

# Community Conversations with Food

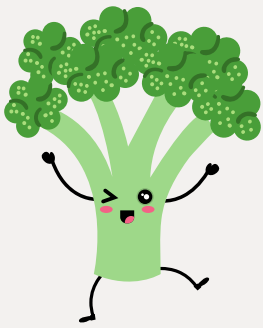


**West Cheshire  
Food Partnership**  
**Delivering the Food for All Plan**

# A guide to holding safe and inclusive conversations about food with communities

## **This toolkit is designed to help you:**

- Start meaningful conversations with local people around food and wellbeing
- Create spaces where lived experience and local voices shape decisions
- Build trust between communities, services and decision-makers
- Gather insights that lead to action and change



# Why Talk About Food?

Food connects everyone - it is a shared human need that brings people together, sparks conversation, reflects culture, and creates community.

Although not everyone has the same access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate good food.

## **Conversations around food can:**

- Help highlight experiences of food insecurity, barriers, and resilience
- Tackle stigma and social isolation
- Strengthen relationships across communities and systems
- Identify practical solutions led by people



# Core Principles

- **Build empowering and equal relationships:** based on trust and respect
- **Promote equality, diversity and inclusion:** use plain language and provide support where needed
- **Foster open and transparent communication:** be honest about purpose and outcomes
- **Share a vision for meaningful change:** this work is part of a wider movement
- **Support ongoing learning:** reflect, adapt and improve over time
- **Embed lived experience:** include people's voices from planning through to action

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## Planning your conversation

### Who?

Invite local residents, people who access your services, parents, growers, older adults, community cooks and those often unheard.

### Where?

Choose relaxed, accessible spaces: community venues, food hubs/meeting places

### How?

- Keep it informal. Share food. Create an welcoming space.

### Consider:

- Childcare or child-friendly activities
- Where you will be promoting the conversation
- What events/activities you already have coming up

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## **Making people feel at home**

**The setting matters. You want people to feel welcomed, safe, and able to be themselves:**

- Welcome people warmly at the door
- Offer a brew, drink/snacks or a shared meal
- Provide a friendly intro space
- Use soft lighting, music, or displays to create a relaxed feel
- Set up round tables to encourage conversation

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## Hosting the Conversation

**Your role as a host is to make sure people feel heard and respected. You don't need to be an expert facilitator - just be open, present, and kind.**

### **Setting the tone:**

- Share the purpose clearly: “We’re here to listen and learn from each other.”
- Use a simple group agreement (e.g. listen with respect, no pressure to share)
- Let people know they can engage in different ways - by speaking, writing, drawing, or just listening

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## Hosting the Conversation

### **During the conversation:**

- Use open, warm questions (see next section)
- Let conversation flow but bring it back to the topic if needed
- Be aware of who's talking and who isn't - gently invite everyone to contribute
- Take breaks and keep the pace gentle

### **Ending well:**

- Ask for final thoughts
- Let people know what happens next
- Say thank you and share any follow-up steps



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## Questions that invite sharing

You can use questions to spark discussion or write them on tables for people to chat through as they eat:

- What does food mean to you?
- What helps you to eat well or what gets in the way? What barriers do you have to accessing healthy, affordable food?
- What role does food play in your family or culture?
- What would you change about food where you live?
- What's already working well in your community?



# From Conversation to Action

People want to know their time, wisdom and contributions matter and that they are valued...

## **After your community conversation:**

- Summarise what you heard and share it back with participants
- Be clear about what will happen next
- Invite people to stay involved in future activities, co-design, or decision-making
- Let people know how their voices are making a difference