Placing Food Ladders.

Nottingham Food Summit 2024

https://geofoodie.org/food-ladders-toolkit/

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5 Missions of Government

All imbricated with food security

- Kickstart economic growth
- Take back our streets
- Break down barriers to opportunity
- Build an NHS for the future
- Make Britian a green energy superpower

Food Insecurity in the UK (Food and You 2, Autumn 2022)

Low or very low food security:

- 1 in 4 adults
- 46% of people with HH earnings less than £32K
- 1 in 3 adults with at least 1 child
- 40% of adults living in most deprived quintile

My Food Security research

- Improving people's ability to have the food they need to live their best lives
- How places can foster health and wellbeing –or-create barriers that isolate and disable
- Builds on UN 4 pillars of food security: Availablity, Access, Utilisation, Consistency

Resources needed to be food secure

Financial resources—Market Engagement

Social resources—Reciprocity, collaboration, and mutual aid; Acceptability

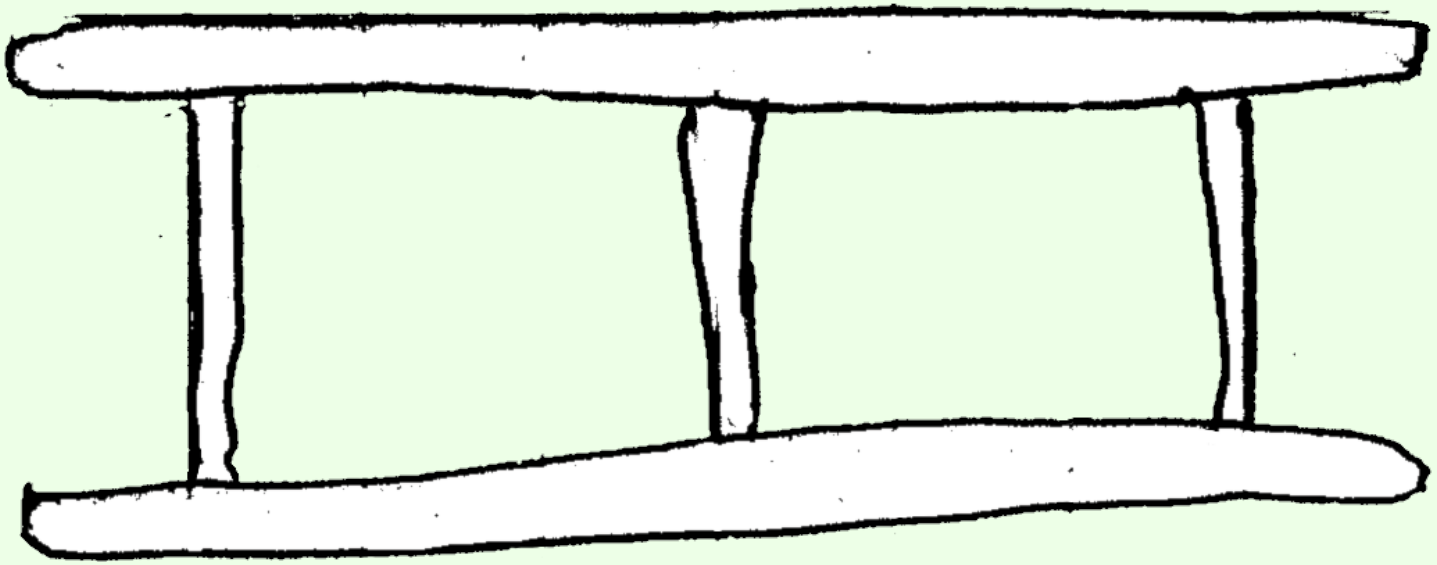
Health—Mental and physical ability to get things done

Knowledge—Know-how, know-what

Time—Temporal engagement with an activity or set of interlinked activities

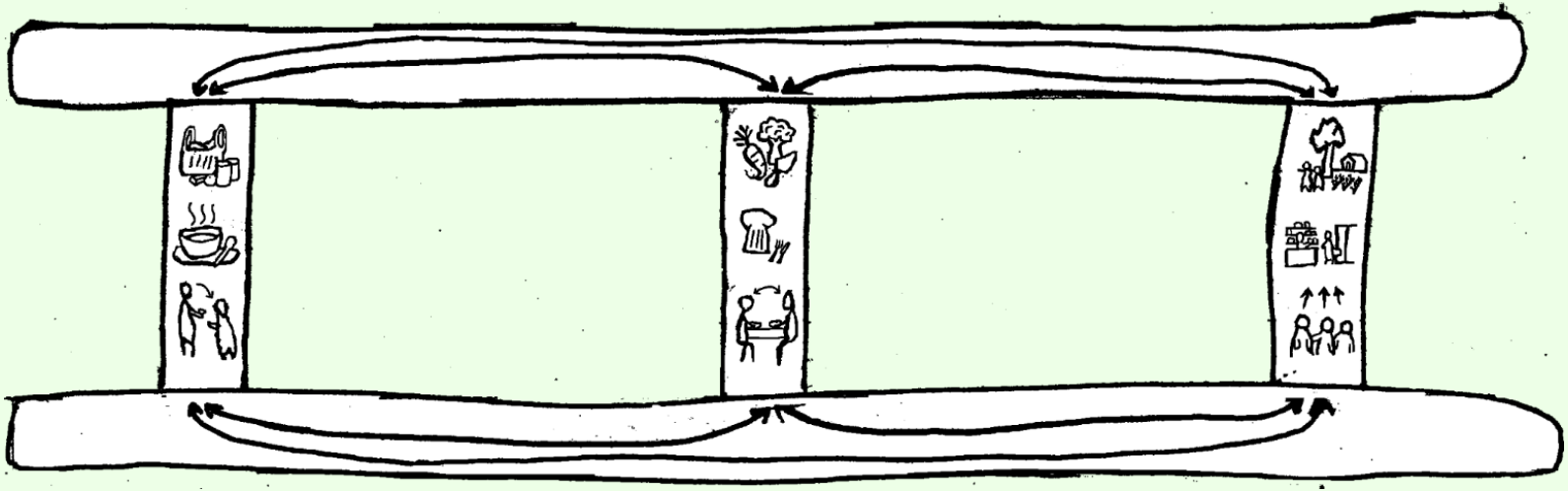
Place-based—physical infrastructures and materials where people can access them

The Food Ladders Model.



Food Ladders imagines the community food system as a ladder.

The ladder is made up of 3 connected rungs.



Each rung represents a different type of activity.

Rung 1 - ‘Catching’.

This is emergency activity, done *to/for* people.

Examples might include:

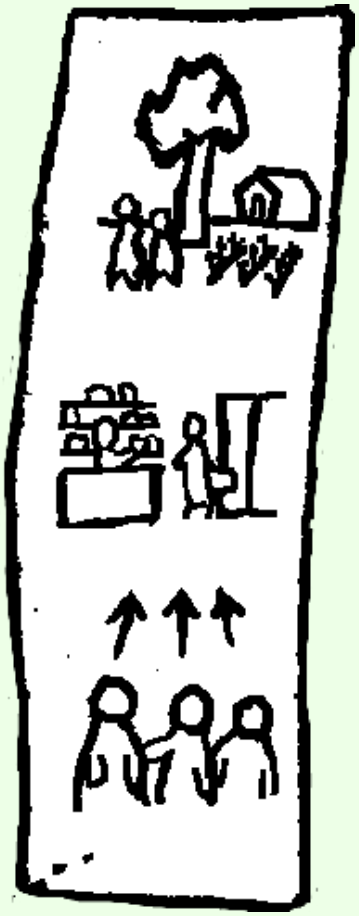
- Emergency food parcels
- Soup kitchens
- Basic signposting

Rung 2 - ‘Capacity Building’.

This is supported activity, done *with* people.

Examples might include:

- Community gardening
- Cookery, food hygiene & nutrition training
- Pantries
- Cash-first and voucher schemes
- Social eating



Rung 3 - ‘Self-Organised Community Change’.

This is community-led activity, done *by* people, that lead to socially just food security.

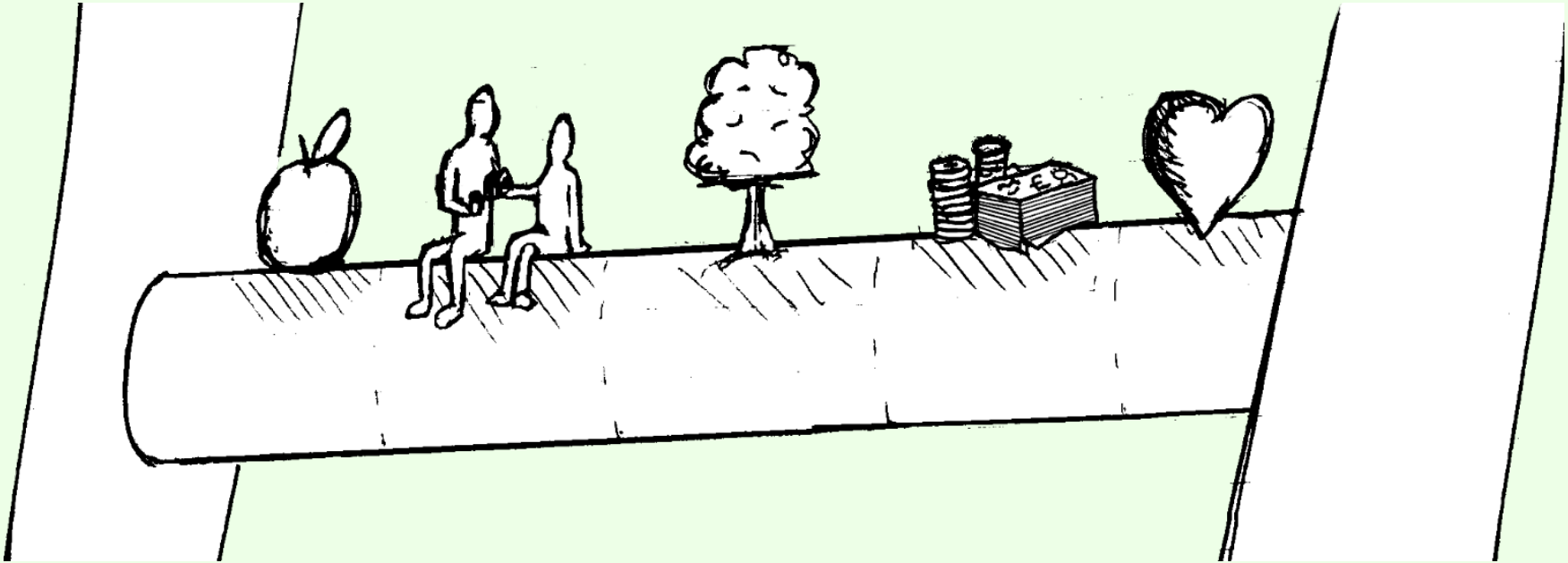
Examples might include:

- Community owned growing spaces
- Local food co-operatives and businesses
- Community-led campaigns on local interests
- Resilient communities

Socially just food security is when

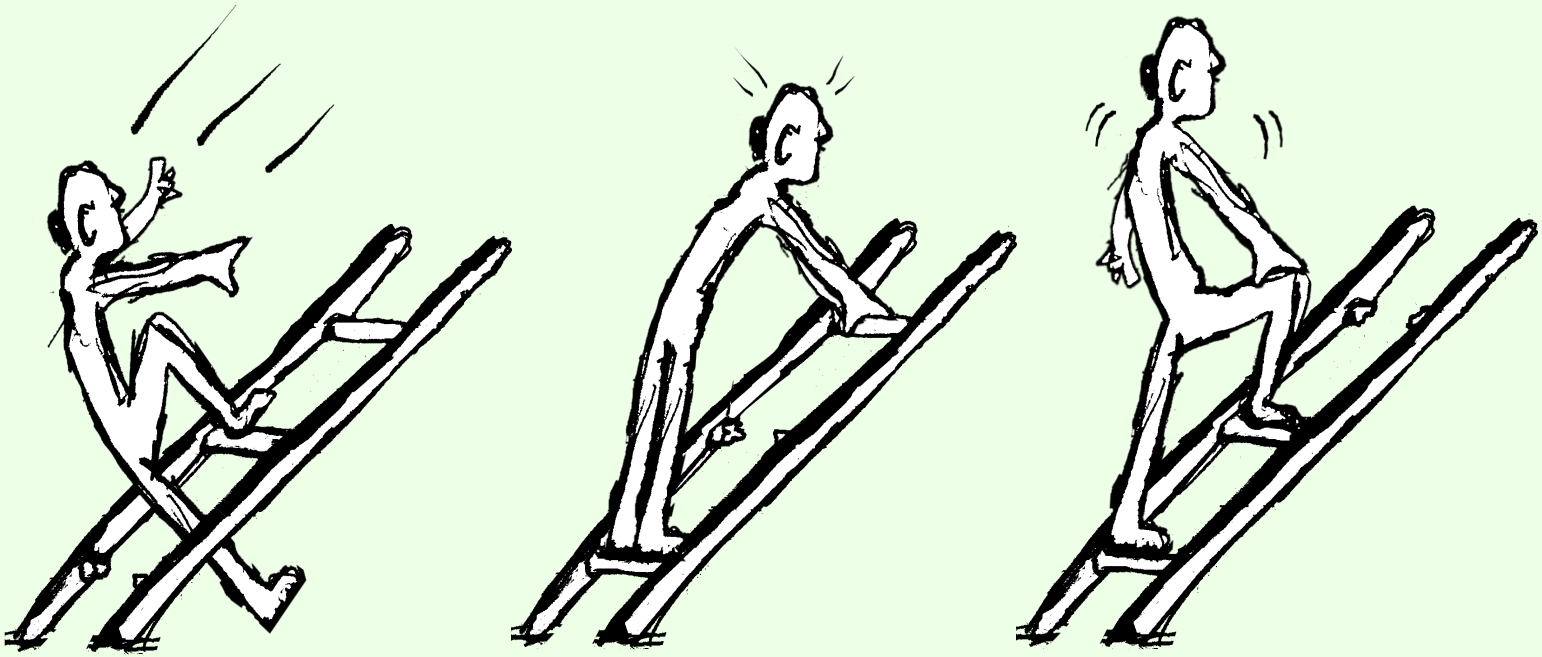
- People have the food they need to live their best lives without shame, stigma, and disproportionate stress
- Legal, policy and power relationships are not systematically disadvantaging certain groups
- People’s experiences are recognised for what they are and not measured against what they are not
- They are involved in imagining what a better food system looks like

Rung activities can affect a range of different areas of people's lives.



Areas might include food, social life, the environment, economy, and physical or mental health.

No rung is more important than any others.

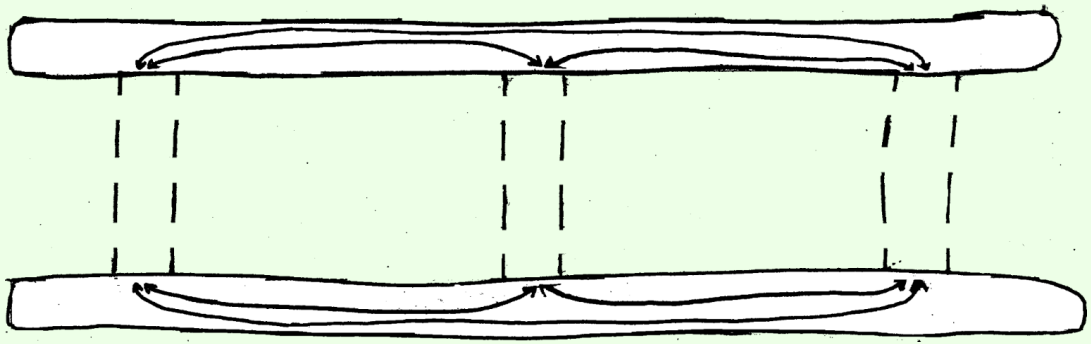


A ladder only works if *all* the rungs are there!

People often use multiple rungs at the same time.

People move up and down the ladder depending on their circumstances.

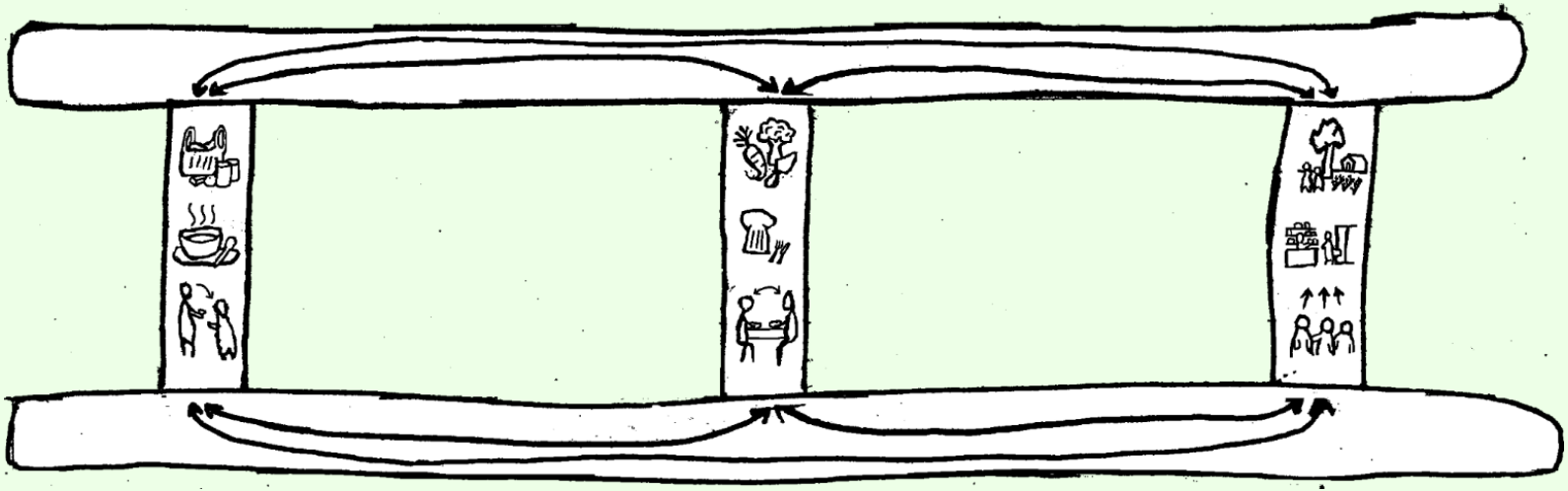
All the rungs need to be connected to one another.



Examples might include:

- Local or area-wide food partnerships
- Collaboration between organisations
- Sharing resources and information
- Signposting and referrals systems
- Community anchor organisations

The complete ladder gives people a range of opportunities and support, to achieve resilient food security.



Placing Food Ladders.

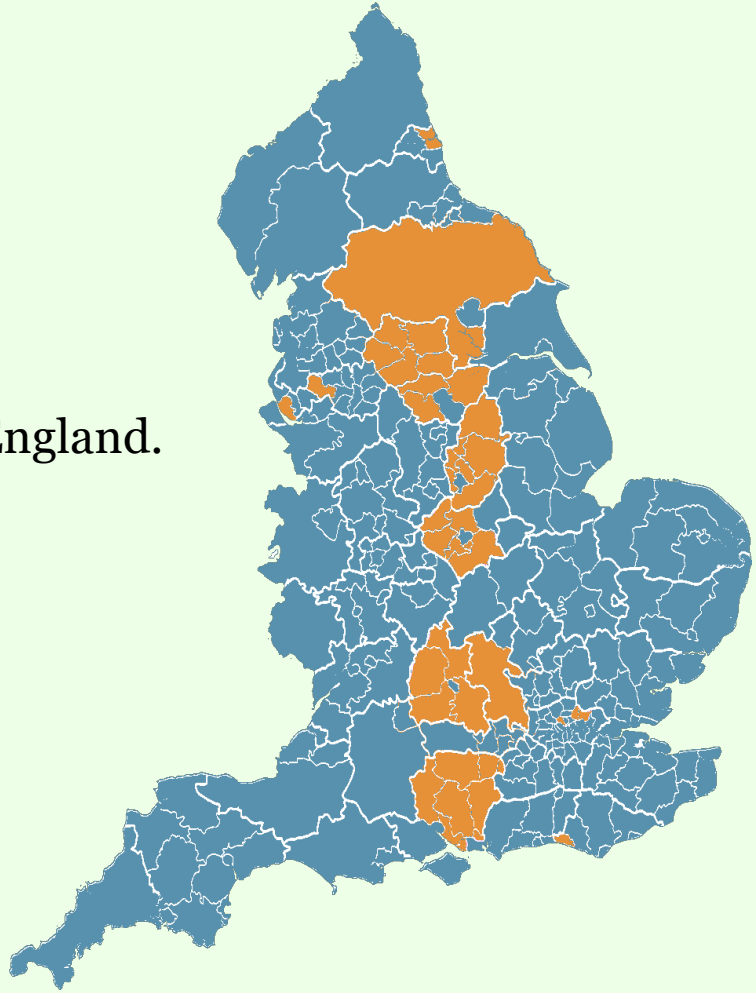
What We Did:

22 initial interviews:

- 34 interviewees.
- 21 council areas in England.

4 follow-up interviews:

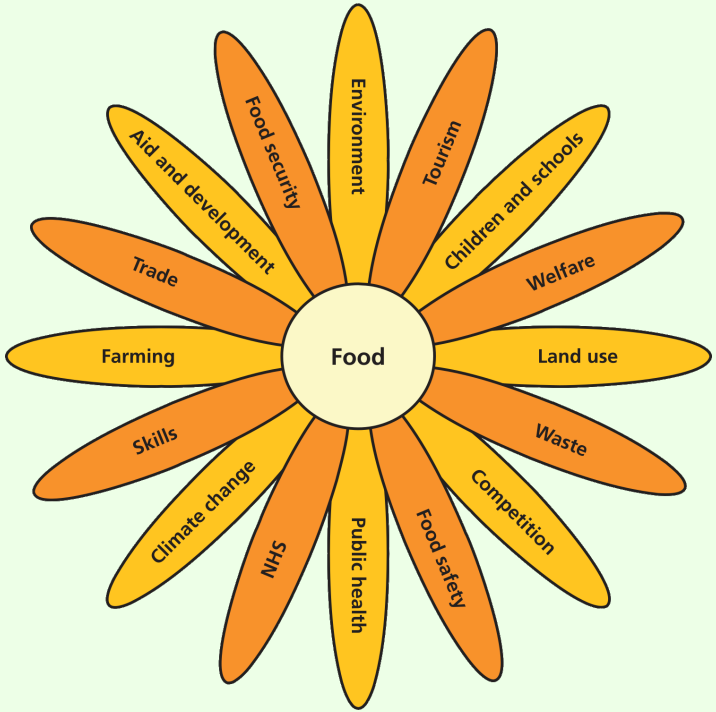
- 6 interviewees.
- 4 council areas.



- Barnsley
- Bradford
- Brighton & Hove
- Buckinghamshire
- Camden
- Doncaster
- Hampshire
- Hull
- Kirklees
- Leeds
- Leicestershire
- Liverpool
- N. Tyneside
- N. Yorkshire
- Nottinghamshire
- Oxfordshire
- Redbridge
- Sheffield
- Waltham Forest
- Wigan
- W. Yorkshire

What We Found: Councils and Food.

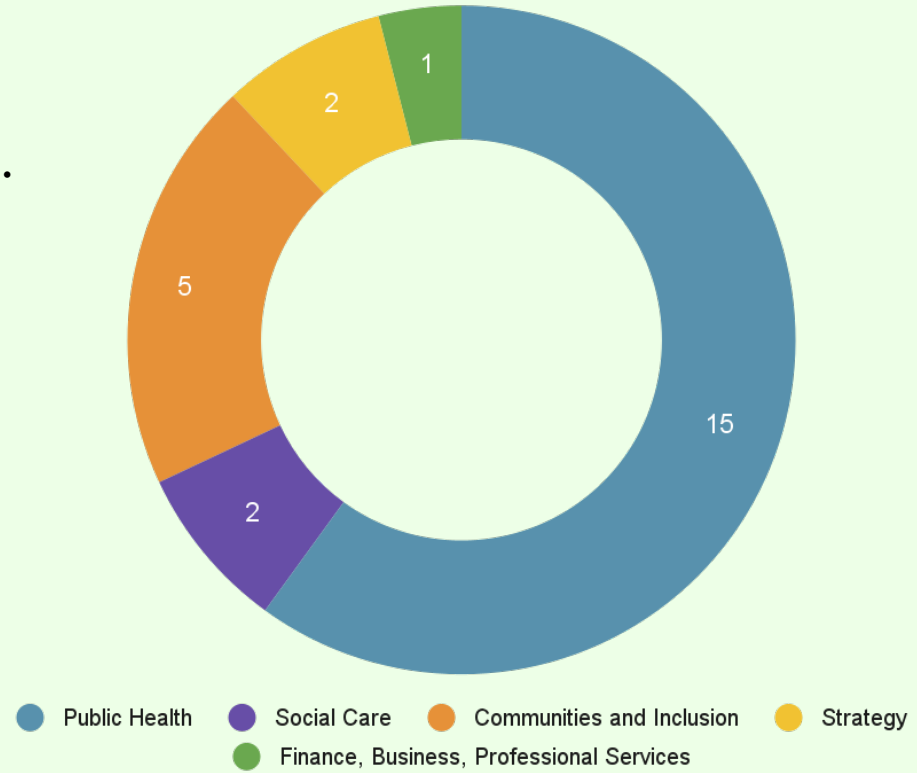
- Food is a fragmented issue, with responsibility split across many teams within authorities.



The Food Policy Flower, from 'Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century' (2008), The Strategy Unit.

What We Found: Councils and Food.

- The majority of interviewees worked within Public Health teams.
- Although food was a multi-departmental issue for all councils we spoke to, very few had a formal cross-council food group.



What We Found: Using Food Ladders.

- Some areas are using Food Ladders with practical results on the ground:
    - 9 areas had organisations explicitly using the framework to inform their practice.
    - 8 said that Food Ladders enabled the achievement of practical outcomes they wouldn't have otherwise.
- All 34 interviewees said that they would recommend the use of Food Ladders to others working in VCS organisations and other councils.

North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, 2023.

What We Found: Food Ladders' Impact.

- Food Ladders has changed councils' approaches to food in their areas:
    - *'Food ladders helped us to see that [people engaged with different parts of the food system] were on the same page, and that was a crucial moment'*
- When applied in policy, the framework has positive, practical outcomes in communities:
    - *'The feedback so far has been very positive [...] organisations who were initially hesitant spoke positively about the impacts and the reception from their community.'*

Articulate Cultural Trust, 2023.

What We Found: Positives of the Framework.

- The simplicity of the model.

  'It is really quite simple to get, and so it helps us with [convincing] elected members.'

- Having a clear way of understanding forms of community food provision.

  'Easily demonstrates the other things that need to be sat alongside that crisis support.'

- The positive focus of the model.

  'I've had numerous people [...] say "we can't solve food poverty", and you go "Well actually, you can! Look! Here you go". You know you can do stuff, you know you can make a difference.'

What We Found: Positives of the Framework.

- The sense of progression.

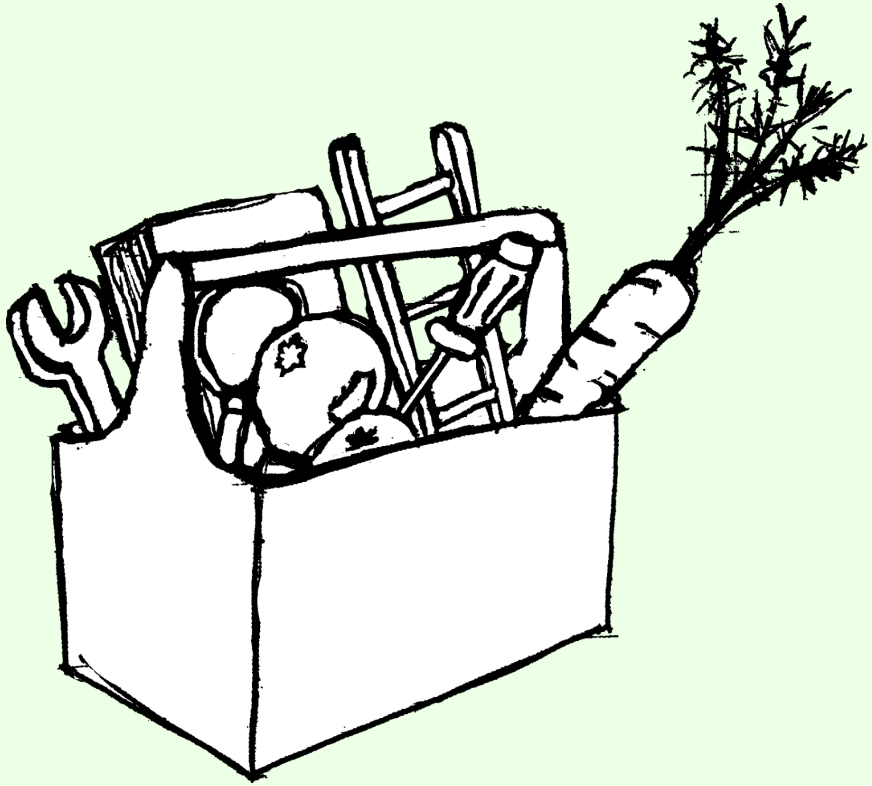
  ‘Useful, accessible way for me to conceptualize [...] the food insecurity journey.’

- It recognises the bigger picture.

  ‘The strength is that understanding that you need a plurality of approaches to cope with the plurality of need. That it's not a competition - if you choose to sit somewhere on that spectrum, that's okay, you don't have to do it all.’

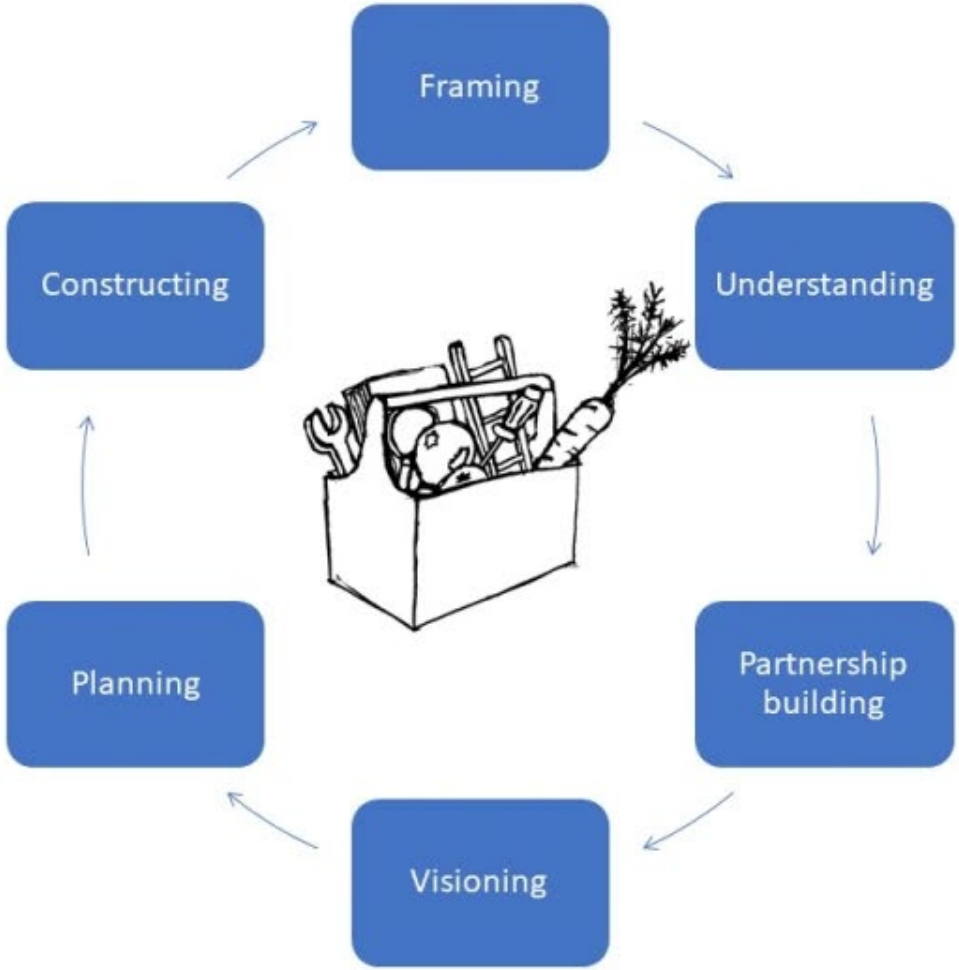
- The nonlinearity of the framework, recognising people’s changing circumstances.

  ‘It's helped me reframe the conversation around food security [...] to articulate those differences to people at a time when it was just all about food banks.’



1. Conceptualising
2.1 Framing
2.2 Understanding
2.3 Partnership Building
2.4 Visioning
2.5 Planning
2.6 Constructing
3.1 Resourcing
3.2 Organising
3.3 Integrating
3.4 Communicating

The Food Ladders Tool Kit.


Framing
Understanding
Partnership building
Visioning
Planning
Constructing

Some additional asks

- More resources and industry collaboration for community food projects that build capabilities at rungs 2 and 3
- A national mandate and funding for local food strategies
- Investment in social development and its related infrastructures
- Adequate incomes that offer living wages and advancement opportunities, with a safety net for those who cannot access work
- Free school meals for more children
- A review of business rates to remove barriers for healthy food retailers
- Better data to be able to track and measure change

Thank you!

Stay in touch with us:

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