



## PRESS RELEASE

To be released: Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup> 2020

### Food Cardiff and UNICEF UK join forces to help support families in Cardiff

[Food Cardiff's](#) Food and Poverty group is to receive £17,000 worth of funding from [Unicef UK](#) to support children and families at risk of food insecurity during the coronavirus pandemic.

For the first time in its 70-year history, Unicef UK has moved to develop a UK domestic emergency response. *'Food Power for Generation Covid'* is a joint initiative with [Sustain](#): the alliance for better food and farming, which will help provide food for vulnerable children and their families by awarding grants to UK community projects like Food Cardiff's Food and Poverty Group.

The coronavirus pandemic is the most urgent crisis affecting children since the Second World War, upending children's lives around the world and in the UK. Even before the pandemic struck, an estimated 2.4 million UK children were already growing up in food insecure households and since March 2020, families have faced hardship and struggled to make ends meet and access food, as the economy suffers and jobs have been lost. This has meant that across the UK, there has been an increased demand placed on community support services like those offered by some of Food Cardiff's Food and Poverty group members, mainly [ACE \(Action in Ely and Caerau\)](#); [SRCDC \(South Riverside Community Development Centre\)](#) as well as local growing projects such as [Global Gardens](#).

The funding received, worth £17,000, will be used to train and support community volunteers to cook and deliver pre-cooked nutritious meals to vulnerable families in Cardiff – including Christmas lunches. 100 pre-cooked meal packs will be prepared and distributed weekly, supporting a total of 200 families during the next three months.

“We’re really pleased that Food Cardiff has been awarded this grant enabling local partners to feed more families across the city during these difficult winter months,” says Pearl Costello, Food Cardiff co-ordinator.

“Creating a pre-cooked meal service will enable us to use surplus from Fareshare and local food and growing projects more effectively. This pilot will be developed by ACE, SRCDC and other Alliance members, and will include improving outdoor and indoor kitchen spaces, enabling volunteers to safely attend cooking and training sessions.”

This project and its subsequent funding has grown from the work that Food Cardiff has undertaken since March. At the start of the pandemic, Food Cardiff convened the Covid-19 Food Response Task Group to coordinate the response of organisations across the city, who had reported that the scale and nature of the support they were providing had changed rapidly.

Food Cardiff went on to set up a network of Anchor Organisations to coordinate responses in different geographical areas with the aim of supporting local organisations and groups. This included the distribution of food in those areas; helping with referrals of people needing food, and receiving and storing food for other organisations to distribute.

Two “Your Local Pantries” run by Alliance members SRCDC and ACE, supported households with an affordable food delivery accessed via a free or £5 weekly membership. This included a wide range of ambient and chilled foods as well as fruit and vegetables from Fareshare. 1400 packs were delivered to 200 families in the first 3 months of lockdown ensuring that those experiencing difficulty were still able to access food in a dignified way.

The UNICEF support will fund pre-cooked food packs that will be provided as part of the support offered through Cardiff’s two Your Local Pantries - projects designed to maintain dignity and remove the stigma associated with crisis food support. Pantry members will be offered a choice of meals and make a financial contribution through their weekly membership fee. Offering high quality pre-prepared food will increase the choice and value for members. This will also include the delivery of Christmas lunches.

“We’re really pleased to be working with Food Cardiff on this project and are delighted to have received this funding to provide families with greater access to food. The funding will enable us to provide members of the Dusty Forge and Wyndham St Pantries with pre-cooked food packs which

they can collect when attending the Pantry shops or access via our delivery service,” said Sam Froud-Powell, Community Support Coordinator at ACE.

“Many families are already accessing our Pantries and are receiving ongoing support and this funding will allow us to offer additional help to those with additional vulnerabilities and barriers to cooking. We will work together with fellow Food Cardiff members to coordinate referrals of people in food insecurity, ensuring this compliments other crisis support services.”

Sarah Way from South Riverside Community Development Centre adds: “This funding will allow us to meet the needs of a growing number of families and households in the South Riverside area. We distribute food through a membership system so we get to know the families receiving food, including their dietary requirements and preferences and can tailor the food provided accordingly.”

“The project is also enabling the Your Local Pantries in Cardiff to work closely with Cardiff and Vale UHB Dietitians to ensure volunteers receive the training, resources and support required so that all pre-cooked meal packs fulfil nutritional requirements. This will include all volunteers attending a Level 2 course in Community Food and Nutrition Skills, either online or at an outdoor training venue, as well as an online Level 2 Food Safety & Hygiene course run by the Local Authority.”

This funding will also allow SRCDC and ACE to work alongside other Alliance members to provide a range of additional support for families, including clothes for families through school uniform exchanges; the creation of bundles for children and the provision of mobile creches and parent and under 5 classes. They’ll also be signposting to advice services, providing mental health support as well as offering support with grants; offering free tablets for digitally excluded and delivering exercise and wellbeing activities. Peer support groups; phone a friend services and gardening and growing projects will be offered and a range of other activities, from creative family learning groups to language cafes will be provided too.

It’s been an extremely challenging year for thousands of families in Wales and although the Welsh Government has committed to providing free school meals for the 90,000 eligible families during the Christmas holidays, around another 70,000 children, living below the poverty line won’t benefit from this much needed support - either during the holidays or when they return to school in January. This is because they don’t meet the eligibility criteria set by Government.

“Covid has exacerbated and brought to the forefront the twin challenges of inadequate state safety nets and low paid work. Brexit is also likely to have an impact on the affordability of food in the UK

and in the short term, our household bills are certain to increase,” says Katie Palmer, Programme Manager at Food Sense Wales, an organisation working to create a food and farming system that is good for people and good for the planet.

“The issue of how children receive their right to good food has rightly been highlighted through campaigns such as Marcus Rashford’s where [more than 1 million people signed a petition](#) calling on the governments of the UK to expand free school meals to all under-16s where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefit.

“Some low income families are managing without this support. Many parents are cutting down on their own food to ensure their children have sufficient. Others will turn to foodbanks. Some will be supported through community provision such as Pantries and others will rely on friends and family. But many are experiencing physical and/or mental ill health as a result of being unable to access sufficient food in a dignified way. Most of these parents are working and on low incomes. Many are single parents.

“This troubling situation isn’t new,” adds Katie. “Covid has just made it worse.”

**Anna Kettley, Director of Programmes at Unicef UK, said:** “The Coronavirus pandemic has significantly impacted children and families over the last eight months. Their lives have been upended and sadly, we know that for many families across the UK, coronavirus will have a continued impact on family finances.

“Through ***Food Power for Generation Covid*** we aim to ensure families are reached at the local level through the services provided by Food Cardiff’s Food and Poverty group members, so children can continue to eat well during this crisis.”

**Simon Shaw, Head of Food Poverty Programme at Sustain, said:** “All over the UK local food poverty alliances like **Food Cardiff** have been taking action to ensure local people have access to food during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“This partnership with Unicef UK comes at crucial point in the midst of further Covid restrictions when many individuals’ resources will be depleted. Local alliances like the **Food Cardiff Partnership** are well-placed to support their communities over the next few months and to reach those who have been hardest hit.”

## ENDS

\*The estimated 2.4million children living in food insecure households is based on findings from the Food Foundation. Full press release can be found here: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/New-COVID-19-childrens-food-insecurity-data-FINAL.pdf>

## Notes to editors

### For more information, please contact:

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- You can read more about Free School Meals and the potential impact of increasing eligibility in Wales in a recent [blog](#) written by Katie Palmer, Programme Manager, Food Sense Wales for the Bevan Foundation: <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/commentary/a-childs-christmas-in-wales>
- Unicef UK Media Team, 0207 375 6030, [media@unicef.org.uk](mailto:media@unicef.org.uk)

### About Food Cardiff:

[Food Cardiff](#) believes that the food we eat has a huge impact on life in Cardiff - not just on people's health, but on communities and businesses, individual farmers, and the environment too.

Food Cardiff believes that food should be good for people, good for the place we live, and good for our planet as well as being affordable and tasty. Good food creates strong, healthy communities. The way it's produced respects people, animals and the natural environment and the way it's sold supports the local economy.

Sitting within [Food Sense Wales](#), Food Cardiff acts as a hub for connecting people and projects working to promote healthy, sustainable and ethical food; acts as a voice for wider change as well as being the catalyst for changing the local food system in Cardiff.

### About UNICEF

UNICEF is the world's leading organisation for children, promoting the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

Unicef UK raises funds to protect children in danger, transform their lives and build a safer world for tomorrow's children. As a registered charity we raise funds through donations from individuals, organisations and companies and we lobby and campaign to keep children safe. Unicef UK also runs programmes in schools, hospitals and with local authorities in the UK.

Follow UNICEF UK on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

### **About Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming**

The Sustain alliance represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. Our food poverty programme and campaigns have a joint goal to ensure that all children have access to a nutritious diet, this requires targeted support for low income children and families.

We are proud of our ability to work nimbly and adapt to events. We quickly established an approach to working during the Covid-19 crisis; securing food for vulnerable people and supporting the local response are two of our priority areas. Our Food Power programme is well-connected into local food networks across the UK and their work to ensure people have access to nutritious food during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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### **About Food Power**

Food Power is a four-year programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund delivered by Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming and Church Action on Poverty. We have a network of 70+ food poverty alliances from across the UK and covering a range of urban and rural areas. The programme supports these alliances to tackle food poverty in their areas through a combination of practical and strategic projects. Alliances vary in size, but their members usually include community organisations, food banks, food pantries, councils, advice organisations and academics. Members come together over common objectives around reducing food poverty and we have supported many to develop food poverty action plans which cover a combination of immediate and preventative responses, including actions targeted at children and families.

For more information about Food Power visit <https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpower/>

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