





Many community-owned pubs want to play an active role in helping people in their area manage the issues around the sharp rise in food poverty.

This factsheet gives you some examples of good projects developed by other organisations, and provides advice on how to expand your work in this area.

✓ Think about why you are doing it

A good community project – as opposed to a 'commercial' one – needs to be run for the long haul. There can be tensions between the commercial and the community aspects of the pub. The need to maximise revenue and footfall doesn't always perfectly align with ideas around the more pastoral side of supporting the community.

It takes time for the local community to begin to trust your commitment and feel comfortable about using the service you're providing. You need to be clear that the entire pub is on board – staff, committee and ideally, members. It should not be a pet project of select committee members who have the desire to see you do more work in this field. It can't become a lifeline service which abruptly ends when circumstances change at the pub.

✓ Think about the resources you can commit

By its very nature, helping people manage food poverty usually involves providing things at less than their 'normal' cost. That can be through sourcing cheaper ingredients from other food outlets who can't use them, or using volunteers to prepare them. It might need extra funding from other organisations that provide grants to support work on food poverty, so you can manage the costs at your end.

Talk to people already working in the area

There should already be organisations and groups working to assist people with food poverty needs, and they know more than you about what's going on and crucially, where there might be gaps where your pub could fill in missing provision, or expand what's being done. Complement what's going on, rather than replicate work already under way. Building partnerships will mean your services get signposted and will make you better placed to access the extra support like grants that make a big difference.



✓ Think about what you can offer

What do you bring to the table? Is it a welcoming space, already familiar to the community? Do you have an under-utilised kitchen? Are you in a prominent place locally? Think 'on the beaten' track rather than off. Anywhere that doesn't involve a circuitous detour to reach.

Good intentions don't trump legal obligations

Helping the community does not absolve you from legal responsibilities. Volunteers who might prepare meals will still have to adhere to health and safety regulations, in the same way that paid staff would. You are responsible for ensuring that all work carried out as part of your business is done so in accordance with the relevant laws and statutes.

Dignity

The causes of food poverty are beyond the control of those being impacted. As a result, there is often embarrassment felt by the people accessing support services, particularly if it is overtly advertised as food poverty support. It can help to tackle the matter obliquely so that the benefit appears as a side-effect of participation rather than the target.

A good example might be families attending cooking classes for children at the pub. If the meal is a combination of main dishes prepared by pub staff with desserts made by the children, it could remove the stigmatic nature of such a visit.

Some ideas:

- 'Junk-food' projects take surplus produce at the end of life donated by other outlets like cafes and grocers and turn them into meals for lower cost because the raw materials are free. Be aware though that surplus food is increasingly rare due to wholesalers supply chain management issues. Also, talented chefs capable of converting a haul of freebie veg into a tasty treat are not always available. Remember, potential users might have less appetite for an interesting usage of aubergines than burger and chips for kids at affordable prices!'
- Cooking courses can address the challenges facing a number of people who simply do not have the skills or knowledge to prepare food. Invite people on the basis of helping them 'beat the system' by making meals cheaply from scratch instead of buying ready-made or highly processed food. Work with local schools to see if there are kids who aren't engaging in school-based learning who might be better suited to the environment of a kitchen in the pub.
- Subsidised lunch clubs often funded by grants from supportive organisations can be provided to specific groups, perhaps those people who are older, or more isolated, and not just because they're in food poverty. The Bevy in Brighton have run a successful Friday club for elderly residents nearby which is based on tackling isolation, by providing a decent meal and social interaction. This approach will often highlight other needs which have perhaps gone unnoticed. These can subsequently begin to be tackled through your partnerships with other health and wellbeing services locally.

The Plunkett Foundation is a charity that supports groups across the UK to set up and run life-changing community businesses that tackle issues of isolation, loneliness, employment and general wellbeing. Thanks to funding from Scottish Government we've been able to offer support, training and networking opportunities to community pub groups in Scotland. If you'd like to explore the opportunities of setting up a new community pub or would like support and advice about how to ensure an existing community pub can continue to thrive, please contact

info@plunkett.co.uk or call 01993 630 022.

Plunkett advocates for and provides support to community businesses to build a fairer and more sustainable economy. If you share our vision and want to support us as well as access an enhanced range of support and supplier discounts, become a member today. With your help, we can continue to help communities create businesses that are innovative, inclusive and impactful.

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