



CIVIL FOOD RESILIENCE CASE STUDY 2: BRISTOL

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Bristol is a long-established SFP member (awarded a Gold SFP Award in 2021), following longstanding food partnership work in the city coordinated by Bristol Food Network. The city's cross-sector food partnership spans community food organisations, public health, local government, public institutions, academia and the wider food economy. The city's experience of coordinating food support during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both the strengths of civil society networks and the challenges of coordination, data, communications and shared ownership across a complex system. This has created momentum for more structured and

forward-looking food resilience planning.

Approach

Bristol's civil food resilience work is currently focused on the Food Disaster Risk Planning (FDRP) project, instigated by Bristol Food Network and delivered in partnership with Feeding Bristol and academic partners at the University of the West of England and the University of Bristol. Many departments at Bristol City Council, including Community Development, Public Health and Civil Protection have participated in the project.

The FDRP project has taken a phased, participatory and evidence-led approach, engaging a broad range of stakeholders spanning community and voluntary sector organisations, alongside public health, emergency response, policy and local food businesses, food system practitioners, academic researchers and relevant national bodies, including DEFRA.

The work has focused on reflecting on Bristol's COVID-19 pandemic food response, understanding how existing networks operated under pressure, and identifying strengths, gaps and points of vulnerability within the local food system.

Across the project, stakeholders have worked collaboratively to build a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, map key actors and relationships, and explore how coordination could be strengthened in future disruption scenarios. Scenario-based exercises have helped participants test assumptions, surface dependencies and consider how different types of disruption might play out locally.

Academic partners are synthesising insights from workshops, interviews and case studies to inform emerging priorities for preparedness actions, coordination mechanisms and governance arrangements. To date, nearly 150 stakeholders have been engaged through the project.

Challenges

- Clarifying long-term ownership and accountability for the Food Disaster Risk Plan
- Aligning partnership-led work with formal emergency planning and response structures
- Securing multi-year funding to support coordination and implementation
- Maintaining engagement across a wide and diverse stakeholder group over a significant length of time

Opportunities

- Strong foundation of trust, relationships and shared learning established through FDRP
- Opportunity to strengthen the role of grassroots and community-led organisations in city-wide food resilience strategy development, while formalising VCSE–local authority collaboration to support co-production, clearer roles and more coordinated action
- Clear evidence base to inform decision-making, governance and future investment
- Opportunity to embed food resilience more firmly within existing food governance structures
- Potential to pilot delivery approaches and clarify roles ahead of future disruptions
- Scope to collaborate with other UK or European cities to share learning and models
- Ongoing work includes further synthesis of learning, stakeholder and network mapping, narrative development and early consideration of support structures and resource mobilisation. The next phase will focus on consolidating learning into a clear, accessible and actionable Food Disaster Risk Plan for Bristol.

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