the land, and a social consensus that food is a key determinant of health and a public good. At the heart of their operations is the belief that healthy food is a basic human right.

The organisation partners with vibrant, food-focused organisations, such as food banks, health centres and local food coalitions, to build and support new Community Food Centres. Food is at the core of all they do and they recognise that good food has the power to build health and community, and inspire people to become engaged in

issues that matter to them. By taking a multidimensional approach and hosting a number of diverse programs under one roof they create multiple points of entry to the community and embody the need for an integrated approach.

All CFCs offer responsive programming in three core areas:

Food Access Programmes provide emergency access to healthy food to those in need in a respectful and dignified manner

- community meals
- healthy food bank
- affordable produce markets
- bake ovens

Food Skills Programmes develop healthy food behaviours and skills, primarily in the areas of gardening and cooking

- community kitchens
- community gardens
- perinatal programs
- after-school programs

Education and Engagement Programmes work to give individuals and communities voice and agency on food and hunger issues

- advocacy office
- community action
- public education
- policy campaigns

A Community Food Centre is a welcoming space where people come together to grow, cook, share and advocate for good food. CFCs provide people with emergency access to high-quality food in a dignified setting that doesn't compromise their self-worth and looks to end the way charity divides us as a society into the powerful and the powerless, the self-sufficient and the shamed; people learn cooking and gardening skills there; kids get their hands dirty in the garden and kitchen in ways that expand their tastebuds and help them make healthier food choices; community members find their voices on the issues that matter to them; and people find friends and support, tackling isolation and creating community.

5.9 Culinary Incubators

Bristol is home to a multitude of independent, local and diverse food retailers and the demand for speciality and artisan foods in Bristol continues to grow. But for many would-be entrepreneurs a lack of capital means the start up costs, namely equipment and premises, preclude them from being able to establish or grow their business to a commercially viable size. Food ventures do have a relatively high failure rate, so business loans may be unobtainable or too high risk.

A solution to this that has been embraced in the US is the culinary incubator. A fully equipped commercial kitchen is rented out to start-ups at an hourly rate, removing the barriers of those initial costs and significantly reducing the risk should the business be unsuccessful. Those who wish to be part of the incubator must go through an application process. Though this process varies, generally the applicants are expected to be business ready: to have researched the market demand for their product, to demonstrate some entrepreneurial skill, and to have their own business license and commercial liability insurance. Incubators generally support small, low-income businesses; the Hot Bread incubator in East Harlem offers subsidised rates to a percentage of their applicants. The incubators also offer support and advice to the businesses on matters such as accounting, marketing and insurance. At La Cocina in San Francisco, once established benchmarks have been reached, after 4-6 years, the businesses graduate out of the incubator to their own premises to allow new ventures in, whilst remaining part of the community.

On days when our central food centre's kitchen is not being utilised by our project we will be able to operate it as an incubator. This collaboration provides great benefits for both parties. Beyond the benefits already outlined the businesses will become part of the community, having links to the local markets and the opportunity to network and skill share with other start-ups, strengthening local networks. They will also have the potential to sell their produce through the Real Economy and will be invited to share their story, promote their produce and run workshops at our community meal days, which will provide further incentive for people to attend our centres. Rental fees will help contribute to our operational costs.

The Bristol Good Food Action Plan identifies the strengthening of community-led food trade initiatives as one area of change that we wish to see. In the Feeding Britain report recommendation 5 addresses the need for regional approaches and identifies six functions these local networks should have, including 'Function as centres of knowledge and excellence by implementing best practice food models and training local food entrepreneurs.' By hosting an incubator at our centre we will encourage and foster local talent to make their dreams a reality, whilst strengthening our local food network.

Acknowledgements

This report was based on research by the authors, working on behalf of Project Agora, a charitable company, based in Bristol that specialises in social innovation and active citizenship. www.agora.uk.com

We are grateful for the many people in Bristol and beyond, who have given their time to talk to us about this project.

We particularly mention Hilary Sudbury of CDA (BRAVE Ltd) who has been helping us think through restructuring Real Economy Co-operative with the help of a grant from The Hive (Coops UK). Also our thanks to David Hunter of Bates Wells Braithwaite who has offered legal advice.

This research project was funded by Awards for All.

