

No social housing resident should go to bed hungry

The year one impact report for the London Food Insecurity Network



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Foreword



Across the housing sector we see on a daily basis the acute impact of the cost-of-living crisis in our communities. Living costs are soaring and more people than ever before are using food banks. Last year, almost 385,000 in London did so, an increase of over 100,000 from the previous year.



Housing associations have responded to the challenge by funding and delivering a range of food-related projects to support residents and communities. This includes food banks, community food pantries, social supermarkets, community fridges, and the distribution of free meals.

Whilst demand for this support is at an all-time high and our sector continues to respond to the immediate challenges so many households are facing, there is only so much we can do on our own. The scale of the challenge facing communities across London cannot be addressed by housing associations and their partners operating in isolation.

In 2023 we founded the London Food Insecurity Network with HACT and The Felix Project to explore more strategic and collaborative responses to addressing food inequality. The Network is a broad

coalition of Housing Associations, specialist food partners and providers with an ambitious aim; to ensure that no social housing resident in London goes to bed hungry.

I am pleased to share in this report, the achievements of the Network in its first year as well as our collective learnings and ambitions for future. The report shines a light on the critical role of the Network and that we, as place-based organisations and community anchors, can take through cross sector collective action to tackle the issue of food insecurity. And in doing so, make a real difference to the lives of thousands of people.

Sahil Khan
Director of Community Strategy,
Partnerships and Funding
Peabody



Fairness is a principle that runs green in the veins of The Felix Project. From the very outset, The Felix Project was founded in response to a young man's experience of food inequality in London.

Our organisation was created in memory of Felix aged 14, who tragically died of a rare form of meningitis. A core memory from his father was the foundation for our service. Felix was playing in a football tournament, where the opponents had not eaten that day. Growing up in privilege, Felix did not understand how or why the boys did not have access to food. For the next tournament to be fair, he asked his mother to prepare sandwiches for everyone to share.

The stats and facts, testimonies, and achievements you will read in this report are inspiring and we are so proud of what this Network has achieved in its first year. But we must remember the reasons why we are all doing what we do - we are all responding in the best way we can to a desperately unfair situation for millions of Londoners.

The power of this collaboration is our ability to streamline, strengthen, and expand our respective services through strategy, innovation, and sharing best practice. With every food delivery we make, with every community space filled, with every referral, we provide opportunities for people to access services that will improve their lives and break the cycle of poverty. Together, the London Food Insecurity Network can improve and sustain London's food aid infrastructure, ensuring a more equitable London where good food is never wasted and nobody goes hungry.

Phil Gray

Trusts and Foundations Manager
The Felix Project



What we stand for

Our collective vision is for no social housing resident to go to bed hungry. To achieve this vision, we are taking cross-sector collective action. The London Food Insecurity Network (LFIN) has been set up and is focused on bringing together as many London housing associations and voluntary and community organisations as possible to develop a collective plan and impactful interventions to address food insecurity for social housing residents across the capital.

Through our collaboration, we are keen to learn and through this approach we hope to provide models and guidance for how housing associations in London can direct their food insecurity efforts, as well as providing a space to engage with good practice across a range of sectors.



What is the scale of hunger in the UK?



14%

of all UK adults

(or their household) have experienced food insecurity in the 12 months to mid-2022...

...this translates into an estimated

11.3m

people



[2023-The-Trussell-Trust-Hunger-in-the-UK-report-web-updated-10Aug23.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

Why is this so important?

Poverty in the UK is getting worse.

The UK's food poverty rate is among the highest in Europe. Despite being the sixth richest country in the world, millions are struggling to access the food they need. According to the latest government statistics, 4.2 million people (6 per cent) were living in food poverty in 2020 to 2021. It includes nearly one in 10 children, around 9 per cent.

[Food poverty in the UK: The causes, figures and solutions \(bigissue.com\)](https://www.bigissue.com/food-poverty-in-the-uk-the-causes-figures-and-solutions)

London has one of the highest poverty rates in the UK.

The cost of living in London has gone up 24% in the last three years with 27% of Londoners living in poverty after housing costs which is the highest rate in the UK.

40% of children in London have experienced food insecurity in the last month – compared to 25% nationwide.

16% of Londoners are skipping meals to make ends meet – in six constituencies this figure rises to over 20%.

BAME households are twice as likely to experience food insecurity as white households.

Trust for London
<https://trustforlondon.org.uk/research/londons-poverty-profile-borough-level-poverty-2022/>

The Cost of living crisis continues to bite.

In October 2023, around:

- 2.8 million of the poorest fifth of households (47%) were in arrears with their household bills or behind on scheduled lending repayments
- 4.2 million households (72%) were going without essentials
- 3.4 million households (58%) reported not having enough money for food.

[UK Poverty 2024: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(jrf.org.uk\)](https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk)

Food poverty is a growing problem despite growing efforts to provide crisis food provision.

In the five years between 2017/18 and 2022/23, the number of emergency food parcels which the Trussell Trust network of food banks had to provide more than doubled, with a similar trend of rising need seen by other providers of food aid in the UK.

[2023-The-Trussell-Trust-Hunger-in-the-UK-report-web-updated-10Aug23.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](https://www.trusselltrust.org/2023-The-Trussell-Trust-Hunger-in-the-UK-report-web-updated-10Aug23.pdf)

The cost of living crisis impacts people's ability to afford essentials.

Researchers at the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) found that “people are having to buy what they can afford rather than having the luxury of choice” in the cost of living crisis – often, that means opting for the unhealthy option. Other people don't live in a home with facilities for cooking or storing meals.

[Food poverty in the UK: The causes, figures and solutions \(bigissue.com\)](https://www.bigissue.com/food-poverty-in-the-uk-the-causes-figures-and-solutions)

Social housing residents are one of the groups most experiencing, and at risk of experiencing, food poverty and hunger.

Some groups of people face particularly high levels of poverty. This includes:

- People living in rented accommodation – in 2021/22, more than 4 in 10 social renters (43%) and around a third of private renters (35%) were in poverty after housing costs. Around a third of these social renters and half of these private renters were only in poverty after their housing costs were factored in, so appear to be pushed into poverty by the amount they have to spend on housing.
- In the social sector, which is highly targeted on people with low incomes, 29 per cent of social renters are living in poverty before housing costs. Despite sub-market social rents, 43 per cent are living in poverty after housing costs have been paid.

[UK Poverty 2024: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(jrf.org.uk\)](https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk)

Founding members



Peabody

Established in 1862, Peabody is one of the UK's oldest not-for-profit housing associations. Today, it has over 108,000 homes and 220,000 residents across London and the Home Counties as well as providing care and support services for around 17,500 customers.

As well as providing great homes and services, Peabody is driven by a core social purpose; to help people flourish. Through its Peabody Community Foundation and place based approach, it puts residents and communities firmly in the driving seat, working together with residents, partners and stakeholders to channel investment, skills and resources into its communities.



The Felix Project

The Felix Project is a food waste and food poverty charity, using one societal issue; food waste to solve another; food poverty. We rescue surplus food that can no longer be sold and would go to waste from over 500 suppliers in the commercial food industry.

The food is all in-date, good quality, and consists predominantly of fresh fruits and vegetables. Using our four warehouses across London, we sort the food with the help of 15,000 volunteers a year, redistributing it for free to over 1,000 community organisations, schools, and holiday programmes. In 2023 we rescued and redistributed food to provide 32 million meals to community organisations supporting London's most vulnerable people. In 2024 we hope to increase that to 35 million.



HACT

The Housing Association Charitable Trust ('HACT') is the charity of the social housing sector. By partnering with organisations across the housing sector, we drive value for residents and communities through insight-led products and services which encourage innovation and foster collaboration.

We believe the provision of housing is about more than just bricks and mortar – it's about enhancing peoples' lives. To us, housing providers are at their most successful when focused on the social value they create and meeting the needs of their residents and investing in their thriving communities. We exist to help them do this.

Network members:

A2Dominion
BME London
Clarion Housing Group
Commonside Community Development Trust
East End Homes
Fareshare
Feeding Britain
Gateway Housing
Greater London Authority
Hexagon Housing Association

Hyde Housing
L&Q
Lewisham Homes
Look Ahead Care and Support
Made in Hackney
Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
Network Homes
Notting Hill Genesis
Nourish Hub
Octavia
One Housing/Riverside
Orbit Group

PA Housing
Poplar HARCA
Riverside Community Association Ltd
Southern Housing
Southwark Food Action Alliance
St Giles' Trust
St Jude's Centre
City Harvest
The Guinness Partnership
Sustain
Wandle Housing

The network's journey



Community impact

The network's winter food markets

The most prominent collective action by the Network, took place across November 2023 to January 2024 to redistribute high-quality food in strategic locations to social housing residents across London. With the Cost of Living crisis deepening, the Network saw an opportunity to collaborate quickly and mobilise a response during the festive months.

The Felix Project led the way in sourcing and managing the mammoth task of redistributing food to these locations, increasing their resources to do so. Housing associations reviewed their community assets and galvanised staff resources to host and set up food market events in communities. The VCSE and community sector embraced collaboration and they too, worked with housing associations to co-deliver and connect communities to the markets ensuring community members knew when the events were taking place and helped to make these spaces warm, inviting and accessible. HACT worked alongside partners in the Network to help facilitate the activity and connect partners with each other.

“Was worried that there would not be enough food, but with this project was able to feel a lot of relief”

London resident who used the winter markets.

The numbers here are only part of the story. We know that the value and impact of these initiatives only truly shines through when we hear from people in the community about the difference this work has made.



“The surplus food meant many residents were stocked up for weeks, relieving them of one less financial burden. The event fostered a sense of community with a diverse range of locals attending. Events contributed to breaking down the stigma associated with receiving surplus food. Residents expressed gratitude for the opportunity to get out of the house, interact with others, and highlighted how the event provided a social outlet they might not have otherwise had during this time.”

Patrick
Community Development and Engagement
Officer at Barnsbury Housing Association



winter food markets across London. 55% more than we had initially anticipated.



of deliveries made up of fruit and vegetables



The 45 tonnes of Carbon embedded during production of this food would have otherwise been wasted



tonnes of food distributed, enough food for 80,000 meals.



The financial value of this food and the saving to residents (based upon WRAP's value of surplus food).



a further 9.5 tonnes of CO₂ would have been created had the food ended up in landfill.

The role of social value

The role that housing associations can play in alleviating food poverty across London ties in with the social impact that they can make within the communities in which they operate. We do know that the role of healthy food initiatives that improve the nutritional benefits of the meals that residents eat can be quantified as social value: by tracking the number of days someone eats fruit – whether fresh, frozen, dried or tinned – and measuring a change over time, we can measure the social value that healthier eating initiatives deliver for people.

Measuring the social value of foodbanks is more challenging, however, because we lack the datasets to understand how these initiatives increase wellbeing over the longer-term. Similarly, the impact of one-off alleviation initiatives might be measured through the use of distributional impact metrics – we are looking at this and the role of foodbanks, as we know these will be of use in the future.

As part of this future, the use of social value through supply chain contracts will also be critical. If we can leverage in some of the social value contributions that contractors pledge and convert these into food-related initiatives – whether by The Felix Project distributing more food or by individual housing associations running their own food-related projects, like health eating clubs, cooking courses or investing in allotments – then we need to develop the metrics that can measure the impact that these contributions can have on local people and local communities. The role of the supply chain will, we believe, be critical in supporting LFIN to deliver more food-related support to Londoners in the years to come.

HACT have been pioneers in measuring social value for over 10 years. Developing the wellbeing approach with the UK Social Value Bank and calculators, and supporting hundreds of organisations in measuring their social value.



Peabody and Cook for Good



Peabody and Cook for Good have worked together from the start. When looking for a community site to establish their social enterprise, Peabody had unused space on its Priory Green Estate in Kings Cross; two buildings that housed an old laundry and space in its High Cubitt Community Centre where they had trialled a café. Peabody were open to testing a more innovative model through Cook for Good's community kitchen and adapting the old laundry into a surplus food pantry. And committed to offer Cook for Good a rent free and utility free lease of the spaces for 10 years.

Three years later, Cook for Good is a flourishing award-winning social enterprise that tackles food insecurity, social isolation and health inequality, supported by corporate clients and partnerships. It runs a surplus food pantry, a soup café, community cooking classes and meals, and provides programmes to support health and wellbeing and create employment opportunities.

The LFIN has been invaluable in helping develop this partnership and sharing its good practice demonstrating how food projects can be made sustainable. Looking ahead, Peabody and Cook for Good, with the support of the LFIN, is exploring how to catalyse more partnerships between housing associations and community food projects. Our goal is to incubate and support more sustainable holistic solutions to tackling food insecurity.

Our learnings

Throughout our collaboration, Network meetings have enabled important learning to come to the surface. This includes insight into how we can pragmatically address food insecurity and food poverty in London, as well as a greater understanding of how housing associations can engage with, and be part of, the solution to ensure no social housing resident goes to bed hungry.



This work needs collaboration and financial resources to make it work. Although surplus food may be free, a lot of resource is needed to ensure that food reaches communities where it will be most impactful and without this, activity, like the winter markets, is just not possible.

In order to deliver impact all year round, The Felix Project incurs all costs of rescuing, sorting and redistributing food to community organisations supporting London's most vulnerable people, many of whom are also supporting social housing residents.

Each year the demand for The Felix Project's service increases, the cost of delivering their service increases, and their list of community organisations waiting to receive food grows longer. In 2024, the charity's operational costs exceed £14m, they are delivering food to over 1,000 community organisations and have a further 700 organisations waiting to receive food. The charity's work supporting housing associations and their residents did not begin in March 2023. Since our inception in 2016 they have been providing free food to vulnerable people all across London and the community organisations The Felix Project supports Londoners in every borough, and they target wards and LSOAs with the highest levels of deprivation. The team estimate that since 2016, The Felix Project

has spent approximately £20m delivering food to community organisations supporting people living in social housing, with a further £5m to be expended in 2024.

Since the beginning of the LFIN, The Felix Project has received over £130,000 in financial support from founding members and partners, including £50,000 from the Peabody Community Foundation, £6,500 from Peabody contractors and suppliers, and over £1,550 raised by Peabody staff, £50,000 from The Hyde Charitable Trust, £7,000 from A2 Dominion, £5,000 from Clarion Futures, alongside a further award of £10,000 for work in West Ealing. This funding will enable the charity to rescue and deliver nearly 350,000 meals to vulnerable Londoners this year and the team are incredibly grateful for the funding received to date by LFIN members.

Housing associations have a wide-ranging scale of activity to tackle food poverty across the capital and knowing what is taking place and where, provides the foundations for place-based collaborations and improved social impact.



Addressing food poverty must factor in how we make healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food accessible to more people.

During Network meetings, we heard from many partners about the need for the food reaching residents, to be good food. In particular, The Felix Project shared how they have adapted their work to accommodate hot meal preparation and service following concerns community members could not afford to cook hot meals for themselves and how they have made strategic connections to a wide range of food wholesalers to diversify the ingredients they are donated. The team at Southwark Council also shared learning from their nutritious food initiatives and how

they are supporting residents to connect with healthy food that feels culturally appropriate to them. Islamic Relief also shared reflections on how their communities have worked with food poverty organisations to adjust hot meal provision times to complement times of fasting and to ensure cultural dignity in the food provision offered to their communities too.



The physical spaces that housing associations have in the heart of communities is incredibly important.

These community spaces provide vital locations to distribute food from within the heart of local communities. These spaces are often familiar to residents and felt to be accessible and provide the connection points for local residents to access and engage with food poverty support, as well as other support opportunities from a wider range of organisations, most often local charities and community organisations.

Housing associations can also help unlock these spaces for the community in a variety of ways and support the sustainability of food insecurity interventions. This includes offering disused space for initiatives, offering social value leases to community partners, directing support through supply chain partnerships, grant funding and broader wrap around support.



Case study

When Saiful from Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (‘MTVH’) approached The Felix Project about space they had available at The Whitmore Centre in Haggerston, The Felix Project team remembered a plea for help from Connecting All Communities, an organisation who urgently needed to find a new community space in Hackney.

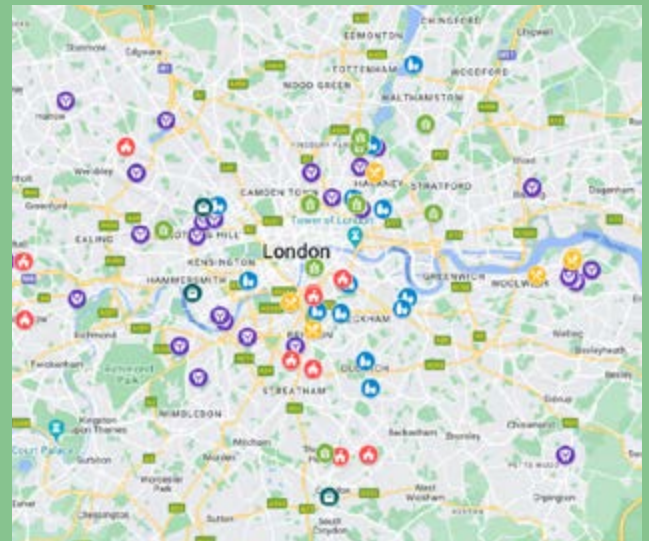
Their mission is to tackle social isolation and promote community cohesion, with a focus on helping Somali and other East African communities integrate into Hackney. They offer language classes, support, and advice as well as free hot food and parcels for those in need. The space that MTVH offered for free was a lifeline to Connecting all Communities and to so many residents experiencing poverty and has become their home and the heart and soul of the local community.

Maps

We mapped where Network partners are active and what they are doing to support social housing residents. Going forwards, we hope to use this to inform strategic collaborations and approaches.



<https://bit.ly/45aKxmQ>



<https://bit.ly/4e2MzcO>

Hopes for the future: The network and changing systems



Peabody

“The challenges facing our residents and communities aren’t going away. We know that housing associations are facing increasing demand for financial and non-financial support from residents. Our recent Index report found that almost a third of those surveyed have a household income of less than £20,000. The report showed that more residents described their finances as “difficult” than “ok”, and as being worse than the previous year. Residents in every age group told us they have cut back on essentials like food and energy because of their worsening finances. Similarly, The Felix Project is seeing at first-hand the rapid rise in need for food support.

The London Food Insecurity Network is about finding sustainable solutions through a joined up social housing response, directly tackling the burgeoning food insecurity and food waste problems facing the capital. The Network not only provides space to think, challenge and innovate but also collectively consider how we, as a sector, can maximise resources and influence for long-term systemic change through a food plus approach.

Our partnership with HACT and The Felix Project is just one example of our dedication to making a tangible difference to the lives of Londoners by breaking stigmas, supporting residents, and boosting health and wellbeing.”

Andrea Purslow

Head of Strategic Partnerships and Funding
Peabody



The Felix Project

“The London Food Insecurity Network has been the catalyst for idea sharing, collaboration and making connections that are mutually beneficial and will help deliver better outcomes for residents. The network has helped to share the operational costs that will enable The Felix Project to support the most vulnerable people with food. Ultimately, we aim to map London and improve resident referrals to the support and advice that will help them live happier, healthier lives.

New partnerships, more food, and more impact for residents comes at a significant cost, and not one that The Felix Project is able to cover independently. The ceiling of this Network is enormous. In order to support your most vulnerable residents, we must collaborate to raise funding wherever we can to move surplus food from the commercial food industry to their estates and their tables. Through staff engagement, fundraising events, grant schemes, donations, and redirecting funds expended on food purchases to Felix, we can deliver an industry leading return on your investments. Just £650 enables us to deliver 1,000kg of food to community organisations supporting social housing residents.”

Rachel Ledwith

Head of Community
The Felix Project



HACT

“The London Food Insecurity Network is about collaboration and collective action. It’s a space to formulate a shared response to a deeply concerning social issue that we all know, can’t be solved by one stakeholder alone. With housing associations embedded in communities and in place for sustained periods of time, they’re really well placed to participate in this response and be guided by their social purpose that sits at the heart of what their organisations are set up to do; empower communities to live healthy, happy lives.

When thinking about the future, we’re really looking forward to evolving the partnerships through the Network and looking at the wider systemic factors that are at the heart of food insecurity and food poverty. I’m hopeful that others will join us including new housing associations, strategic partners and community groups to strengthen and enrich our work. We can then co-create strategic interventions and continue to pursue our goal together to ensure no social housing resident goes to bed hungry.’

Rebecca Rieley

Head of Communities and Projects
HACT

How to get involved

We would love to welcome more housing associations to the Network and new supporters who share our vision that no social housing resident in London should go to bed hungry.

Connect with us for a conversation and see how you can get involved in 2024 and beyond.

Rebecca Rieley
Head of Communities and
Projects at HACT
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