



## Case studies: The role of housing associations in preventing hunger and food insecurity



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Across the United Kingdom, housing associations are playing a crucial role in local efforts to prevent hunger and to provide households with access to nutritious and affordable food. This includes making space available in their properties for local community groups to run food projects from, providing funding, staff and other resources, and running projects themselves. This document sets out case studies of this work from across the Feeding Britain network. You may also be interested in this recording of a webinar we ran on this topic in December 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIx6UIVZYEM>

If you would like to find out more, request support toward the development of an initiative along these lines in your area, or be included as a case study in the next version of this document, please email [info@feedingbritain.org](mailto:info@feedingbritain.org)

### **Glasgow: Wheatley Housing Group and Good Food Scotland**

Good Food Scotland, a local community group, approached Wheatley Housing Group to propose setting up an affordable food club within a space they had identified in a Wheatley block of flats. Good Food Scotland had seen there was a lack of access to good food in the area, and engaged the tenants to seek their thoughts on what was needed - tenant support for the project was an important factor in Wheatley's buy-in. The space was a sun room at the bottom of a multi-storey block of flats in Glasgow that was being used for storage. Wheatley agreed to provide the space free of charge, covering the utility costs and ongoing costs, and also paid for the fit out of the space with fridges, freezers, shelving etc. Wheatley offer their wraparound services through the affordable food club - this includes benefits and fuel advisors, employability programmes, training, apprenticeships and a graduate scheme. Wheatley also identified other ways they could help the project including introducing Good Food Scotland to food suppliers and relevant local businesses.

For Wheatley, this work is helping to deliver their strategic aims of changing lives in communities and supporting economic resilience. Wheatley had identified multi-storey blocks in areas of high need, where the majority of tenants are on Universal Credit, there were antisocial behaviour issues, and a significant population of asylum seekers being hosted there. They have seen a significant impact from the affordable food club for their tenants including the financial impact of saving money on food, the convenience of having food right on their doorsteps, improved community spirit and connections, reduced social isolation and increased takeup of wraparound support from the housing association's broader services.

Wheatley has worked with Good Food Scotland to set up three affordable food clubs within their properties in Glasgow - Nitshill, Kennishead, and Sandyhills - with several more in the pipeline. As a result of this work, three additional housing associations have partnered with Good Food Scotland to set up similar projects within their properties. One of these, Linthouse Housing Association, has set up a voucher scheme to subsidise a shop at the affordable food club for people in crisis - this is helping to support a transition from people accessing a food bank into membership of an affordable food club.

### **Nottingham: Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing**

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) are working with two local community groups, Himmah and Foodprint, to offer a weekly mobile affordable food club to one of their estates. This food club offers residents access to nutritious foods at a heavily reduced rate. MTVH have noticed a significant increase in people's consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables as a result of making this produce available for a low price. They also report a strengthening of local community and relationships, with people coming together, socialising, and sharing advice and recipes through the project. This project fits alongside other activities that MTVH are running at their community centre including a community allotment, weekly grub club, community cooking courses and breakfast clubs for young people. MTVH also offer wraparound support to complement this work including benefits advice, crisis provision and grants.

### **Warrington, St Helens and Liverpool: Torus Housing Association**

Torus Foundation has a Food Security Officer to support local work around hunger. This Officer works closely with local food partnerships and projects and provides a range of support including grant funding, hands-on help to run affordable food clubs, and delivering activities such as cooking sessions. They have a Community Investment Fund that local food projects can apply for, which they have used to support the establishment of a network of affordable food clubs across the region. They also offer wraparound support including social prescribing, employment skills and benefits support. This work fits within Torus' corporate ethos of Building Stronger Communities. Typically, Torus are not able to provide physical spaces due to the housing shortage in the area. Instead, they provide funding and staff support for projects to run in separate community venues. Support from Torus and other partners has been central to Merseyside becoming the first region of the UK where there are more pantries and affordable food clubs than food banks, and therefore shifting the response to food insecurity from crisis provision to more preventative and sustainable models.

The Food Security Officer also supports the local food partnerships with delivering broader strategic priorities. In Liverpool this has included a project to increase takeup of the Healthy Start scheme for pregnant women and families with young children. In Warrington, this has included match funding a voucher scheme to support people who are accessing the foodbank into membership of a pantry in order to reduce dependency on emergency food provision.

### **Lambeth: Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing**

Healthy Living Platform, a local community group, launched an affordable food club in a small community hall in a block owned by Lambeth Council, which is part of a larger estate that is owned by Metropolitan

Thames Valley Housing. Initially, MTVH supported with communications for example by sending text messages to all of their residents on the estate telling them about the affordable food club and promoting it in their newsletter and website. MTVH also provided support to residents who were flagging housing issues through the affordable food club. In the longer term, MTVH have been able to offer a larger community centre space for the project. This has allowed the affordable food club to expand, provided them with a storage room and a space where people can socialise and where other services can be hosted.

**Tips from Feeding Britain partners for food projects on working with housing associations:**

- Share this document of case studies with your local housing associations, to show what others are doing and what is possible.
- Be proactive and bring a proposal with a clear ask to the housing association.
- Speak to the housing association about the types of support they could offer. If they do not have venues available for food projects, they might be able to provide funding, staff or other resources.
- Help the housing association to see how this work overlaps with their own priorities. That might include their strategic goals or their ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) Reporting.