



# Food & Housing Connections

Strengthening communities  
through good food

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## Summary

Food is integral to our well-being, as is access to a good home. Housing associations are already making progress in the area of food, including creating spaces for growing, switching procurement pathways, and improving tenants' cooking skills. Meanwhile, Wales has rich experience and ambitions around enabling the nation to eat better – expertise which can inspire and support housing associations to deliver change through food.



Food Sense Wales and the School of Geography & Planning, Cardiff University, hosted an event in May 2025 to explore how social housing's vital interventions in communities can connect with ambitious national strategies and local work that changes how food is produced, consumed, and distributed. It brought together three communities of experts: practitioners in social housing, Local Food Partnerships, and specialist researchers in food system transformation and housing. The event provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and make connections, working towards a shared ambition for putting food at the heart of healthy social housing.

During the workshop, participants heard from a series of speakers who provided inspiration and a picture of current best practices. These included Dr Megan Blake's Food Ladders framework; housing associations collaborating as part of the London Food Insecurity Network; the strategic approach to food taken by Tai Calon (host of the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership); and the Down to Zero project, supported by Cynon Taf Community Housing Group and RCT Food Partnership.



Participants then worked together throughout the day, following a process that mirrored one used by the Seeds of a Good Anthropocene project. This process culminated in participants identifying three "Seeds" – practical ideas with transformative potential:

- **Homes for Horticulture:** tackling the lack of homes for food producers by building commercial growing spaces into developments and developing affordable housing near rural food growing areas.
- **Local Food Co-ops:** housing associations partnering with tenants and health teams to create cooperative food models that utilise Housing Associations and tenants' purchasing power, reduce food insecurity, and support local supply chains.
- **Tenants' Right to Grow:** housing associations giving their tenants a contractual "Right to Grow", ensuring that everyone can access growing space, working through their own housing estate and with external providers.

To make these seeds grow, housing associations need to **strategically prioritise food, share evidence of what works, and involve tenants meaningfully**. There also needs to be a supportive policy context, where food is integrated into housing policy and the statutory landscape encourages and enables housing associations to engage strategically with food.

Collaboration is also essential. The group agreed that it's not something that housing associations can do alone. Instead, there are opportunities for collaborative working with Local Food Partnerships, the Welsh Government, and with each other, sharing good practice across rural and urban contexts, and building new connections that sustain momentum.





## Acknowledgements

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Thanks also to YMa Pontypridd for hosting, and to Mabin Eatery for catering.

Thank you to all the workshop speakers and contributors for making the day a success.



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## Background

In 2021, 16.5% of Welsh households were in the social rented sector, the majority owned by housing associations. Housing plays a central role in wellbeing, so investing in quality provision can relieve public pressure on health and social care ([CHC 2019](#)). Social housing providers are creating homes and communities of the future as they contribute to the Welsh Government's target of 20,000 new low-carbon social homes for rent. These organisations provide frontline support to those experiencing food insecurity. Social housing residents are more likely to access food banks ([Welsh Government, 2023a](#)), and associations are increasingly providing emergency relief to food-insecure households ([CHC, 2023](#)). Recent figures suggest that 15% of people in Wales struggle to afford the basics required to meet their needs, with almost a quarter of adults reporting that they have had to reduce meal sizes or skip meals ([Bevan Foundation, 2024](#)). Children are particularly likely to suffer long-term negative impacts on health and well-being from household poverty ([PHW 2023](#)).

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**There is widespread recognition that transforming how food is produced, consumed and distributed will make vital contributions to a resilient, sustainable and just Wales.**

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There is widespread recognition that transforming how food is produced, consumed and distributed will make vital contributions to a resilient, sustainable and just Wales. The Future Generations Commissioner has identified food as a key focus area because it can impact cross-cutting wellbeing priorities. As keystone institutions, particularly within deprived neighbourhoods, housing associations connect with food systems in multiple ways.

This presents opportunities to leverage change in food systems, for example, by moving procurement for catering within social care facilities to use local, sustainable produce. As landowners and managers, they are responsible for a valuable resource which food producers often struggle to access. Individual associations have begun to explore such potential; for example, Cynon Taf housing supports a community benefit society that grows organic produce for tenants. Hafod are working with partners to make space within Cardiff sites for food growing and associated training. However, these initiatives remain piecemeal, with most focusing on reactive provision, such as food pantries that assist households experiencing food insecurity. They also remain isolated from academic expertise in food system sustainability and food security.





Wales boasts a wealth of activities focused on transforming its food system. The value of this was signalled by the Welsh Government's commitment to fund a food partnership in each local authority. This expertise represents a rich experience in what works, with the potential to support and partner with housing associations in accelerating their contribution to food system transformation.

Food is so central to Welsh life that it impacts all of the wellbeing goals, meaning that improving the food system presents an opportunity for integrated action to enhance future wellbeing ([Sanderson Bellamy and Marsden, 2021](#)). For example, better diets contribute to a healthier Wales, whilst eating together contributes to cohesive communities, and sustainable, ethical food supply chains enact global responsibility and enhance resilience. Producing, processing and distributing food is also a significant economic contributor and source of green jobs.

The Future Generations Commissioner has therefore identified food as a priority area that can engage public, private, and voluntary sector bodies in activities to deliver across its five missions. Welsh Government has also recognised food as a cross-cutting policy area, touching on all current and long-term wellbeing priorities ([2023b](#)). Food Sense Wales recently outlined the potential for public service boards to embed food more thoroughly in wellbeing plans, building on a growing consensus about the central role food can play ([Adlerova et al., 2024](#)).

Within this context, Food Sense Wales and the School of Geography & Planning, Cardiff University, identified an opportunity to foster collaborations between specialists in food systems and social housing, with the hope of enabling positive change to benefit communities.

## Workshop Aims

The workshop was conceived as a first step to building collaborations around food and social housing. The agenda and facilitated activities were designed to:

- **Make connections, expand networks,**
- **Share good practice and examples,**
- **Spark innovation and ambition, and**
- **Highlight opportunities to collaborate.**

The individual participants shared their own aspirations for the event, with strong themes centred on making connections, seeking collaboration, developing partnerships, and gaining inspiration and energy. This report highlights the key information and ideas developed by participants through pre-event written contributions, speaker presentations, and discussions during the workshop.

Participants included representatives from five housing associations or allied projects/organisations, eight academic researchers, five staff members from local food partnerships, representatives from six food-focused organisations, and others affiliated with community organisations and health authorities. See Appendix A for the complete list.

## Why housing associations prioritise food

Across the workshop and in participant submissions on registration, numerous motivations and priorities were highlighted, which suggest multiple reasons for housing providers to engage with food system action:

- Demonstrating social value,
- Meeting climate action and net zero goals,
- Supporting tenant health and wellbeing, including tackling health inequalities,
- Ensuring tenant participation and community engagement, and
- Meeting the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act goals and recommendations on food

It was noted that there is no specific statutory responsibility connected to food, so it can and does 'fall through the cracks'. However, some associations have made it a strategic priority, and participants identified good potential for food-focused action to align with current priorities and partnerships.

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# Part 1: Responses to Food Insecurity

Many of the examples of existing activity which participants highlighted focus on tackling access to food and responding to food poverty. **Dr Megan Blake from the University of Sheffield provided context regarding the** connections between housing and food insecurity. She defined food security as “people have the food they need to live their best lives”, today and in

future, including for celebrating and connecting to our values. She noted recent Food Standards Agency data, which reveals that the overall rate of food insecurity for working adults in the UK is 24%, a level that has been sustained since 2022. However, rates are much higher for specific groups and locations. Dr Megan Blake outlined multiple ways in which food and housing are intertwined:

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**If your housing is located in a place where it is hard to get good food, then you will struggle more to have the food you need to live your best life compared to those with better access.**

If your housing lacks adequate storage, doesn't come with a refrigerator, cooker, freezer, microwave, and isn't energy efficient, you will struggle more compared to those who have these amenities to cook at home, eat healthier meals, and budget by buying in bulk. You may have to choose between food and fuel.

We also know that poor mental and physical health undermines the ability to be food secure. At the same time, individuals with strong social ties tend to be more resilient and live longer, healthier lives. Being able to share meals facilitates this.

If you live in a place where you don't know or are afraid of your neighbours, and if your housing is designed to limit interactions between neighbours or otherwise undermines social connections, then the cycle of struggle is reinforced.

If the place where you live does not enable you to grow or otherwise interact with food, then your food knowledge will suffer. People with a healthy, well-developed set of food skills can manage better with less compared to those who don't have these skills.

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Tackling poverty and supporting access to food is already a priority across many of the organisations represented at the workshop. For example, all Local Food Partnerships work closely with emergency food provision networks and food projects, ranging from pantries to cafes to community gardens. Most actively support projects around school holiday food access, Healthy Start, cooking skills and nutrition for a range of adults (for example, with the Nutrition Skills for Life programme) and work directly with schools. Participants shared numerous examples of housing associations operating or supporting pantries, community fridges and food co-ops. They also provide emergency aid such as vouchers and school holiday food programmes for children. Education and training also support access to better food by helping tenants develop cooking and gardening skills, often with a focus on budgeting and healthy eating.

## London Food Insecurity Network

**Catherine Brindson** of HACT shared insights from the London Food Insecurity Network, which launched in 2023. The Felix Project, Peabody and HACT came together to create Network (LFIN) to bring together as many London housing associations and voluntary and community organisations as possible. Together, this group developed a collective plan and impactful interventions to address food insecurity for social housing residents across the capital. Catherine explained that housing associations play a vital part in tackling food poverty across London, and this aligns closely with the wider social impact they can deliver within their communities. Healthy food initiatives that improve residents' diets can generate measurable social value. For example, tracking changes in the number of days a person consumes fruit, whether fresh, frozen, dried, or tinned, can help quantify the benefits of healthier eating over time.

The London Food Insecurity Network's shared future vision is for:

- **No social housing resident goes to bed hungry**
- **Stronger partnerships, richer collaboration**
- **Measurable impact on health and wellbeing**
- **Sustainable, system-level solutions.**

The key actions the network has taken so far include:

- **Mapping food insecurity activity to identify the scale of provision, gaps and opportunities for collaboration,**
- **Launching a market project to distribute high-quality food,**
- **Establishing peer learning clusters,**
- **Measuring and reporting on impact using social value metrics.**

Catherine suggested that tackling poverty must align with broader social impact priorities, hence working to measure the social impacts of community food projects. The London Food Insecurity Network's housing members also aim to embed social value within supply chain contracts, so that contractors' social value commitments can be channelled towards food-related projects. This also requires robust methods of measuring the social value of all activity.



## Food Ladders Framework

The need for more systemic solutions to food insecurity was also the driver for Megan Blake to develop the [Food Ladders](#) framework – a holistic approach to its causes and consequences. It aims to resist passive, precarious emergency food and to empower and build resilience among communities, with vital involvement from those who most struggle with food insecurity. A Food Ladder comprises three rungs:

- 1. Catching:** ensuring people in crisis have the resources needed to meet their basic needs. These are activities done for rather than with people, recognising that during times of crisis, people are not in the position to learn new skills or think about the future. However, we shouldn't keep people in this position, and if we can support them before they reach that point, so much the better.
- 2. Capacity building:** activities in this rung are done with people, aiming to increase skills, knowledge, opportunities, and resources, so that people can better help themselves. It takes the approach of teaching someone to fish instead of giving them a fish.

**3. Transformation:** these are self-organised activities done by people, often initiated or run by local community members. This rung considers how community-driven change can contribute to building a future that protects the food system and addresses the root causes of food insecurity.

The Ladder also needs rails: the unseen structure that provides support, stability, and direction for community action. Megan proposed that housing providers and Local Food Partnerships are fundamental rails of the food ladder:

**"Imagine housing estates designed with integrated community markets, retail, and spaces for vital third-sector services. Your Local Pantry, for example, began with a housing association providing the space, coordinating food supplies, recruiting volunteers, and connecting members to broader support services. Food opens the door and connects people to other services. Comprehensive support follows."**

She portrayed a complete ladder, grounded in the assets and resources of a particular place, as an important tool for building a resilient community, but not the only tool required for food system transformation.





Figure 1: [Food Ladders](#)

### Rung 1: Catching



### Rung 2: Capability Building



### Rung 3: Transformation

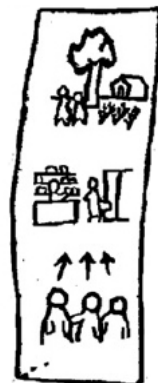


Figure 1: Food Ladders Source: <https://geofoodie.org/category/food-ladders/>



## Part 2: Housing and Local Food Partnerships

As an approach to thinking about food, the workshop highlighted the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) framework, which outlines six key issues facing UK food systems (Figure 1). Local Food Partnerships around Wales are coordinating actions to address these issues, as recognised in the Community Food Strategy published by the Welsh Government in 2025.

For those unfamiliar with the Local Food Partnership approach, a useful overview shown during the workshop is available:

<https://youtu.be/FMANtvrW6rs>

These goals indicate potential for interventions across food systems, through more collaboration, smarter policy, and targeted considerations in the design and provision of homes.

Figure 2: 6 key food system issues identified by Sustainable Food Places



Housing associations are already involved in a wide range of activities addressing the six food system issues outlined above. In advance of

the workshop, we gathered some examples of current activity (Table 1).

**Table 1: How housing associations currently connect to food system issues**

Key Issue	Activities
Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action.	Tai Calon hosts the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership. Housing Associations also sit on the steering groups of Anglesey and Gwynedd, Bridgend, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire, RCT, and Torfaen, where they connect with County Councils, Public Health Boards, Academics, and both the third sector and local businesses.
Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement.	<p>United Welsh has participated in Food Cardiff's Good Food Autumn Festival, hosting a multicultural cooking event for over-55s.</p> <p>Blaenau Gwent's Food Partnership, hosted by Tai Calon, co-developed the 'Taste of Nature' booklet, providing activities for parents and children to learn about food, health, and nature.</p>
Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food.	<p>All food partnerships work closely with emergency food provision networks and food projects, from pantries to cafes to community growing. Most actively support projects around holiday food access, Healthy Start, cooking skills and nutrition for a range of adults and work directly with schools.</p> <p>Cartrefi Conwy used a small grant to run 'Come and Cook' sessions, teaching healthy eating tips and showing how to recreate recipes with simple, nutritious swaps.</p> <p>Monmouthshire Housing utilised a small grant to run a six-week Community Chef programme, supporting 100 people in learning how to prepare low-cost, healthy meals for their families, alongside providing food vouchers and equipment.</p>
Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy.	Many housing associations operate community restaurants or cafes, enabling tenants to develop skills or gain qualifications in the food sector. Food partnerships also support small, local food business owners and start-ups.
Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food supply chains.	Food Partnerships map producers, local supply chains and best practices for procurement and catering.
Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming, and an end to food waste.	<p>Many housing associations have Net Zero and Decarbonisation strategies, which could include food growing and support for biodiversity.</p> <p>Tai Calon will open three different pieces of land for community orchards and growing.</p> <p>Cynon Taf supports Down to Zero, which has a veg box scheme and actively engages with and co-delivers solutions to local people on climate change.</p> <p>Many Housing Associations have allotments or community gardens that are part of larger networks supported by food partnerships.</p> <p>Community Led Housing Wales is developing projects that combine housing, nature, and food.</p>



## Tai Calon Community Housing and Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership

By taking a holistic approach to food across these six key issues, housing associations can utilise food to meet their wide-ranging strategic priorities and demonstrate strong leadership for change. This is the case for **Tai Calon Community Housing**, which is a key partner in the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership. **Chris Nottingham**, the area's Sustainable Food Coordinator, described how Tai Calon host the partnership, and has embedded food within their approach to supporting tenant health and wellbeing. Tai Calon is a member of the Gwent Public Service Board, which follows the Marmot Principles for addressing health inequalities, aiming to become a Marmot Region. Tai Calon's position has helped ensure that the local food strategy was developed with tenant voices, targeting their specific needs. Projects that are part of the partnership's effort to build a good food movement include supporting community allotments, which provide surplus produce to a local mutual aid group, and the schools-based Bread Squad, which involves pupils in growing wheat to mill and bake.

## Down to Zero, Cynon Taf Community Housing Group and RCT Food Partnership

Tom Addiscott of Down to Zero presented the highly ambitious initiative, supported by the Cynon Taf Community Housing Group and a member of the RCT Food Partnership. Down to Zero is a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society established to support community-led environmental activities that help tackle climate change. The project began in 2022 following devastating floods which affected homes across the area, highlighting the urgent need for climate action. It takes a systems approach to action for climate, food, and nature, but one that involves people where they are. Through a community engagement consultation, a vision for the sites, including agroforestry and food systems, was developed. These have been established on two community growing spaces on leased land, which now feature wildflower meadows, community orchards, growing beds, polytunnels, and beehives, plus associated watering infrastructure.





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At present, boxes are cheaper than like-for-like goods from a supermarket

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Cynon Taf tenants volunteer at sites that operate according to permaculture and no-dig principles. The resulting produce supplies the Llysh Bocs subscription veg box delivery, which aims to become a self-financing social enterprise supplying locally grown produce produced by its employees. At present, boxes are cheaper than like-for-like goods from a supermarket, although they are likely to be less accessible to households with low incomes.

Outcomes of the project so far include:

Tom suggested that this meets Welsh Government priorities for value for money in social housing provision, as demonstrated through calculating the social return on investment. Participants expressed that it is an approach that could be replicated elsewhere and shows what is possible when housing providers commit to action on food.

In discussions during the workshop, participants suggested that such close collaboration between housing associations and Local Food Partnerships is an effective way to progress action.



Over 100 volunteers, contributing to 7488 voluntary hours – equivalent to £148,760 of in-kind contributions



Development of infrastructure for veg/food packing, with a 5-star food hygiene rating,



Volunteers reporting increased skills, confidence and wellbeing

## Part 3: The Future of Food & Housing Connections

The workshop's interactive sessions provided opportunities for the experts in the room to consider the current status of food and housing

and to discuss ideas for building on these, as well as suggest new innovations.

### Mapping additional existing activity

Participants spent time sharing where current activities contribute to the Sustainable Food Places' 6 Key Issues and how housing associations' broader priorities can connect with them. Across these suggestions, there were some key themes and ways of working which would advance progress:

1

Collaborations between housing associations and food-focused organisations – to deliver food projects in partnership, or support community action delivered by others, including schools.

2

Strategic partnerships and priorities – connecting housing associations to health services and local food partnerships, and embedding food within housing priorities.

3

Involving tenants in food-focused activities – such as food growing, as volunteers, and as participants in learning or skills development, either directly or via partners.

4

Capacity building – supporting networks of actors, for example, through providing micro-grants, and sharing tool kits on how to deliver core initiatives.

5

Providing space and infrastructure – including sites for food growing, venues for food pantries, equipment and kitchens for training or community food provision, and trading opportunities for social enterprises and local food businesses.



Participants identified there were fewer current initiatives related to Key Issue 5 (Catering and Procurement), but felt there were multiple opportunities for housing providers to address these, such as:

- **Creating local food buying consortia,**
- **Investing in processing infrastructure to support local supply chains,**
- **Aligning their catering with the Social Partnership and Procurement (Wales) Act and Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy, and prioritising local, ethical suppliers.**

In support of all these suggestions, it was proposed that current activities be audited and mapped—an area where academics could make a valuable contribution.

The discussion also highlighted other key initiatives that housing associations deliver at present, which could have food embedded within them:

- **Biodiversity/greenspace strategies,**
- **Retrofit and refurbishment,**
- **Design and build of new housing.**

Specific actions which would embed food within such work were highlighted through discussion of innovations or 'Seeds' (see below).

A key message emerging from these discussions was the importance of leadership and continuity within housing associations, to avoid changes in leadership derailing long-term delivery on food action.



## Seeds of food system transformation

Participants were encouraged to share ideas for innovation and ambition, following a process mirroring that used by the Seeds of a Good Anthropocene project. Seeds are initiatives that exist, at least in prototype form, but are not currently dominant or prominent in the world; they suggest [pathways for change, ideas worth nourishing and spreading](#). A discussion was facilitated to enable the exploration of seeds of food system transformation, developing an idea, initiative, or prototype that connects food and housing to improve food systems. Through this process, several Seeds emerged and were considered in some detail to identify how they might spread, grow and reproduce.

### Seed 1: Local Veg for Local Tenants

Based on the model of community-supported agriculture (CSA), this would be a system of offering housing association tenants fresh, locally grown produce at a more affordable price through a variable pricing scale. They could also be involved in developing as volunteers, so learning food growing skills. This would support community-led food growing, which can enhance food security, whilst increasing accessibility for individual households. Options could include tenants buying shares in food production and using tenant-run green spaces for food growing.

### Seed 2: Integrating Food Access into Housing Association Contracts

This proposal for housing associations include access to food-growing opportunities as part of tenants' contracts. This idea was linked to examples of community-supported agriculture (CSA), where veg boxes on a sliding scale are provided to tenants, especially in low-income urban households. Participants highlighted that such initiatives could be considered a standard investment by housing associations, as part of a "CSA + Housing Association" model. Starting with the tenant contract was identified as a replicable, impactful opportunity for housing associations to support sustainable food access while investing in tenant development.

### Seed 3: Community-Led Cooperative Food Models

A food cooperative model in which members pay a regular fee and gain access to produce they typically cannot afford would operate on a sliding scale, increasing community agency by allowing residents to decide what types of food should be prioritised.

### Seed 4: Public Service Board Collaboration and Systemic Influence

A public service board (PSB) member explained how their network has extended support to schools, food banks, and mutual aid groups. They emphasised the importance of housing associations taking leadership in the food agenda, particularly in reducing health inequalities and supporting early years development through food access initiatives. The approach includes training frontline staff to recognise food-related needs, such as eligibility for the Healthy Start scheme.



### Seed 5: Innovative Tenant Engagement and Education

Several examples were highlighted as projects aiming to strengthen food literacy and demonstrate the power of community-scale engagement. For instance, tenants utilise timber from local woodland management projects to construct raised beds and establish community allotments.

### Seed 6: Community-led Housing Integrating Food

This model for housing provision features a mix of owner-occupied and affordable housing, with food growing incorporated on site. It supports local food production and enhances community connections and well-being through features such as shared facilities. The approach of combining housing development with food production could be replicated in other ownership models, particularly as finance and planning issues can hinder progress with community-led schemes.

### Seed 7: Affordable Farmhouses

One Welsh local authority is already building new farms that include affordable homes, providing affordable housing alongside space for traditional farming. This also aims to revitalize rural communities.

### Seed 8: Vertical Farming in Isolated Communities Vertical farming and Controlled Environment

Agriculture (CEA) is possible within flats or garages. Growing food in such locations can shorten supply chains and improve access to fresh produce for isolated communities. It presents a potentially space-efficient mode of food production.





## Seeds to combine and sow

Participants discussed these innovations and explored what might happen if some of them were combined. These explorations led to a focus on three core ideas with potential to be impactful and replicable.

### Combined Seed 1: Homes for Horticulture

Affordable housing is particularly scarce in rural areas, which is where food production is currently concentrated. Meanwhile, those who most need access to affordable produce are located in more built-up areas, often including housing association properties. Bringing these needs together could mean increasing access to affordable housing for those who want to produce food. Models which currently target rural areas – such as Affordable Farmhouses (Seed 7) could be replicated in urban communities.

Alternatively, housing developments could integrate space for food production, allowing new entrants to have sites where they can produce. Urban spaces could also provide small units to support local supply chains by enabling producers to process and store produce. An advantage of this approach would be utilising housing association expertise in creating spaces.

To make this happen would take:

- **a cost-effective business model,**
- **an investment scheme enabling housing associations to access funding,**
- **combined policy for food and housing,**
- **a successful pilot,**
- **broader support for pathways into farming, and**
- **partnerships between those with complementary expertise.**

Challenges would include:

- **land in areas with high demand for food is not always suitable for good growing, e.g. steep slopes, contaminated brown/grey field sites;**
- **impact on food insecurity is not immediate; and**
- **costs.**

### Combined Seed 2: A Local Food Co-op

Establishing local food co-ops would support communities in accessing food while building community empowerment. Key features include listening to tenants' needs and utilising community networks as an asset, and adopting techniques such as appreciative enquiry. It begins with the observation that housing associations already possess strengths in tenant engagement, tenant voice, and empowerment.

A potential approach would be to partner with local public health teams, connecting their initiatives to Make Every Contact Count.

To make this happen would take:

- **Tackling poverty and food insecurity is a key priority for housing associations,**
- **engagement to build community support, and**
- **evidence to demonstrate impact and value.**



### Combined Seed 3: Tenants' Right to Grow

Housing association tenants would be offered a contractual entitlement to grow food, based on Hull Council's '[Hull Right to Grow](#)' principle. Tenants could be given this right (which would be optional for them to take up) through a range of models and spaces, including back gardens, communal spaces, links to local Community Supported Agriculture sites, and within school grounds, or by ensuring space for food growing when creating new properties. This could appeal to housing associations by connecting to their priorities around tenant engagement, net zero and wellbeing.

To make this happen would take:

- **providing housing associations with a set of models and options for how to enable tenant food growing,**
- **housing associations to make space available in existing and future sites,**
- **incorporate food spaces into greenspace strategies,**
- **a network of external food growing providers such as allotments, community gardens, local farms,**
- **knowing and promoting the social value of tenant food growing,**
- **understanding community/ tenant needs.**

Challenges would include:

- **ensuring sufficient capacity to meet demand,**
- **reliance on volunteers as a food source, particularly amongst tenants with complex social needs and little time,**
- **cannot address food insecurity wholly for all tenants.**



## Growing Conditions: what needs to change

The final stage of exploring potential Seeds involved considering the challenges that might arise when implementing or disseminating the innovations. Participants then examined the potential activity to identify common issues and targets for change, making progress possible.

From this, the following priorities emerged:

- **Housing association priorities:** Food needs to be strategically prioritised, and recognised as an area for intervention with potential to make a difference across other priorities.
- **Policy context:** Food and housing policy needs to be better connected and provide a statutory context which encourages housing associations to prioritise food systems.
- **Evidence of success:** Housing associations and others must promote and share the experience of what works from pilot projects and good practice.
- **Partnerships:** Local Food Partnerships and other key food system actors could better connect with housing associations and facilitate other collaborations.
- **Learning and evidence:** Additional research and knowledge exchange would help calculate, demonstrate and communicate the value and impact of action.
- **Community engagement:** All actors should seek to understand what people want, and involve them in transformation.



## Collaborations to make change possible

Across the day, discussions also highlighted some of the key collaborations which can enable change, and support initial steps to address these priorities:

- **Local food partnerships** can seek strategic relationships with housing providers in their area.
- **Housing Associations** can host conversations with Welsh Government to explore the issues, and seek their support. A network such as Community Housing Cymru was suggested as a potential entry point.
- **Make connections** between housing associations to share examples and work out how to cooperate on shared priorities.
- **Actors primarily focused on rural areas** seek to connect with housing providers focused on more densely populated areas to share ideas and practices, and explore how they might assist communities with the most significant housing needs.

Representatives from Local Food Partnerships suggested that the opportunity to interact with and better understand housing associations had been a particularly valuable aspect of the workshop. This suggests the merit of future activities to bring these communities of stakeholders together.



## Feedback and Follow-Up Actions

Participant feedback on the value of attending the workshop was very positive (see Appendix B), with most responding that they would be very likely to participate in a similar event in future. Most had made new connections through attending, and stated they were very inspired to take action in light of the event.

Participants were invited to share how they would follow up on discussions or implement something they had learned. Actions included themes around:

- **Pursuing connections made with specific organisations or people.**
- **Applying learning or new approaches to collaborating.**
- **Finding out more about ideas, issues and methods/ techniques.**
- **Hosting activities to bring key stakeholders together in their area.**

A key outcome for Local Food Partnership coordinators was feeling more able and informed to engage with housing associations.

Food Sense Wales will build on this by sharing insights from the workshop with the wider network of Local Food Partnerships.

The organisers have also committed to exploring with Community Housing Cymru how learning can be effectively shared with their network of housing associations.



## Appendix A: Participants

Anando Ghosh, UCL

Barbora Adlerova, Researcher

Catherine Brindson, HACT

Catherine Siviter, Food Vale Partnership

Chris Nottingham, Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership

Duncan Fisher, Our Food Trust

Eifiona Thomas Lane, Prifysgol Bangor University

Holly Cookston Williams, Down to Zero

Jianhao Yang, Cardiff University

Jonathan Conway, Community Housing Cymru

Libby McIntosh, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Health Team

Mary Duckett, Bwyd Abertawe Food

Megan Blake, Sheffield University

Nadine Fletcher, Monmouthshire Housing

Pat Gregory

Philip McDonnell, NPT Local Food Partnership

Shuangyu Wei, Cardiff University

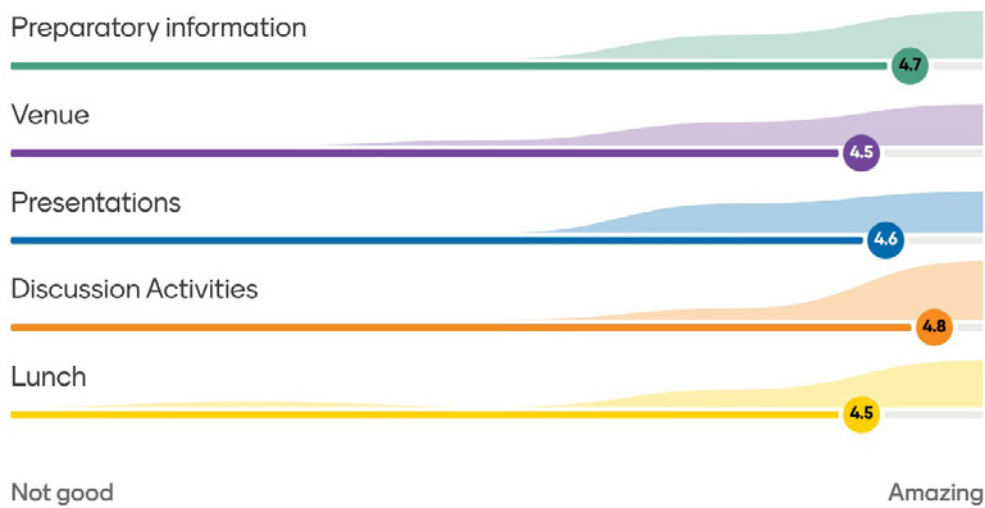
Richard Thomas, United Welsh

Tom Addiscot, Down to Zero

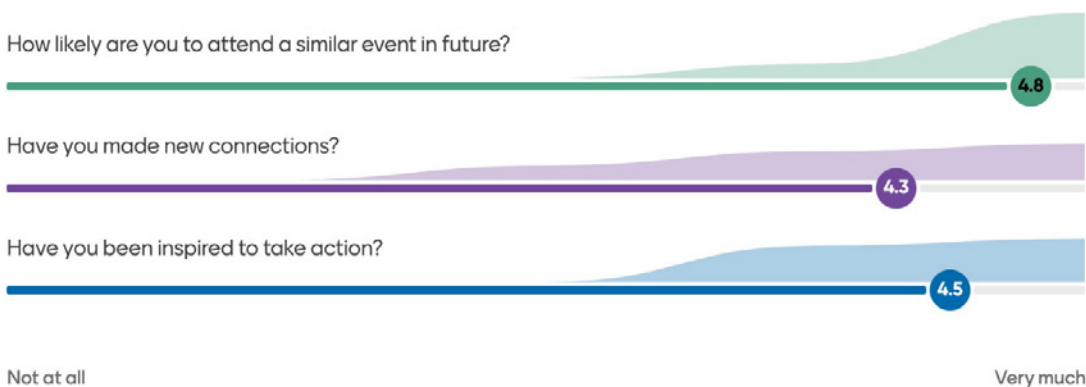
Xinshuang Xhang, Cynon Taf Housing

# Appendix B – Participant Feedback

## How would you rate the following



## Following today’s workshop





## What will you do as a result of today?

I am going to read more about what was discussed and follow up with people. Such an interesting workshop !!

Increase communication within the Housing Association, raise awareness and facilitate community engagement.

Be able to approach housing associations with more confidence about what can be done in partnership

Reach out to local housing associations to arrange a joint workshop on community growing

Reflect on what has been discussed and explore what I can do in collaboration with the housing association.

Feel more confident when approaching housing associations about the actions that can be made in partnership with sustainable food places

Investigate effective ways to engage stakeholders in research instead of mere recipients, and form potential partnerships with participants today for future collaboration

Continue conversation to cocreate / develop event with HAs in NPT & Swansea, following SBUHB & PSB & Healthy Weight Wales priority: Access to food

Learn more about social value metrics and follow up with some participants

Continue conversation re event (previous comment)

discuss info gleaned with other members of my group. Use what I've learned in our briefing doc and in approaching housing associations. Contact some of the people I've met and other growing groups.

Further work with Hannah to understand the asks of the sector. Showcasing good work already taking place.

Link in with one attendee who is now working in connection with the Food Network RCT one day a week and hopefully build on the relationship moving forward



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