

Food For Thought



Who are we?

We work with people with direct experience of systems to influence decision making for the better.



How did we come to be here today?

We met Alan at some network meetings, talked, connected and took the opportunity to support Alan with lived experience research.

The Golden Thread

Why Lived Experience?

Why is the voice of lived experience important when researching systems and services?

What do we need to achieve?

How do we best ensure that lived experience is at the heart of any revised policy about food insecurity?

More to come about the foundational role of lived experience in change...

Why and How?

Why?

We wanted to understand the lived experience of people accessing community food services in York.

How?

We talked to people about choice, dignity, reliance, self-sufficiency and much more.



More about the how...

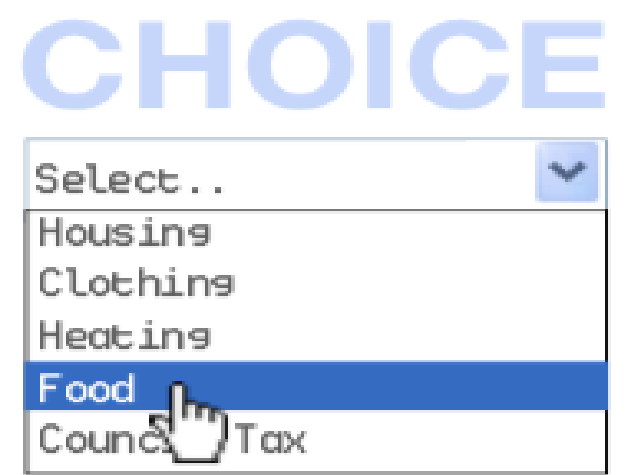
Information gathered from local people by local people is better, so we recruited people already connected to food services as **community researchers**.

Tacit knowledge and **existing connections!**

We spoke to over 55 individuals from 8 different food services.

Food Services	
I am Reusable	Community provision, Leeman Road
St Deny's	Church community provision, Walmgate
Collective Sharehouse	Community collective, in Micklegate ward
Luke's Larder	Sharing scheme, Burtonstone Lane
Bell Farm Social Hall	Community provision & space, Heworth
SPARK food provision	Independent, zero waste, city centre
Haxby Food Share	Provision and distribution, Memorial Hall
Carecent	Provision for socially excluded, city centre

Choice



Choice means no choice

“A Lot of people coming in are working, but they simply cannot afford any more to feed, clothe, and eat like they could before, they tell us!”

People need food type choice

“Works great for us, our dietary needs are different, we have halal meat...they have alternatives like fresh fruit and vegetables...we can choose what we have.”

Stigma



Many feel ashamed, embarrassed and afraid

“Stigma, labelled, that was me to start with”.

Respect and reciprocity; people feel better

“They’re really great, they treat me with respect”.

“It’s not all about take, it’s nice to be able to give back”.



Without more money, most people need to attend

“A benefits uplift is the only thing that will help but with everything else going up, it won’t happen”.

“Once I get back to work...I probably won’t need to use the foodbank”.

An increase in the cost of living is cited as the main reason why people need to attend

Connections

A focal point, connecting, propagating networks.

“Might be the only people I talk to, that’s the really fundamental thing for me, social connection”.

It’s a good community vibe, all local people...staff are really good here”.

Used to feel embarrassed...I volunteer...which helps me!

“It’s really heartwarming to hear how people have turned their lives round”.



Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Reducing food waste, recycling and sustainability goals are motives for people attending.

"It cuts down on food waste going to landfill, waste that'd end up in the tip...which is a cost to society".

"It's part of how we set up...originally just to eliminate Food supermarket waste...that was our remit...some People still come for that reason alone".



Experiences

Examples of how accessing food provisions can sometimes have wider social impact for the individual and the community.

CASE STUDY : DAVE

"I came in accessing it, but now I use it as a social connection..."

Having secured his own flat, after living in a tent by the river, Dave started going to his local food provisions. He accesses two or three different services a week to pick up what he needs to 'get by'. He has been given a slow cooker by one provider and he tries to be "as healthy as I can." Dave really values the connections that he has made, and is able to "chat and socialise again". He is more confident and enjoys helping when he can. It has enabled him to "start to live the life I want to live again."

Community Messages

What we heard from talking to the community

- Community-led food provision is really valued
- More choice and less gatekeeping
- Access should be open and free
- Less formality, greater connection
- People are naturally fair and compassionate and want to help
- We need to keep talking about the absence of money!



**Does food
provision have to
be the headline?**

OFFICIAL



Learning

What we, as researchers, have learnt.

People who access and support food provisions know more than us, let them guide.

Trust is a key lever, people who are part of a community have gained that.

Get to know providers and attendees, help out where you can.

Fewer questions and more listening.

We are not the experts!



Why Lived Experience?

We can enter the world of others with empathy

Real issues can be identified and prioritised

Research can be more useful; meaningful to the people it serves

Not bound by conventional research methods; new/different ideas may emerge

We meet people in their own space and hear their truth



Barriers/Challenges

It can be difficult to find the people we really need to talk with

It can be extractive or tokenistic, how do we bring people along if they want to come?

Involving people equally can be hard

There is not always willingness from decision makers

Stigma and stereotypes still exist! (for many on the margins)



At the Heart



How can we embed at the Policy level?

Would like to end with these words from our community reporter



We would love to talk more and to hear your thoughts and experiences.

Please pick up a Food for Thought Brochure to read more.

contact@matterslife.org