

VS6 – Working together to build a stronger Liverpool City Region

Dear Readers,

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the latest VS6 Assembly Report which summaries the feedback from the Sustainable and Affordable Food assembly which took place on 1st October 2020 with 68 individuals from over 80 VCFSE organisations across Liverpool City Region.

The purpose of the Sustainable and Affordable Food Assembly was to not only understand the issues that our communities are facing in relation to food poverty and insecurity, but also for the VCFSE sector to work together to identify and develop potential solutions to these challenges. To do this, the assembly event focused on firstly identifying groups at-risk of food insecurity and the reasons for this, and secondly by discussing potential interventions for those vulnerable groups.

The discussions held and feedback received from our representatives was truly inspiring and reflected what a brilliantly diverse, innovative, and multi-faceted VCFSE sector we have in Liverpool City Region.

Following the assembly event and the outcomes from the workshops, we have developed six key visions that represent the experience and voice of the VCFSE sector and how we can move towards developing a city region where everyone is able to sustainably access affordable and healthy food. These visions are to:

1. Improve access to affordable and healthy food within communities and local high streets
2. Develop and build upon local food supply chains with local food sources and producers
3. Develop and maintain partnerships between the private, public and VCFSE sector
4. Understand the LCR community food economy and improve data sharing opportunities
5. Improve digital inclusion across the region and use technology to increase access to food
6. Work with the VCFSE sector to develop innovative and community focused solutions to food insecurity

This document and associated visions represent the thoughts and idea of the VCFSE sector, and we hope that it can help form part of the blueprint for developing a city region, whole-system approach to tackling food poverty and food insecurity in Merseyside. We will be working closely with the combined authority, local authorities, and existing groups such as the Standing Action Group on Poverty and Life Chances to build upon this work and make a real difference for our communities.

I do hope you enjoy the report and will support us with this work.

Yours Sincerely,



Rev Canon Dr Ellen Loudon

Director of Social Justice & Canon Chancellor, Diocese of Liverpool
Independent Chair VS6

VS6 – Working together to build a stronger Liverpool City Region

Feedback from the VS6 Sustainable and Affordable Food Assembly

The First Steps Toward a Vision for a Sustainable and Affordable Food Plan for the Liverpool City Region

- 1 Improve access to affordable and healthy food within communities and local high streets
- 2 Develop and build upon local food supply chains with local food sources and producers
- 3 Develop and maintain partnerships between the private, public and VCFSE sector
- 4 Understand the LCR community food economy and improve data sharing opportunities
- 5 Improve digital inclusion across the region and use technology to increase access to food
- 6 Work with the VCFSE sector to develop innovative and community focused solutions to food insecurity



Foreword

We want to see an affordable and sustainable food ecosystem that works for everyone in our City Region.

This report, collating the wisdom and insight shared by VSFCE partners during the Food Assembly, provides a vital roadmap as we work together towards this vision. It mirrors the practice present within the workshops, where we sought to distil our hopes and desires for our region down into clear action points, identifying the appropriate geographic scales for their implementation.

This assembly reminded us of the need to continuously widen the invitation to these conversations, welcoming, amongst many others, the growers, small businesses owners, social entrepreneurs, supermarket managers, city planners, cooperative leaders, volunteers and experts by experience to the table. It has become clear that there is a clear role for Food Alliances – partnerships which intentionally bring together the voluntary and statutory sectors – to drive forward these conversations. Holding each of us to account whilst providing, what Bishop Paul describes as ‘a line of sight to the street and back’, ensuring our decisions are informed with lived experiences.

In commending this report and the six recommendations within it to our Combined Authority and local authorities, together as a sector we are offering to play our part to ensure the vision of a healthier, fairer, kinder foodscape becomes a reality.

Dr Naomi Maynard
Food Insecurity Lead Executive
Together Liverpool

Background

The VCFSE sector in the Liverpool City Region plays a vital and varied role in supporting our communities to access food, and without this support many vulnerable people and families may struggle to put food on the table. Following years of austerity and the now the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have served to further highlight the struggles that many people face every day when it comes to being able to afford and access food.

Although our regions food banks do a fantastic job and are a lifeline for so many, we know that to fully address food poverty we must look at how we can improve people's ability to access affordable, healthy food in a much more sustainable way. Food poverty is such a multi-faceted issue that can not be solved by emergency food provision alone and consequently we must look at how various different factors, such as employment, housing, finances, and transport can impact on someone's chances of not only living in food poverty but being able to lift themselves out of it.

The VS6 Sustainable and Affordable Food Assembly was therefore developed as a way to bring together the VCFSE sector across the Liverpool City Region to share our experiences and be the voice of our communities in order to initiate conversations and cultivate ideas on how we can improve food affordability and sustainability in the region.

The assembly was chaired by Dr Naomi Maynard, Food Insecurity Lead Executive at Together Liverpool, and was attended by 68 individuals from over 80 VCFSE organisations across the Liverpool City Region.

The event was split into two workshop sessions where participants were put into small groups to discuss:

- A. What groups participants most concerned about and most at-risk of hunger and severe food insecurity, both before and during the coronavirus pandemic.
- B. Actions and interventions that we could put in place for each vulnerable group identified in Workshop A.

This report provides a summary of the conversations and ideas shared in the assembly by our VCFSE partners, and from these discussions we have developed six visions we believe are key in order to improve food affordability and sustainability across the city region. We have included some potential next steps for achieving our visions for consideration by VCFSE, local authority and combined authority partners.

This document is a record of the voice of the sector and subsequently our communities and takes the first steps forward towards developing a whole-system approach to developing a city region where everyone has access to affordable, healthy food.

Our key visions for improving food sustainability and affordability across the Liverpool City Region

① Increase the accessibility to food locally by improving the amount of affordable, healthy food available within communities and high streets

Why is this important?

During the coronavirus pandemic our local, independent high street shops, community food businesses and foodbanks provided an incredible response for those who struggled to access food within our communities. Shielded and vulnerable people who could not visit supermarkets were supported by local communities and food businesses that were able to mobilise quickly and effectively for those in need. Many people rely on their local high streets to purchase food, and therefore we need to make sure that our high streets are able to offer affordable and healthy food options in a more accessible way.

What is needed?

- A fuller understanding of what is available on high streets in each local authority area in relation to affordable and accessible food, this will enable us to identify gaps in provision.
- Support for local food businesses and VCFSE food organisations operating in communities and high streets, including financial support and advice for new businesses and start-up organisations that will increase the accessibility of food locally.
- Ensure that affordable food accessibility is a key aspect of high street revitalization work and existing high street projects across LCR.
- Closer links between access to food and transport infrastructure, to ensure that there are available public transport routes for everyone to access food.

Next steps

1. A review of local high streets in each local authority area could be conducted to identify what is currently available in terms of accessing affordable and healthy food and to identify where there are gaps in provision. This could include a review of transport routes in the region to identify communities who may not be able to access food easily. We would recommend that this review is conducted in partnership with the VCFSE sector.
2. LCR Combined Authority could support the VCFSE sector to develop best practice guidance for community food provision by reviewing existing models across the region and sharing key learnings that could be implemented in each local authority.

② Develop and build upon local food supply chains with local food sources and producers

Why is this important?

Throughout the food assembly the idea of locally grown food and local food supply chains was raised by the majority of groups during the workshops. It was recognised that within our local communities across LCR there are many community gardens, allotments and even home gardens that are used to grow fruit and vegetables. This presents a significant opportunity to link these growers into a local community food supply chain to increase the amount of healthy, fresh food available. Gathering food that grows naturally in the environment could also link into local supply chains, such as wild berries or

other fruits. Keeping supply chains as local as possible benefits communities by supporting local producers, providing potential training and volunteer opportunities, and supports the circular economy.

What is needed?

- Support for new and existing projects that encourage the local growing of food and use of land for growing fruit and vegetables for local communities.
- Linking new and existing growers, gatherers, and community food projects into local supply chain and distribution networks. This could also include local farmers and producers as well as VCFSE community groups.
- An LCR development plan to link growers and gatherers into food supply chains.
- Establish an LCR community food company operated by the VCFSE sector that would be responsible for sourcing and supplying food to community food initiatives and procuring locally produced food.

Next steps

1. A review of council land assets across LCR could help identify unused land that could be transformed into community gardens, allotments, and urban farms for local growing initiatives.
2. Mapping of existing food suppliers, producers, and community food projects in the region to develop and refine a local food supply chain to increase the accessibility of healthy, affordable food within communities.
3. Connect with existing LCR circular economies groups and explore developing a circular food economy initiative

3 Develop and maintain partnerships with the private, public and VCFSE sector

Why is this important?

Many VCFSE community food groups in the region rely on not only donations from the public but on the generosity of the private sector to provide food for those struggling in our communities, including large supermarkets and distributors in the region such as Amazon and Unilever. Workshop feedback stated that food donated by the private sector is appreciated however sometimes is not usable because it is out of date or does not enable the recipient to cook a well-balanced meal. Additionally, the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted issues with supermarket delivery, with some households on low incomes and the elderly struggling to afford the minimum order amount and delivery charges whilst being unable to visit the store in person.

What is needed?

- Strengthened relationships and partnerships between the private, public and VCFSE sector to bring influential private sector partners into the food sustainability agenda. This would help encourage good quality food donations to maintain the dignity and meet the needs of those needing support with food. It is important that this includes food donations that are appropriate for different cultures and diets.
- Work with supermarkets to better identify priority and vulnerable customers, and remove minimum spend requirements and delivery charges for these customers, including volunteers or carers who may be supporting them.

Next steps

1. Local authorities could approach or build upon existing relationships with the key private sector suppliers in their area to discuss how they can contribute to the community food sector and develop appropriate protocols for doing so, to help ensure support is consistent and valuable.

2. LCR Combined Authority could support work between private sector suppliers and the VCFSE sector to review opportunities for support with warehousing, food storage and the logistics of food supply for the community food sector.

4

Understand the LCR community food economy and improve data sharing opportunities and processes

Why is this important?

Feedback from the workshops during this assembly highlighted the significant and varied support that community food organisations provide across the region, and how the size and scale of the sector is not necessarily recognised at an LCR level. It is important to understand the contribution of the community food sector to the region so we can recognize the value of the sector and how it supports public sector services to reduce food insecurity and inequalities. Additionally, better data sharing protocols across the VCFSE and public sector would help improve communication and the capabilities of all statutory and non-statutory services to provide support where it is most needed.

What is needed?

- A stronger understanding of community food provision and activity across the region; this will help to capture the economic value of the community food sector to the LCR economy. This should include the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the sector, number of organisations, employers, volunteers and social value.
- Data sharing protocols and agreements between the public and VCFSE sector to share data and information to understand the needs of vulnerable groups.

Next steps

1. A review the scale of community food activity across the region which could be supported by the combined authority working closely with the VCFSE sector. This could be a commissioned piece of work and should link in with other mapping work described previously.
2. Local authorities and VCFSE sector leaders to work together to review how data can be better shared to enable an improved understanding of the food needs of communities across the region in order to best target support.

5

Improve digital inclusion across the region and use technology to increase access to food

Why is this important?

Those without access to a digital device or the internet are already disadvantaged in many ways and the coronavirus pandemic highlighted the effects of digital exclusion on access to food. With libraries and community centres closed, assembly attendees raised concerns that those who are digitally excluded had limited ability to order food for delivery online with reduced opportunities to search and apply for support with many services moving online. This is particularly apparent for those requiring Universal Credit support for finances to purchase food and for people who have been emergency housed during the pandemic, including asylum seekers, domestic violence victims and newly released prisoners. Digital inclusion has many positive outcomes for people in terms of food as it enables them to easily find their nearest support service online and also search for ideas to make affordable, healthy meals.

What is needed?

- Increased provision of digital devices for those who live in digital poverty, to support people to find services, complete online application forms, purchase food for delivery and keep up to date with the latest rules and regulations.
- Improved Wi-Fi accessibility across the region, targeting vulnerable groups including those who have been emergency housed such as asylum seekers, domestic violence victims and newly released prisoners.
- Clear guidance for residents across the region on how to find food support services.
- Support for people to learn and develop skills to cook affordable, healthy meals and using technology to develop opportunities to create or share online cooking videos.

Next steps

1. The importance of digital inclusion is well recognised by the CA and local authorities across the region, and improving digital inclusion and skills forms a significant part of the CA's new digital strategy. The relationship between digital inclusion and access to sustainable and affordable food should be linked into this work moving forward, with opportunities for the VCFSE sector to input into decision making.
2. Ensure that community food support services are available on local authority service directories and that this is easy to find. Working closely with the VCFSE sector would help ensure that digitally excluded and marginalised groups can also access to this information.

6 Working with the VCFSE sector to develop innovative and community focused solutions for food insecurity

Why is this important?

Many people who struggle to afford or access food will turn to the VCFSE sector for support, and this has been evident throughout the coronavirus pandemic as the demand for foodbank rises. With concerns about the increase in unemployment levels due to the pandemic, it is vital that the VCFSE sector is at the heart of affordable and sustainable food policy and decision making. VCFSE organisations understand the needs of their communities, are able to respond to these needs rapidly and flexibly and can ensure that key messages are shared successfully.

What is needed?

- Continued partnership working with the VCFSE sector to develop innovative, sustainable solutions for eradicating hunger and food insecurity.
- Ensure BAME organisations are at the centre of this work to support the voices of marginalised groups that may not access mainstream services to be heard.
- Financial support for community food organisations to provide support for those who are at risk of hunger and severe food insecurity, and for infrastructure organisations who provide leadership and guidance for VCFSE organisations.

Next steps

1. Each local authority area would benefit from having a local food alliance led by the VCFSE sector that will help understand and address food affordability and sustainability issues in each area and communicate closely with local authorities. In areas that currently do not have a food alliance, local authorities could support the VCFSE sector to develop one. Alliances should look to connect into national networks, such as Feeding Britain and Food Power, to support the sharing of resources, knowledge and good practice.
2. Continue to make sure that relevant strategic and policy groups have representation from the VCFSE sector.

Workshop A

What groups are you most concerned about over the next six months?

Participants were asked to think about:

- How has the pandemic specifically impacted most at-risk groups?
- Is this a 'new' group that has emerged directly because of the pandemic?
- Why is it that they face these issues?
- Identify any issues surrounding access to healthy and nutritious food and the affordability of food.

Assembly participants identified numerous groups that were vulnerable to and at risk of food insecurity across the region. These consisted of groups of people that were either:

- Already vulnerable prior to the coronavirus pandemic and whose vulnerabilities have increased as a result and,
- New groups of people and new users of services that are at risk of food insecurity directly due to consequences of the pandemic.

Across each breakout room, similar at-risk groups were identified and have been summarised in the below table from assembly feedback. The groups are listed in order of most frequently mentioned.

Group	What issues do they face and why
Shielded and vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those shielding are at increasing risk of becoming isolated from friends, family and community services • A lack of face-to-face services due to pandemic restrictions is increasing vulnerabilities • Lack of appointments reduces the opportunities for people to be signposted to relevant food support services • There are concerns that shielded people may not know how to access the services they need including sourcing medication and food • Some services have moved online however many shielded and vulnerable people may be unable to access help online due to lack of skills and technology • Online food shopping can be a struggle and not suitable for everyone • Issues such as minimum spend and delivery charges can make online shopping unaffordable • Vulnerable people are fearful of leaving the house, going to the supermarket and taking public transport however local shops are often more expensive, have less choice and often do not stock fresh food. • Pre-COVID users of food support services have lost contact with support structures and are seen less frequently. • Newly vulnerable people may be unaware of support available and how to access support with food shopping • Increasing poor mental health will impact on ability and motivation to look after oneself and cook healthy meals. • Domestic violence victims who are emergency housed may not have the finances, equipment and facilities needed to purchase and cook food.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly, homeless people and newly released prisoners may also lack the fundamentals needed to purchase and cook healthy food.
Low income families and new users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This group includes both existing families on low income and newly low income families because of the pandemic. • Families on Universal Credit are struggling to make ends meet, with a lack of affordable healthy food available to feed a whole family. Some reports that families were living on basic food for days at a time, e.g., bread and jam. • Some families are just above the threshold for free school meals, however as children have not been in school their food bill has doubled throughout the pandemic. • People who have been furloughed or made redundant, are self-employed and working on a zero hour contract have been hit hard by the pandemic. • People who are no longer working or whose work is now limited are spending more time at home with increased food and utility bills whilst their income has dropped or ceased. • Those with reduced income are struggling to maintain standards of living, for example paying their mortgage or paying for various contracts such as their cars, phone bills, credit card repayments etc. • Delays with setting up benefits have impacted people’s ability to pay their bills and purchase essential items including food. • Newly low income individuals may not know how to access services they need including debt advice, legal support for evictions, emergency food support etc. • There is a stigma associated with accessing support, including around food, especially for those who have not had to worry about food access before. This prevents some people from seeking help. • The stress of job and financial insecurity can have a big impact on mental health.
Migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are various difficulties for these communities to access support including language barriers, cultural barriers and recourse to public funds. • Recently a lack of face-to-face appointments and increase in online applications, particularly benefit applications, has been difficult due to varying English language and digital skills, as well as having access to technology and internet. • Food parcels provided to asylum seekers are often not culturally appropriate • Food drop offs are not done in conjunction with other services • Refugee and asylum seeker communities are often isolated due to a lack of services and English language courses • Cancelled and delayed appointments due to the pandemic can impact on the time left on visas and right to remain in the country • Lack of knowledge of how to navigate the system • Instances where a person relies on their English speaking partner who has sole access to the money however their partner is hospitalised due to coronavirus. That individual is then isolated with no funds or means of purchasing essential items.
Older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people are finding it difficult to keep up with all the recent changes • Some older people are wary of going on public transport to go to the shops and to go to the bank for money.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many older people are reliant on using cash to pay for things and are unfamiliar with using a debit card and contactless payment. Many shops have moved to contactless payment only to reduce transmission of the virus, leaving elderly people unable to pay • Banks and post offices moving out of villages and small towns means that elderly people must travel further to withdraw money, yet they are fearful to travel. • Older people who live in rural areas have limited transport routes and internet access • Local smaller shops feel safer however they are more expensive and have less choice. • Older people who have lost their partner, or their partner is hospitalised or moved into a care home can be extremely isolated and may not have the skills to cook for themselves if their partner usually did this for them (generational issue). • Older people can lack essential digital skills for ordering food online, interacting with online services or searching for support. May also do not have access to a computer or the internet.
Other groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children - Children who are entitled to free school meals have not all receive this support throughout lockdown, passing expenses for children's food onto low income families who are already struggling. Concerns around children who are having to isolate due to their own health conditions and children who are caring for their parents. • Women – Food insecurity also includes access to baby milk and access to sanitary products • Homelessness – People who are homeless being emergency housed and questions over whether they have the finances to afford food and the equipment and skills needed to purchase food and cook a healthy meal • Newly released prisoners – Similar to the above compounded by delays in setting up Universal Credit • Traveller and Gypsy Communities – Difficulties accessing services and the stigma the communities already face.

Throughout the feedback from the first workshop, consistent themes were raised across each vulnerable group mentioned above that impacted on that group's ability to source, purchase and eat healthy nutritious food sustainably. These barriers are a result of issues within the entire food process, from farms to table, with problems relating to food supply chains and how customers obtain food. These are highlighted and discussed in the below table:

Barrier	Why is this a barrier to food access
Food accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people are reliant on the food outlets available to them in their community, in some cases this is a Farmfoods where there is little or no fresh food to purchase • Food donations from supermarkets are not always usable or dignified e.g., a food pantry receiving a crate of leftover kale. • Unusable food often goes to waste when there could be an alternative use

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply chain issues in rural areas • Many people, particularly the elderly and vulnerable/shielded, do not want to go to the larger shops as they do not feel safe, but local shops are more expensive with less choice • Free food is not sustainable in the long term, there needs to be support for people to be able to purchase their own food • Food deserts reduce opportunities to access fresh food due to lack of supermarkets and transport e.g., Kirkby • Local authority food packages throughout COVID have been poor, with lack of fresh, nutritious food • Food supplies are decreasing whereas demand for support is increasing • Difficulties with accessing baby milk and sanitary products • Supermarket delivery charges can be expensive and sometimes the minimum spend for delivery can be unaffordable.
Digital exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people do not have access to IT equipment to order food online • Some charitable organisations also do not have digital access to ordering food for food banks and are reliant on donations • Those without access to IT are unable to complete Universal Credit and other benefits applications online which has been difficult throughout the pandemic due to the closure of libraries and other services. • Delays to Universal Credit have resulted in people relying on foodbanks
Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a stigma attached to receiving “handouts” which prevents people from accessing the support they need, particularly to those who are newly unemployed due to COVID or have never struggled with affording food before. • Due to stigma people do not identify or recognise themselves as being in need and therefore will not seek support. • Irish traveller communities already face a stigma in society and being unable to afford food compounds the stigma.
Equipment and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people who experience food insecurity do not have the equipment and facilities needed to cook healthy, fresh food • Additionally, many do not have the knowledge or skills to cook a meal from scratch
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who do not have access to a car can find it difficult to get to a supermarket particularly in food deserts • Supermarkets are not always on public transport routes, and when they are it can be difficult for people to carry their shopping home, especially the elderly and disabled • Elderly people are fearful of getting public transport due to COVID and have been walking large distances to get food shopping in some cases. • Rural areas often have poor transport routes

Workshop B

What could we do to resolve food insecurity issues?

Participants were asked to think about:

- Actions and interventions that we could put in place to for each vulnerable group identified in Workshop A.
- Over what geographic scale could these interventions take place:
 - Hyperlocal
 - Local (borough wide)
 - Liverpool City Region
 - Nationally

Below is a summary of the responses received for each vulnerable group and issue in the workshop.

Vulnerable Groups				
Group	Hyper Local	Local (borough wide)	City Region	National
Shielded and vulnerable	Conduct wellbeing calls to vulnerable clients Post notes through doors with signposting information A befriending service for vulnerable people to reduce feelings of isolation Put stickers on wheelie bins with signposting information	A renewal of local high streets to make them accessible and safe A triaging service to act as a central point of contact for other services Each borough to adopt Halton & St Helens “Community Tasks” app in which support referrals are posted for volunteers to offer to complete. No need to manually search for a volunteer.	LCR CA to obtain data on shielded and vulnerable people in the region and map out where support is most needed, including identifying areas with gaps in support. To support a co-ordinated conversation to share knowledge and best practice across the LCR	Increased funding needed to continue to support these residents Pressure on supermarkets to play their role in meeting these needs of this group, including reducing minimum spending and delivery charges for online shopping. Supermarkets also need to be more flexible with how they accept payments and look for alternative methods for shielded and vulnerable people.

<p>Low income families and new users</p>		<p>Support individuals to purchase food preparation equipment</p> <p>Support newly unemployed people into volunteering to provide structure and purpose.</p> <p>Utilise skills of newly unemployed or furloughed people</p>	<p>Support for low income families to make sure they can afford utilities including gas and electric to be able to cook food.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people improve and gain new skills to increase employability.</p> <p>Lobby the Government over delays to Universal Credit</p>	<p>Need a national response to Universal credit delays and barriers</p> <p>Pay people the living wage and implement universal income</p> <p>Legislation to ensure that employers and paying employees who are self-isolating or waiting for test results</p> <p>Work with energy suppliers to ensure that people on low income are able to pay for utilities to cook food.</p> <p>Free school meals to be provided for those who are entitled and these to be provided even if a child is not able to go to school.</p>
<p>Migrant, refugee & asylum seekers</p>	<p>Better understand cultural needs for different migrant communities, including minimum standards and individual food requirements and diet. Work with local BAME organisations.</p>	<p>Data sharing between local authorities and food charities to locate asylum seekers who may be in need of food related support</p>	<p>Ensure that asylum seekers are housed in accommodation with internet access.</p> <p>Support food charities to stock culturally appropriate food</p>	<p>Implement a food equivalent of a national basic income.</p>
<p>Older people</p>	<p>Volunteer shopping service for older people</p>	<p>Provide charities with tablets with data to distribute to older</p>	<p>Practical and financial support for charities to re-open</p>	

	<p>Neighbourhood scheme to build relationships with older isolated people</p> <p>Lunch clubs and community groups to re-open safely</p>	<p>people with tech support on how to use to order food, keep in touch with family etc.</p> <p>Local authorities to assist with the reopening of community organisations</p>	<p>community centres and events safely for older people</p> <p>Increased information sharing needed for elderly people on continued changes to COVID requirements and legislation to reduce confusion. Print based comms messages are more accessible for older people e.g., letters, leaflets, newspapers.</p>	
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Barriers				
Barrier	Hyper Local	Local (borough wide)	City Region	National
<p>Food Access</p>	<p>Disseminate knowledge on how to access food support</p> <p>Local community kitchen use for people to cook or learn to cook food</p> <p>Local businesses to donate food and facilities</p> <p>Make use of community gardens to grow food</p> <p>Community shops/social supermarkets to open on high streets to fill the gap between food banks and supermarkets. Pop up shops.</p>	<p>Local Whatsapp groups to communicate between organisations, move surplus food and identify where food is most needed</p> <p>Open a local “food hub” that contains a social supermarket, kitchens to cook, community garden etc.</p> <p>Engage with national suppliers and farmers that are in the area for donations.</p> <p>Develop a food alliance/collaboration/network for joint funding, sourcing and distribution of food.</p>	<p>Give people the skills and knowledge to cook food, including recipes, grants to help with fuel costs and purchasing cooking equipment.</p> <p>Mapping of food organisations in the area including foodbanks, social supermarkets, high street shops, big supermarkets to understand areas of need.</p> <p>Review of council land assets available for community gardens, allotments and farms.</p> <p>Develop an LCR Community Food Growers Network</p>	<p>Business rate reductions to support high street and small businesses</p> <p>Limit the number of betting shops and off licences</p> <p>Work with national supermarkets and supplies to play their role in meeting need.</p> <p>Funding</p>

	<p>Posters in community areas such as GP practices, bus stops, local shops.</p> <p>Community forages</p>	<p>Maximise use of local supply chains when purchasing goods.</p> <p>YouTube videos with how to cook meals and recipes</p>	<p>Develop a plan for surplus, unusable food e.g., could be used for compost for community allotments or go to animal charities.</p> <p>A development plan for increasing the local food supply and distribution network.</p> <p>An LCR food distribution centre to supply food to community organisations</p> <p>Initiatives to encourage home growing.</p> <p>Funding for food support services to continue vital work and innovate.</p> <p>Involve trade unions in the management of supply and distribution logistics</p> <p>Agree protocols for emergency food provision across LCR</p> <p>A move away from Foodbanks to food pantries and social supermarkets</p>	
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Digital Exclusion			<p>Recycled laptop/smart device scheme to give to those in need of IT equipment (e.g., Reboot)</p> <p>Improve access to internet across LCR</p> <p>Increase and promote digital skills development programmes.</p> <p>Access to technology and internet for asylum seekers</p>	<p>Increased funding for digital inclusion initiatives</p> <p>Make all government documents/forms accessible in different formats</p>
Stigma		<p>Develop ways of providing dignified food related support which promotes choice and autonomy.</p> <p>Support people to buy food if they can</p> <p>Promote good news stories</p>	<p>Ensure quality food is available for people who need support by partnering with supermarkets</p> <p>Promote the third sector as being there for the whole community, not just for those who are struggling.</p>	<p>National image of the third sector needs to change – it is not just charities.</p> <p>Educate supermarkets on the value of fresh food donations</p>
Equipment and facilities		<p>Review available community cooking facilities</p>	<p>Ensure that those in emergency housing situations have the equipment needed for cooking</p>	
Transport			<p>Review transport infrastructure for distribution of food</p> <p>Review transport providers, public and private, to ensure that everyone on the region can access food or have food delivered</p>	

VS6 – Working together to build a stronger Liverpool City Region



VS6 is a partnership of support organisations working with the 8,600 voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) groups operating across our Liverpool City Region

VCFSE in Liverpool City Region

- Over 8,600 VCFSE groups supporting communities across the City Region including 5,500 community groups
- 24,000 plus FTE employees working in the sector
- £918m GVA contribution to the City Region
- 180,000 volunteers contributing over 500,000 hours per week¹

What do we do?

VS6 work together to champion the vital role our sector does and could play in the future of the City Region, while seeking to shape local policy and implementation for the benefit of our communities.

How do we do this?

VCFSE support organisations have collectively engaged with public and private sector partners on a City Region level since 2004. In 2015, we formally launched the VS6 partnership in order to provide a voice, platform and action model for VCFSE participation.

We're focused on driving positive change by connecting the VCFSE sector with our developing city region. Together, we have links to 8,600 organisations across the six boroughs, and aim to support these groups – many integral to our communities - to collectively influence decision making:

- Offering solutions to some of the most challenging economic issues facing our City Region
- Driving community-centred approaches to transforming health and well-being
- Providing a single point of contact for the city's VCFSE sector

Contact

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¹ **Source:** *Measuring the size and scope of the VCS in Liverpool City Region (Liverpool John Moores University: 2015)*