

Focus Group with Worthing Homeless Community

December 2021

Co-hosted by Worthing Soup Kitchen and Community Works
Facilitated by Sarah Davenport & Charlie Temperton, Community Works



Adur & Worthing
FOOD PARTNERSHIP

The focus group took place at Worthing Soup Kitchen during their regular Friday evening dinner drop in in December 2021. The conversations happened on a 1-2-1 or sometimes in pairs, with participants eating dinner and chatting round the table. There were 7 participants, a mix of male & female. We spoke to people from the UK & Lithuania. Participants were given a £10 Greggs voucher for taking part.

Suggestions & Recommendations: summary

Food Provision

It was clear from the feedback that there was not enough food provision for the street homeless and vulnerably housed in Worthing. Worthing Soup kitchen and temporary accommodations were noted as the main sources of food, with many people shoplifting to supplement their diets.

All noted that the location of Worthing Soup Kitchen was too far out of town. At the time of consultation, Worthing Soup Kitchen are actively looking for a central location.

Hot food was in particular demand, as cooking facilities and provision limited the availability of a hot dishes.

Cooking Facilities and Communal Cooking

A number of people also expressed issues with the cooking facilities provided in their accommodation. Many simply did not have access to suitable cooking facilities to cook food they wanted or were able to eat. Those that did have microwaves did not have oven or grill functionality. When asked what they would like to see for people in the future, a number of people expressed for communal fridges and freezers to be made available, suggesting that current food storage options were inadequate for their needs.

A number of people reminisced around homecooked meals with their families, either in recent years or growing up and few of people expressed the desire to cook communally with and for others. This was either due to the want to cook larger meals, and not feeling the desire to make the effort to cook for one person, or the desire to do something creative and share with others. Communal cooking was either expressed as cooking up large meals to hand out, or cooking as a group and sitting down together to eat.

Gratitude and Giving Back

Everyone who attended expressed a huge amount of gratitude for the work of Worthing Soup Kitchen, Khristina in particular. All of the participants noted that they would like to be able to give back in some way, and would have liked to have a pot to donate money in now and again to show their thanks and appreciation. One person noted that they often took some extras to take back to hand out, as it helped their mental health. Another was taking people in and supporting them to be able to make the most of available food support.

Everyone who attended was grateful for the presence of people who cared to come and communicate and find out more about their lives and experiences. The majority of people attending wanted to speak with us, more time would have allowed for more conversation.

Children

Two of the women specifically mentioned no longer caring for their children as a key factor in their diets. As both women prioritized cooking when they had a family to care for.

Money

A large number of people regularly shoplifted or had done so in the past. All the people who spoke about this reflected that this was done out of necessity and they often felt they had no other choice. Lack of affordable hot meals, court fines, lack of income and rent arrears were cited as reasons for being unable to access food. Others spoke about how a chaotic lifestyle also contributed to their lack of money and ability to purchase and cook food for themselves.

Housing

Housing stability in particular was mentioned as a reason for being unable to access a healthy diets. As well as cooking facilities available in temporary housing solutions (see more above). Many who lived in hostels expressed feelings around isolation, and had a lack of motivation to make use of facilities that were available when they were only cooking for themselves.

Summary of Recommendations

- More local food provision for homeless and vulnerably housed, especially hot meals
- Improving cooking facilities in temporary accommodation, and access to funds for cooking facilities for those with more secure housing
- Donation pots to be set-out at places where free meals are given away
- Creation of cooking and eating spaces that create a communal environment and family feel

Suggestions outside the Scope

- Stable housing with cooking facilities

- Support with mental health, for those who were separated from their children, and those who have issues with alcohol, drugs, and supported housing
- Temporary housing infrastructure to incorporate spaces for shared meals and cooking

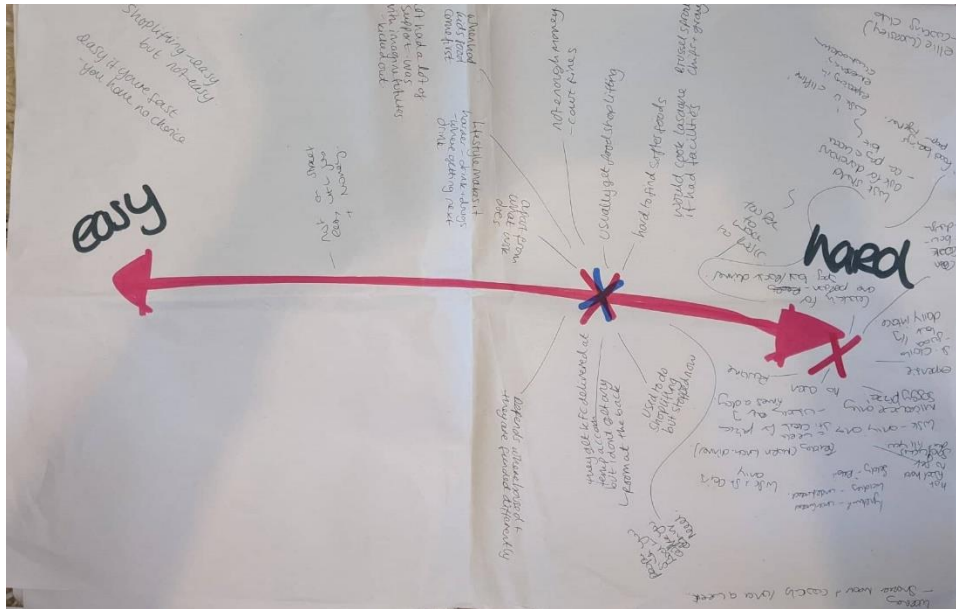
The Discussion

Question: “What makes a good diet”

- Alcohol
- Fray Bentos pies
- Cannabis – goes to day center every morning, can't eat until had a spliff in morning
- Food to take away from Worthing Soup Kitchen
- Need soft food as got teeth missing ast the back, e.g. pasta
- Hot food – not just sandwiches as don't feel full up on sandwiches
- Veg, fruit, fish, red meat once a week
- Don't have accommodation so can't grow own veg
- Only got a microwave - don't really use it
- A home cooked dinner
- Veg & proper dinner on Friday nights at Worthing Soup Kitchen
- Whatever you can get
- Can't use cooking facilities at temporary accommodation
- Apple cider, only thing can eat to get calories
- Used to eat with mum & kids before she died – spag bol, nuggets chips & beans
- Was bought up doing cooked dinners
- Changed diet once I lost my kids as not cooking for them
- Don't eat a lot of carbs
- Eat a lot of fish and veg
- Tin of beans
- Kebab – little bit!
- Croissant – lidl
- Yoghurt drink
- Nuts – power and energy
- Fat – meat
- Bread, water, salt – power food!
- Roast dinner

How easy is it to access a good diet?

Participants were asked to mark somewhere along a line drawn out on flipchart between Easy - Difficult to demonstrate how easy/difficult they find it to access a good diet.



- Shoplifting – easy, but not easy. Easy if you’re fast. Have no choice
- Not on street, easy with job and money
- Hard, apart from what WSK does
- Lifestyle makes it harder, drink and drugs – where getting next drink?
- When had kids, food comes first
- Not had a lot of support, was with Imagine Futures, was kicked out
- Depends where housed, and they are funded differently
- Not enough money – court fines
- Usually get food shoplifting
- Hard to find softer foods needed for current injury
- Would cook lasagna if had facilities
- They get KFC delivered at the temporary accommodation but I don’t get any – got a room at the back so get left out
- People give you food and coffee you don’t need
- Used to do shoplifting but stopped now
- Microwave only – soggy pizza!
- Hot food hard to find, sandwiches don’t fill you up
- Expensive
- St Claires food only 1/3rd daily intake
- Cooking for one person – spag bol/roast dinner
- Too far to walk to WSK
- WSK should ask for donations – can pay a little bit
- WSK is a lifeline, especially in emergency accommodation

- Routine
- Not got ingredients to cook
- In rent arrears
- Alcohol dependent
- Not got motivation to cook for self
- Cooking is a communal thing e.g made Chinese curry and egg rice for 6 people and, if on own would have had a cuppa soup
- Come from East Worthing to WSK
- Live in hostel and have own room, hard to cook for one person – would need to eat same meal all week
- Happy to cook for 5-6 people a few times a week, was a chef for 13 years. Don't want to cook only for self. Hard to maintain want to eat
- WSK – take extra food for tomorrow
- In B&B/temporary accommodation (Wolsey Hotel). Would cook if had facilities.
- In Chatsworth at the start of covid – was eating better, more support, it helped#
- If busking can get money
- Easier to get food in prison – been 7 times. Homeless people try to get in to prison over winter – food, shower, library, gym. English prison is a holiday

What would you like to see in place to support people in your position in 4 years time...

- Hard question!
- Need more people giving food out
- More communication between everyone about food
- WSK too far away
- More places in Worthing Town Centre e.g. near Splashpoint
- I would like to help people, I take people in and help them get food. There is kindness from others on the street
- Stable housing. For the council to give me my own place – not working where ive been housed.
- People in hostels to live more communally and live collaboratively
- I take spare meals from WSK each week to give out – helps my mental health to help others
- Somewhere we can go to cook together and share it out – all the health and safety rules get in the way. Even 3 times a week would make a difference. Would put in a few quid each week.
- Would like access to a shared freezer and microwave
- Space for fridges and freezers
- More services – more people giving
- money