

Evaluation Report for The Real Junk Food Project, Twickenham, June 2023



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Executive Summary

This report outlines the evaluation of TRJFP Twickenham, carried out by a research team from Kingston and London Metropolitan Universities at the request of the project organisers. Perspectives of clients and volunteers were sought, using a mixed methods approaches. All sites were visited on multiple occasions and data were collected from clients using questionnaires completed there and then (71 in all over 9 site visits). Optional telephone interviews were held with clients (4 in total). 40 telephone interviews with volunteers were held, as well as 9 with organisers or suppliers (the latter are not included in this report but provided valuable context).

TRJFP was very positively viewed by both clients and volunteers. Clients attended for a number of reasons, including food support, environmental concerns and to meet and socialise with others. Having access to varied fresh foods, hot meals and a hearty welcome were all important to them, and they valued the opportunity to make a contribution using the pay-as-you feel scheme.

Volunteers chose to work with TRJFP for different reasons, but for many the environmental and food foci, as well as the community value of the project were key drivers. Involvement in the scheme gave them insight into groups they might otherwise not meet, and contributed to their self-worth through their contribution to causes they perceived as valuable. For many, the friendships formed with other volunteers, and the structure and purpose of their volunteering hours were important, although they also valued the flexibility. Most volunteers were positive about the pay-as-you-feel model, but some struggled not to make judgements or assumptions on the basis of whether clients donated or not. Similarly, for most the impact of the project on the environment was viewed very positively, but others had concerns about the true eco-impact of the project, and whether it hindered supermarkets from properly addressing the food waste they generate.

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Introduction

This report is based on a comprehensive analysis of The Real Junk Food Project (TRJFP) Twickenham. It was carried out by a research team from Kingston University (HM, SS, NN & RR) and London Metropolitan University (DB), at the request of TRJFP organisers. The aim of the evaluation was to identify what the benefits of the scheme are both from the perspectives of the clients and those of volunteers at all three sites. In addition, it aimed to identify aspects which could be improved.

Context

The Real Junk Food Project (TRJFP) Twickenham primarily uses surplus food donated from supermarkets to donate directly to clients via food hubs, and to prepare hot meals and/or soups which can be consumed at the time or taken away to eat later. It operates at three sites; the ETNA centre in East Twickenham, Linden Hall in Hampton and Noble Green on Hampton High Street. Both hot food and a food hub operate from ETNA and Linden Hall, while Noble Green operates as a pop-up once a week and is a food hub only. The hot food offer at ETNA is more extensive than that at Linden Hall and has a greater seating area, offering more opportunities for clients to sit and socialise. All sites operate on a pay-as-you-feel basis, where donations may be made as wished but are not obligatory, and there is no requirement to pay at all. ETNA is open three days a week for two hours each time, Linden Hall and Noble Green operate once a week (at the time this work was undertaken). Linden Hall is open for two hours and Noble Green for one hour.

Clients can attend as many of the venues as they like, can come as often as they wish and do not have to provide any personal information about themselves. They can choose the food they take from the food hub (although guidance is given by volunteers and there may sometimes be restrictions if donations of particular foods are low).

The views of clients were collected using questionnaires designed for the purpose of this evaluation and co-developed with the organisers. In addition, optional telephone interviews were held, to add qualitative detail to their responses. Volunteer perspectives were collected using telephone interviews; an interview guide co-designed with the organisers was used for consistency.

Questions for clients related to the reasons for using TRJFP, perceived value of the scheme, rating of different aspects of TRJFP, client views on the importance of healthy eating and the impact of the project on social inclusion and the environment. Questions for volunteers included the reasons for their involvement in the project, what they gained from their volunteer work, their perceptions of the pay-as-you-feel model, as well as the impact of the project on social inclusion and the environment. Both groups were asked for demographic information, and both were also asked their views about wider aspects of food poverty drivers in the UK and how this could be addressed. The latter questions are not included in this report.

Methods

Ethics approval for the evaluation was granted by Kingston University Faculty Ethics Committee as part of a larger project exploring community food provision (ref 2786, 8th November 2021).

Data collection: volunteers & organisers

A list of the volunteers willing to be interviewed and their contact details was supplied by organisers of the community food groups. Interviews were organised and carried out online or by telephone between 31-11-22 and 23-03-23. Interviews took approximately 30-40 minutes each.

Interviews

Interview guides, co-created with community food project organisers, were used to ensure consistency and interviews were audio-recorded with permission for accuracy. Additional contemporaneous notes were taken. Questions included are shown in Table I. Audio recordings were transcribed and basic thematic analysis was carried out to identify key themes. Where quotes are used to demonstrate themes, pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity.

Volunteers also completed a short demographics questionnaire allowing them to be characterised (e.g. age range, gender, disability & working status). A total of 49 interviews were carried out, 40 with volunteers and 9 with organisers or suppliers. Two individuals had dual roles as volunteers and organisers; they are included within the volunteers' interview totals but not counted in the organisers' interviews.

Table I. Questions asked to volunteers within their interviews.

- How long have you been involved with TRJFP?
- What do you typically do at TRJFP? How often/how many hours do you spend on it?
- How did you hear about it?
- What are your reasons for involvement with it? (as opposed to other possible food support schemes)
- Are you involved in other non-food volunteering? If so, what?
- Are you involved with other food aid initiatives? (if so, can you tell me about them?)
- Were you involved with food aid work before the pandemic?
- What do you gain from your involvement?
- What is the value of TRJFP, in your opinion?
- What do you think of the pay-as-you-feel model? How well do you think it works?
- What is your opinion of TRJFP in relation to social inclusion?
- How do you think TRJFP may impact on the environment? Do you think it does?
- What do you think are the main reasons for food poverty?
- How would you like to see it addressed?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Data collection: clients

Data were collected using a bespoke questionnaire about their experience of TRJFP at all three locations between November 2022 and April 2023. A total of 9 data collection visits were carried out (4 in ETNA, between 30th November 2022-14th April 2023; 2 in Noble Green, on 6th December 2022 & 21st March 2023; and 3 in Linden Hall, on 8th December 2022, 30th March & 13th April 2023). The questionnaire was co-developed with TRJFP organiser and is shown in Appendix 1. Completion of the questionnaire took place at TRJFP with the interviewer filling in the responses (in most cases); it took approximately 20-25 minutes. A total of 72 questionnaires were completed.

Interviews

Clients were also given the option of taking part in a one-to-one interview to expand upon their responses. Those who wished to take part added their contact details to the questionnaire and were subsequently contacted to arrange the interviews at a mutually agreeable time and date: their contact details were then deleted. Interviews took place by telephone and an interview guide was used for consistency. All interviews were carried out by the same interviewer (HM) and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Interview questions are shown in Table II. In acknowledgement of their time, all interviewees were given a £10 Amazon voucher. Although 8 clients agreed to be interviewed, only 4 responded when contacted.

Table II: Questions asked to clients within their interviews

1. How long have you been using TRJFP?
2. How did you hear about it?
3. Can you tell me about your visits; how TRJFP works for you?
4. Would you say you have tried new tastes/ foods/ recipes because of TRJFP? Can you tell me more? [give examples]
5. What about your skills; would you say you have learnt new skills since coming to TRJFP?
6. How do you find TRJFP compared with other food support schemes you have used (e.g. Foodbank) [if appropriate]
7. What are your thoughts about TRJFP in relation to social inclusion?
8. What about in relation to the environment?
9. What do you think is the best thing about TRJFP?
10. Thinking about the UK as a relatively wealthy country, what do you think are the main causes of food poverty in the UK?
11. And what do you think should be done to address it?
12. Anything else you'd like to add?

Data analysis

Demographics questionnaires were coded and data were entered manually into an Excel spreadsheet. Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS version 28. Differences in levels of agreement with statements by demographic characteristics were assessed using Kruskal Wallis tests with posthoc Dunn's and Bonferroni correction. Differences in responses between venues were tested using chi square tests at $p < 0.05$. For similar statements, levels of similarity were tested using Cronbach's analysis.

Interviews were transcribed and basic thematic analysis carried out to identify key themes. Verbatim quotes from the interviews are used throughout the report to illustrate key themes which arose; pseudonyms have been used to protect identities and in some cases, genders have been changed so that individual contributors cannot be recognised (participants contributed on the basis of anonymity). Quotes are not linked to specific sites where volunteers are based, and no indication of the role of volunteers within TRJFP is given, again to reduce the risk that individuals may be identified.

Results:

Demographics of the participant clients – age, gender, ethnicity & disability status

A total of 72 clients across 3 venues completed questionnaires. Over half of all clients were aged at least 65 years (55.1%) although this varied between venues – in Linden Hall, 31.8% were in this age group. Across the three venues, 70% of participants were women and the majority in all venues were white (87% overall, ranging from 85.7% in Noble Green to 88.9% in Linden Hall). Between 28.6% (Noble Green) and 44.4% (in Linden Hall) considered themselves to have a disability.

Looking at all the participants, apart from gender differences between the venues, there were no significant differences by age, gender, ethnicity or disability status. Significantly more females than males visited Linden Hall (32.7 vs. 9.5% respectively), while significantly more males visited ETNA (61.9 vs. 34.7% respectively; $p=0.02$).

Table III: Age, gender & ethnicity characteristics of clients. Data are expressed as numbers (%)

Age (yrs)						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	≥65
ETNA (n=29)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.4)	3 (10.3)	0 (0.0)	5 (17.2)	20 (69.0)
Noble Green (n=22)	1 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	3 (13.6)	0 (0.0)	7 (31.8)	11 (50.0)
Linden Hall (n=18)	3 (16.7)	2 (11.1)	4 (22.2)	2 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	7 (31.8)
Total (n=69)	4 (5.8)	3 (4.3)	10 (14.5)	2 (2.9)	12 (17.4)	38 (55.1)
Gender						
	Woman			Man		
ETNA (n=30)	17 (56.7)			13 (43.3)		
Noble Green (n=22)	16 (72.7)			6 (27.3)		
Linden Hall (n=18)	16 (88.9)			2 (11.1)		
Total (n=70)	49 (70.0)			21 (30.0)		
Ethnicity						
	Asian	Other	Mixed	White		
ETNA (n=30)	2 (6.7)	2 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	26 (86.7)		
Noble Green (n=21)	1 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (9.5)	18 (85.7)		
Linden Hall (n=18)	1 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.6)	16 (88.9)		
Total (n=69)	4 (5.8)	2 (2.9)	3 (4.3)	60 (87.0)		
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?						
	Yes			No		
ETNA (n=30)	11 (36.7)			19 (63.3)		
Noble Green (n=21)	6 (28.6)			15 (71.4)		
Linden Hall (n=18)	8 (44.4)			10 (55.6)		
Total (n=69)	25 (36.2)			44 (63.8)		

Demographics of participant clients – housing, marital status & number of dependants

Almost half (42.3% average across all three venues) lived in their own homes. This was lowest for ETNA (37.5%) and highest for Noble Green (47.6%). Almost a third

overall (31.0%) lived in temporary or rented local authority housing. This was lowest in Linden Hall (27.8%) and highest in ETNA (34.4%).

Over a quarter (26.1% overall across all three venues) were married however, this differed by venue. In ETNA 9.7% were married compared with Noble Green, where 47.6% were married. Almost a third (29.0%) were single; this was lowest in Noble Green (14.3%) and highest in ETNA (35.5%).

The majority of respondents across the three venues (72.6% on average) had no dependents. Of those who did, the most common number of dependants was 2, and this ranged from 6.7% of ETNA respondents to 20.0% in Noble Green. Data are shown in Table IV.

Table IV: Housing, marital status & number of dependants of clients. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

<i>Housing type</i>							
	Private rented	LA rented/temp	Own	Family/ friends	Hostel/ refuge	Rough sleeper	Other
ETNA (n=32)	4 (12.5)	11 (34.4)	12 (37.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.1)	2 (6.3)	2 (6.3)
Noble Green (n=21)	2 (9.5)	6 (28.6)	10 (47.6)	3 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Linden Hall (n=18)	3 (16.7)	5 (27.8)	8 (44.4)	2 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total (n=71)	9 (12.7)	22 (31.0)	30 (42.3)	5 (7.0)	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)
<i>Marital status</i>							
	Divorced	LT relationship	Married	Separated	Single	Widowed	
ETNA (n=31)	7 (22.6)	2 (6.5)	3 (9.7)	1 (3.2)	11 (35.5)	7 (22.6)	
Noble Green (n=21)	3 (14.3)	1 (4.8)	10 (47.6)	1 (4.8)	3 (14.3)	3 (14.3)	
Linden Hall (n=17)	2 (11.8)	1 (5.9)	5 (29.4)	0 (0.0)	6 (35.3)	3 (17.6)	
Total (n=69)	12 (17.4)	4 (5.8)	18 (26.1)	2 (2.9)	20 (29.0)	13 (18.8)	
<i>Number of dependants</i>							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
ETNA (n=30)	25 (83.3)	2 (6.7)	2 (6.7)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Noble Green (n=15)	8 (53.3)	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	
Linden Hall (n=17)	12 (70.6)	1 (5.9)	3 (17.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	
Total (n=62)	45 (72.6)	4 (6.5)	8 (12.9)	2 (3.2)	2 (3.2)	1 (1.6)	

Clients' visits to TRJFP – frequency, venues visited & contribution of TRJFP to household food

Most clients attending one venue did not visit other venues in addition; of the 72 respondents overall, only 10 (13.9%) visited more than one venue (Table V). Only 1 (3.2%) client of ETNA also visited Noble Green; while 6 (27.3%) of Noble Green clients also visited Linden Hall. Of the 18 Linden Hall respondents, 2 (11.1%) also visited ETNA and 1 (4.5%) visited Noble Green.

The majority of respondents at all venues had visited before, and over a third overall (36.1%) stated that they visited as often as possible, with a further 29.2% stating they visited regularly.

In relation to the contribution of TRJFP to their household food, the most frequent response was 'other' (42.9% of respondents overall selected this option). Additional qualitative comments made in relation to this suggested that for most this meant that they used TRJFP to obtain some basics, which supplemented their shopping rather than relying on it for their basic necessities. However, 27.0% of respondents across the three venues stated that TRJFP supplied 'about half' of their average household shop, while 22.2% overall stated that it supplied them with the basics.

Housing type, marital status and ethnicity did not impact on any of these. However, while 100.0% of those without disability (n=44) had visited before, only 84.0% (n=21) of those with disability had (p=0.008). Disability status also affected the types of visits made (p=0.02). Among those with disability, 16.0% (n=4) were visiting for the first time while 48.0% (n=12) stated they visited as often as possible. For those without disability the corresponding figures were 0.0 and 32.5% (n=0 and n=13) respectively.

[Frank, ETNA client with disability]... 'I'm giving half of my UC and limited ability to work to [ex-partner] to look after my kids and I receive no support for the help I give but I have decided to do that, and make up the slack by coming through Etna.'

Table V: Location, type & frequency of visits; impact on household food of clients. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

Locations visited*						
	ETNA	Linden Hall			Noble Green	
ETNA (n=32)	32	0			1	
Noble Green (n=22)	0	6			22	
Linden Hall (n=18)	2	18			1	
Total (n=72)	34	24			21	
Have you visited before?						
	Yes			No		
ETNA (n=32)	30 (93.8)			2 (6.3)		
Noble Green (n=22)	21 (95.5)			1 (4.5)		
Linden Hall (n=18)	16 (88.9)			2 (11.1)		
Total (n=72)	67 (93.1)			5 (6.9)		
Frequency of visits						
	First	Come when can	As often as possible	Most days	Regularly	Other
ETNA (n=32)	2 (6.3)	2 (6.3)	12 (37.5)	3 (9.4)	9 (28.1)	4 (12.5)
Noble Green (n=22)	1 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	7 (31.8)	0 (0.0)	8 (36.4)	6 (27.3)
Linden Hall (n=18)	2 (11.1)	1 (5.6)	7 (38.9)	0 (0.0)	4 (22.2)	4 (22.2)
Total (n=72)	5 (6.9)	3 (4.2)	26 (36.1)	3 (4.2)	21 (29.2)	14 (19.4)
How much household food on average per week comes from TRJFP?						
	All	Most	About half	Basics	Other	
ETNA (n=28)	1 (3.6)	2 (7.1)	7 (25.0)	8 (28.6)	10 (35.7)	
Noble Green (n=19)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.3)	4 (21.1)	1 (5.3)	13 (68.4)	
Linden Hall (n=16)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.3)	6 (37.5)	5 (31.3)	4 (25.0)	
Total (n=63)	1 (1.6)	4 (6.3)	17 (27.0)	14 (22.2)	27 (42.9)	

*More than one location could be chosen

Clients' reasons for visiting TRJFP

Major drivers for visiting TRJFP were using the food hub, followed by 'helping the environment' (Table VI). Across the three venues, 83.6% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they visited for the food hub, while 81.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they visited because it helped the environment.

[Robert, Noble Green & Linden Hall client].. *'I do know the term, a large part of our carbon waste is in food production. And also, erm, having these events, having these things close to community centres means that people can walk to them.'*

[Belinda, ETNA client]... *'I've got my little green bin at home which I put my recycling food out for the dust binmen. And I've got a small garden, so I do try to put a little bit of compost out the bottom of the garden'*

Lower levels of agreement were seen for visiting due to the home cooking (70.2% overall), but this was driven by low levels of agreement from Noble Green clients, since there is no home cooking available at the Noble Green pop-up. If Noble Green clients are excluded, 86.7% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they visited for the home cooking.

The cost-of-living crisis was a driver for almost two-thirds of clients overall (63.4%), which is a likely reflection of the mixed clientele that use TRJFP and the fact that for some, it is for the environment and other reasons that they come. Lowest levels of agreement related to social reasons for attending; however overall, 57.4% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that this was a reason they attended. Again, although this appears low it is driven by differences between the offer at the different sites. There was low level of agreement among Noble Green attendees and if they are excluded, 73.5% of clients overall agreed or strongly agreed that they attended for social reasons. Both ETNA and Linden Hall are indoor venues, both offer home cooking (much more extensive at ETNA than Linden Hall), and there is seating available at both (again, this is more extensive at ETNA than Linden Hall). The outdoors and temporary nature of TRJFP at Noble Green limits the possibilities for social interactions, although clients do talk in the queue and the staff are friendly and welcoming. It is the nature of the set-up that differs. The importance of social space is evident from other research, and many of the volunteers also emphasised the importance of social space and opportunities for social contact that the project offers (see below).

[Robert, Noble Green and Linden Hall client]... *'the social aspects are nice because I met [name], it's nice to say hello to everyone, you know? And see other people. Um, it doesn't feel like a shop in, in that sense.'*

[Frank, ETNA client]... *'I've made quite a few friends' 'I'm a big people person, I love hearing people's stories, erm, and it's, it's the range of people that are affected is just amazing. It's literally actually more than I would meet in my normal interactions, you know, so it's good.'*

There was no effect of housing status, gender, ethnicity, current work status or marital status on responses. However, age had a significant effect. Among those aged 65 years and above, 72.2% (n=26) agreed or strongly agreed that they visited for social reasons, compared with 0.0% of those aged 18-24 years ($p=0.02$). Again, this is highlighted by many of the volunteers (see below), and the project is likely to be an important part of combatting potential social isolation in this vulnerable group.

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis was also seen in relation to disability status. Significantly more of those with than without disability (83.4%, n=20 vs. 54.5%, n=24 respectively, $p=0.009$) visited due to the cost-of-living crisis. Disability status also affected whether clients came for the home cooking, those with disability being significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they did so than those who preferred not to state whether they had a disability or not (85.0%, n=17 vs. 0.0%, n=0 respectively, $p=0.02$). National data from SCOPE suggested that those with disability have been disproportionately badly affected by the cost-of-living crisis, and again this is a group who may be at risk of social isolation. This means that TRJFP may be particularly important in helping to alleviate both difficulties within this vulnerable group.

There were low levels of reliability between the 5 statements (Cronbach's alpha = 0.585). This is likely to reflect that participants have multiple and varied reasons for attending TRJFP.

Table VI: Respondents level of agreement with a range of reasons for visiting TRJFP. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

<i>I visit because of the home cooking</i>					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
ETNA (n=32)	13 (40.6)	15 (46.9)	2 (6.3)	2 (6.3)	0 (0.0)
Noble Green (n=12)	0 (0.0)	1 (8.3)	10 (83.3)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)
Linden Hall (n=13)	8 (61.5)	3 (23.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)
Total (n=57)	21 (36.8)	19 (33.3)	12 (21.1)	4 (7.0)	1 (1.8)
<i>I visit for the food hub</i>					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
ETNA (n=32)	10 (31.3)	17 (53.1)	2 (6.3)	3 (9.4)	0 (0.0)
Noble Green (n=18)	6 (33.3)	6 (33.3)	6 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Linden Hall (n=17)	15 (88.2)	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total (n=67)	31 (46.3)	25 (37.3)	8 (11.9)	3 (4.5)	0 (0.0)
<i>I visit for social reasons</i>					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
ETNA (n=32)	14 (43.8)	13 (40.6)	0 (0.0)	3 (9.4)	2 (6.3)
Noble Green (n=19)	2 (10.5)	1 (5.3)	14 (73.7)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.3)
Linden Hall (n=17)	6 (35.3)	3 (17.6)	3 (17.6)	4 (23.5)	1 (5.9)
Total (n=68)	22 (32.4)	17 (25.0)	17 (25.0)	8 (11.8)	4 (5.9)
<i>I visit due to the cost-of-living crisis</i>					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
ETNA (n=32)	11 (34.4)	7 (21.9)	10 (31.3)	4 (12.5)	0 (0.0)
Noble Green (n=22)	12 (54.5)	3 (13.6)	6 (27.3)	1 (4.5)	0 (0.0)
Linden Hall (n=17)	8 (47.1)	4 (23.5)	2 (11.8)	2 (11.8)	1 (5.9)
Total (n=71)	31 (43.7)	14 (19.7)	18 (25.4)	7 (9.9)	1 (1.4)
<i>I visit because it helps the environment</i>					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
ETNA (n=32)	13 (40.6)	11 (34.4)	3 (9.4)	4 (12.5)	1 (3.1)
Noble Green (n=22)	16 (72.7)	2 (9.1)	3 (13.6)	1 (4.5)	0 (0.0)
Linden Hall (n=17)	14 (82.4)	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.9)	0 (0.0)
Total (n=71)	43 (60.6)	15 (21.1)	6 (8.5)	6 (8.5)	1 (1.4)

What do clients think of TRJFP offer?

Table VII shows clients' views of different elements of TRJFP offer. Clients were asked to rate their levels of agreement with a series of reasons for visiting TRJFP. For each statement, they could choose one of five options, from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', with a neutral option in the middle.

A combination of factors were shown to be important to them. The most highly rated aspects related to the friendliness of the people and the helpfulness of staff (98.7 and 97.1% of clients across all three sites agreed or strongly agreed with these statements).

[Nick, Noble Green client]... *'It's good because you go there, you chat to people and they're very helpful.... the people [volunteers] are friendly and, and it helps a lot with a few bits, you know. It does. Otherwise, it would cost you much more. I mean you, you go there, you pick up a few stuff and even if it's £20 worth, it helps a lot, you know.'*

[Belinda, ETNA client]... *'they're so kind, they always take their tray to the table if it's possible'*.

Being able to choose one's own food rather than being given food others have chosen (e.g. like at a Foodbank) was important to 87.3%. This is of interest both from a food waste and a food dignity perspective. Research suggests that being able to make food choices increases the dignity of those using food support schemes, and it also reduces the potential for food waste since people will choose foods that they know are acceptable to themselves and their families. The convenience of the location mattered to 87.1%, while impacting upon climate change mattered to 75.4% and reducing food waste mattered to 70.4%.

[Robert, client Noble Green & Linden Hall].... *'so it's primarily, um, bread and vegetables, I think, and some fruit. Um, so...we don't buy bread from the shop, um, all our bread...because there's so much, and you've probably seen how much bread they have. And otherwise, all of that would just be getting binned, which is terrible.'*

[Belinda, ETNA client]... *'it is very nice of people to donate, and I would hate to think that that was all going in the rubbish bin at night. I would rather bring it home and make use of it. Do you know what I mean?'*

Being able to meet and talk and social aspects of TRJFP were highlighted by 70.1 and 68.7% respectively (bearing in mind the earlier comments in relation to this; these are findings for the overall group, and the importance of social aspects is venue-specific, depending on the individual set-up at each site).

[Belinda, ETNA client]... *'I think the advert was, um, "Come and enjoy a chat, "or something, you know, something like that. But I'm such a sociable person, I thought, "Ooh, this might suit me down to the ground....when I walked in, straightaway, I, I saw a couple of people I knew. Otherwise, I didn't know anybody. But now I know all of them, practically (Laughs)'*

[Robert, client Noble Green & Linden Hall]...*'I definitely do feel part of a community. I think that, erm, definitely is, at Linden Hall, more so because they've got the, they've got the soup... there'*

The pay-as-you-feel model was highlighted by 60.6%.

[Nick, Noble Green client]...*'I put a little bit of what I can in every week [yeah], you know [yeah]. It's not a lot but ... it helps, you know'*

The lowest rated statement was *'I would prefer not to be seen visiting TRJFP'*. Only 11.3% of clients agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that stigma associated with TRJFP is relatively low, perhaps because the clientele is mixed, comprising those who are not dealing with food insecurity but choosing to support a local initiative focused on the environment, as well as those finding it difficult to make ends meet. However, the friendliness of the staff is also a likely contributor, as is the pay-as-you-feel model.

[Frank, ETNA client].... *'the staff members, are extremely congenial, they do identify you, fairly quickly, and what's nice about that is you're engaging with the people who are cooking you food and they're very willing to talk and engage'*

There may also be different connotations of attending TRJFP arising from the name, logo and environmental focus than would arise from attending a foodbank, which has the sole purpose of emergency food support and evidence of need must be supplied. This point was also raised by the volunteers, who felt that the openness and accessibility of TRJFP to all was a real strength (see volunteer feedback below).

[Frank, ETNA client]... *'it's the only project I can think of from the few there are... in this area which is open three times a week'*.

Research data suggests that for many who need help, the stigma associated with accessing it is a major barrier. The lack of stigma associated with TRJFP is therefore a real strength, as observed by the volunteers, and means that individuals are more likely to make repeat visits. These will be particularly important for those clients visiting primarily for food support, as opposed to visiting primarily for environmental reasons.

[Frank, ETNA client]... *'the project just banished that shame because they're so welcoming, accepting, and they use affirmative...it's pretty obvious that they're probably just being themselves, but some...a lot of other places do not manage to reach that....[they] have just got really, really good people skills'*

Also relatively low-rated were the access to fresh foods offered by TRJFP and its contribution to healthy meals (50.7% and 58.8% agreed or strongly agreed with these statements). This may be because for many, the project is not the main source of food, but supplements what they buy elsewhere. Table V shows the contribution of the project to the average weekly household shop and for over a fifth (22.2%) it supplies the basics. Only 1.6% and 6.3% respectively indicated that TRJFP supplies all or most of their weekly household food.

Demographic factors such as gender, ethnicity, housing, work and marital status did not impact upon these responses. However, significantly more of those aged at least 65 years agreed and strongly agreed that meeting and talking was important than those aged 35-44 years (84.4%, n=27 vs. 55.6%, n=5 respectively, p=0.03). This again highlights the importance of the social contact for this group.

Disability status also had an impact. Of those with disability, 81.0% (n=17) agreed or strongly agreed that TRJFP helped them prepare healthy meals compared to 0.0% of those who preferred not to state their disability status (p=0.06). Significantly more of those with disability agreed or strongly agreed that TRJFP gave them access to fresh food they would not otherwise have compared to those without disability (75.0%, n=18 vs 38.6%, n=17 respectively, p=0.007). As stated earlier, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on those with disability has been considerable, as suggested by national data and this more local data aligns with it.

Current work status also affected the impact of TRJFP on access to fresh foods. Those currently not working were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that TRJFP gave them access to fresh foods they would not otherwise have, compared to those in part-time work (60.0%, n=30 vs. 28.6%, n=4 respectively, p=0.02). While this is not surprising, it does suggest that TRJFP brings together people from different walks of life, in different financial and social circumstances, who attend for different reasons, not just for food support.

Table VII: Clients views of the importance of different elements of TRJFP offer. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Social elements (n=67)	21 (31.3)	25 (37.3)	5 (7.5)	6 (9.0)	1 (1.5)
Pay as you feel (n=71)	28 (39.4)	15 (21.1)	5 (7.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)
Choosing own food (n=71)	43 (60.6)	19 (26.8)	7 (9.9)	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)
Reduced food waste (n=71)	29 (40.8)	21 (29.6)	17 (23.9)	4 (5.6)	0 (0.0)
Meet & talk (n=67)	25 (37.3)	22 (32.8)	10 (14.9)	2 (3.0)	1 (1.5)
Help with healthy meals (n=68)	16 (23.5)	24 (35.3)	17 (25.0)	5 (7.4)	2 (2.9)
Prefer not to be seen (n=71)	1 (1.4)	7 (9.9)	10 (14.1)	18 (25.4)	35 (49.3)
Access to fresh foods (n=71)	13 (18.3)	23 (32.4)	11 (15.5)	16 (22.5)	8 (11.3)
Impact on climate change (n=69)	35 (50.7)	17 (24.6)	12 (17.4)	4 (5.8)	1 (1.4)
Location is convenient (n=70)	41 (58.6)	20 (28.6)	7 (10.0)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)
People are friendly (n=70)	58 (82.9)	11 (15.7)	1 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Staff are friendly (n=70)	60 (85.7)	8 (11.4)	2 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

Clients' views of healthy eating

Table VIII shows clients' responses to a series of statements related to healthy eating. They were asked to rate their levels of agreement with each by choosing one of five options, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', with a neutral option.

Lack of knowledge about how to prepare healthy food or whether their meals were healthy did not appear to be an issue in this group. Only 14.1% agreed or strongly agreed that a lack of know-how affected their ability to prepare healthy meals, and 15.7% that they were unsure if the meals they ate were healthy. However, 18.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they did not have the equipment they needed to prepare healthy meals while time was a barrier to preparing healthy food for 19.7%. This agrees with other research which shows that rather than lack of knowledge, major barriers to cooking healthy foods are time, cost, equipment and disability.

For most, healthy eating was a priority – only 65.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was not. In relation to whether healthy eating was too expensive the group were split; 42.3% agreed or strongly agreed that it was, while 38.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed and the remainder were neutral. This likely reflects the mixed clientele utilising TRJFP, some of whom are doing so at least partially for financial

reasons and others primarily for social, community and environmental reasons, but many for a mixture of reasons:

[Robert, Noble Green & Linden Hall client]...*'is the impact the satisfaction of knowing that you're, you know, reducing food waste but also keeping your own costs down'*

Several demographic factors influenced these responses. Significantly more of those with 1 than 2 dependants agreed or strongly agreed that healthy eating was too expensive for them (50.0%, n=2 vs. 12.5%, n=1, p=0.02). Significantly more males than females agreed or strongly agreed that if they knew how, they could prepare healthy meals (28.5%, n=6 vs. 8.4%, n=4 respectively, p=0.02). Significantly more of those with disability (66.7%, n=16) compared to those without (29.5%, n=13) agreed or strongly agreed that healthy eating was too expensive for them (p=0.04) – see earlier comments in relation to disability and barriers to healthy food cookery. Significantly more of those who preferred not to state their disability status compared to those without disability agreed and strongly agreed that healthy eating was not a priority for them (66.7%, n=2 vs. 16.3%, n=7, p=0.04). By contrast, type of housing, marital status, age and ethnicity had no effect on responses.

[Frank, ETNA client]... *'would say if you are on, erm, food parcels, etc., it's not necessarily giving you the healthiest food. So one of the ...huge advantages of... the project is that you have fresh vegetables and really fresh salad, so, erm, that's, er, an extremely important, er, if I'm not getting elsewhere or can't afford it elsewhere, I'll, erm, I'll come down to Etna to, to have that. So that's one of the important things about it. ... the quality of food is always very, very good.'*

Reliability estimates for the statements in Tables VII and VIII combined were moderate (Cronbach's alpha=0.639). However, given the diversity of these factors this is unsurprising.

Table VIII: Attitudes of respondents to statements about healthy eating. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Not sure if what I eat is healthy (n=70)	3 (4.3)	8 (11.4)	21 (30.0)	20 (28.6)	18 (25.7)
Healthy eating is too expensive for me (n=71)	15 (21.1)	15 (21.1)	14 (19.7)	19 (26.8)	8 (11.3)
Healthy eating is not a priority for me (n=70)	9 (12.9)	8 (11.4)	7 (10.0)	29 (41.4)	17 (24.3)
I do not have the equipment I need to prepare healthy meals (n=71)	7 (9.9)	6 (8.5)	5 (7.0)	27 (38.0)	26 (36.6)
If I knew how, I could prepare healthy meals (n=71)	6 (8.5)	4 (5.6)	7 (9.9)	31 (43.7)	23 (32.4)
Time is a barrier to me preparing healthy meals (n=71)	4 (5.6)	10 (14.1)	9 (12.7)	27 (38.0)	21 (29.6)

Food support and employment status of clients

Most clients did not use other food support (65.3); this was highest in Noble Green where 81.8% did not do so (Table IX). Just over a quarter (26.4%) were currently using other forms of food support in addition to TRJFP. This was highest in ETNA, at 34.4%, and suggests that clients at different sites may have different levels of need for food support, and that this is highest for ETNA clients than those at other sites. The majority of clients at all three sites were not currently working (73.9%). This was lowest in Linden Hall where 27.8% were currently working part-time and 11.1% working full-time. There were no differences in these by demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, housing, disability or marital status or number of dependants.

Table IX: Working status and use of other food support by TRJFP clients. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

Do you use other food support?				
	Yes, now	Yes, in the past	I think I will need to	No
ETNA (n=32)	11 (34.4)	2 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	19 (59.4)
Noble Green (n=22)	3 (13.6)	1 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	18 (81.8)
Linden Hall (n=18)	5 (27.8)	3 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	10 (55.6)
Total (n=72)	19 (26.4)	6 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	47 (65.3)
Are you currently working?				
	Yes, full-time	Yes, part-time	No	
ETNA (n=31)	0 (0.0)	5 (16.1)	26 (83.9)	
Noble Green (n=20)	2 (10.0)	4 (20.0)	14 (70.0)	
Linden Hall (n=18)	2 (11.1)	5 (27.8)	11 (61.1)	
Total (n=69)	4 (5.8)	14 (20.3)	51 (73.9)	

Those who had previously used a food bank were asked to highlight the important aspects of TRJFP for them, compared with their experience of the food bank. They could choose as many options as they wished. These findings are shown in Table X. Across all three sites combined, 50% chose the wide range of foods available, the availability of fresh foods and being able to choose their own foods. These were the most commonly chosen options, suggesting these were the most important to the clients. These were followed by the friendly atmosphere, being able to pay a bit when possible (46.9% each) and the location being easy to get to (40.6%). Lowest rated was the availability of additional services such as financial services, chosen by 12.5%.

It is of note that several of these factors relate directly to stigma but also impact on nutritional status. As discussed in earlier sections, being able to choose one's own food allows for client autonomy and dignity, as does the opportunity to contribute where possible. Many volunteers also agreed that the pay-as-you-fee model was the best option available, since it promotes a non-judgmental approach and reduces financial barriers to accessing food (see below), although this was not a

universal view. From a nutritional perspective, offering variety including fresh foods is an important contributor towards meeting nutritional needs. From an environmental perspective, allowing individuals to make their own food choices is likely to reduce food waste since they will choose foods they know meet their and their families personal likes and dislikes and are appropriate to their health, cultural and religious needs. This is perhaps an additional environmental benefit of the project which could be highlighted – the contribution of choice to client dignity and autonomy, but also to reducing food waste indirectly.

Table X: TRJFP compared with food banks...views of clients. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

	ETNA (n=16)	Green Noble (n=11)	Linden Hall (n=5)	Total (n=32)
Wide range of foods available	9 (56.3)	5 (45.5)	2 (40.0)	16 (50.0)
Availability of fresh foods (e.g. salads, fruit, vegetables)	10 (62.5)	3 (27.3)	3 (60.0)	16 (50.0)
Availability of meals (e.g. frozen meals, soups)	8 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	10 (31.3)
Being able to choose for myself	12 (75.0)	1 (9.1)	3 (60.0)	16 (50.0)
The friendly atmosphere	11 (68.8)	1 (9.1)	3 (60.0)	15 (46.9)
Being able to sit and have a chat	10 (62.5)	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	12 (37.5)
Availability of non-food items (e.g. toiletries, household items)	8 (50.0)	1 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	9 (28.1)
The location is easy to get to	9 (56.3)	1 (9.1)	3 (60.0)	13 (40.6)
Being able to pay a bit when I can	10 (62.5)	1 (9.1)	4 (80.0)	15 (46.9)
Additional services (e.g. financial, recipes)	3 (18.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (20.0)	4 (12.5)

The volunteers

A total of 40 interviews with volunteers were held. Demographics data were completed by 38 of them and are shown below in Table XI. Data from volunteers at all sites are merged to avoid the possibility of identifying individuals from any one site. Note: interviews were also held with organisers and some suppliers. These are not included since individuals would be identifiable, and they were used to understand the background, ethos and development of the project. The only exception to this is where an interviewee was both a volunteer and an organiser and if that were the case, they were classed as a volunteer and their information included below.

Demographics of volunteers - age, gender, ethnicity and disability status

The majority (76.3%) of volunteers were female and white. More than half were aged 60 years and above (55.3%), with almost a third aged 50-59 years. Most did not consider themselves to have a disability.

Table XI: Demographic data for volunteers (age, gender, ethnicity & disability status). Data are expressed as numbers (%).

Gender				
Male		Female		
9 (23.7)		29 (76.3)		
Ethnicity				
White		Not white		
36 (94.7)		2 (5.3)		
Age (years)				
<30	30-39	40-49	50-59	≥60
2 (5.3)	1 (2.6)	2 (5.3)	12 (31.6)	21 (55.3)
Self-perceived disability				
With disability		Without disability		
3 (7.9)		35 (92.1)		

Time contributed to TRJFP & work status of volunteers.

Most volunteers donated between 3 and 6 hours a week to TRJFP (65.8%), and almost half were working in addition to their volunteering (42.1%). This may be unexpected, since the perception often held of volunteers is that they are more likely to be older and retired, but it emphasises the importance of this project for volunteers who managed to juggle work and still donate time regularly to their voluntary work.

Of those also working, almost a third were working up to and including 4 days a week (31.3%), and a quarter were working full-time (25.0%). A sizable minority (39.5%) were volunteering elsewhere in addition to their work at TRJFP. Data are shown in Table XII.

Table XII: Volunteering and working status of volunteers. Data are expressed as numbers (%).

Hours per week on average spent volunteering at TRJFP (n=38)				
1-2		3-6		7-10
11 (28.9)		25 (65.8)		2 (5.3)
Are you working alongside your volunteering? (n=38)				
Yes			No	
16 (42.1)			22 (57.9)	
How many days a week do you spend working, on average? (n=16)				
≤1	≤2	≤3	≤4	Full-time
2 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	3 (18.8)	5 (31.3)	4 (25.0)
Do you volunteer elsewhere in addition to TRJFP? (n=38)				
Yes			No	
15 (39.5)			23 (60.5)	

Reasons for volunteering with TRJFP

For volunteers, major reasons for choosing to work with TRJFP included the **ethos of the organisation, avoidance of food waste and use of surplus food to help others**, in a **worthwhile** project:

[Fred] *..I thought it was great to go and help obviously vulnerable people..[].. – I mean their ethos has always been all about food not going to the bins and so going to people after they’ve been chucked. I believe in that ethos and I think it’s a great project to support’.*

[Ben] *...’It just makes sense for somebody to pick that [supermarket food] up and for it to be used or at least some of it to be used in some way. It makes you aware of the scale of what supermarkets throw away. I wouldn’t call it waste because it’s still got some value but what they get rid of’.*

[Laura] *...’I hate wastage and I hate the idea that food is being thrown away when people are actually needing it, so that’s it and I don’t like inequality in society and I also think people are a bit fastidious about the sell-by dates and whatever...environmentally, I think it’s a brilliant idea and also it’s just so important, especially as things, the way things have been going in the last years to support people when you can...’*

[Astrid] *...’I also feel very passionately about food waste, it was not just a café, it was the fact that they were using food that would otherwise have gone to waste’.*

[Silvie] *..’I mean this is my personal belief, I don’t believe in wasting food when it’s edible and there’s so many people going without food especially now...and it’s a strong word I’m going to use, throwing food away in my opinion is a crime, literally, morally maybe, not criminal in terms of criminality but I think morally, I can’t justify it...’.*

[Mandy]...*'I like the ethos of it, the whole thing. It's ridiculous we throw out all the food we can that is totally edible and people are going hungry. It's mad'*.

[Jack]..*'Well it's doing good isn't it, it's good for the environment and it's good for people who don't have enough, they're finding it difficult to make ends meet...I think it's the idea that it's food that otherwise would be just thrown away by the supermarkets, It's a lot of waste, I don't like the idea of that waste'*.

[Laurel]..*'I'd much rather use the food rather than it to be thrown away, I find that quite appalling really'*.

The fact that it was **local** was also important, both for volunteers in terms of ease but also knowing that their work was **contributing to their local community**:

[Moir]..*'I didn't want to travel too far...I wanted a local one'* [volunteering opportunity]

[Dolores]..*'It's local. It was around the corner....I knew I could make a real difference'*.

[Imogen]..*'I thought 'great', it's very easy for me to pop in, it's nearby, if they put out 'we need someone for tomorrow'. If I'm available, it's fine'...*

[Millie]..*'it was voluntary work and it was just around the corner from me, so it kind of ticked quite a few boxes.....it was nice serving the customers and because being local I often see them if I'm out and about and say hello and remind them about the project'*.

[Chris]..*'I liked the idea that it was local, that it was serving my area, my community. I liked what they were doing. I liked the sound of the initiative, of using food that was going to waste basically'*.

For some, what started with an **environmental focus** evolved into a **community focus**:

[Hannah]..*'I've tried to sort of save food from being wasted basically. That was the initial thing and then I guess it developed into more of a community type of thing'*.

In fact, as far as the value of the project is concerned, the **community benefits** were highlighted by most volunteers, as much as the environmental benefits:

[Georgia]..*'Well, interestingly, since starting to do it the thing I really see as a value to it is actually the social side of it....[.]..I think there are regulars throughout the week but the ones I see will express their absolute gratitude for it, for its existing so they have somewhere to come that they feel they're acknowledged..'*

[Astrid]..*'We were serving the community by the lovely friendly atmosphere and friendly, supportive space that so many different people can come in and dine but actually, as importantly for me was the fact that we were saving food that would otherwise have gone into the bin'*.

[Maeve]... *'Well, it's using up obviously food that would have been thrown away which stops it going to, I'm not sure if it's landfill but I think that's the idea, to stop it going to landfill so you are using that, I don't like waste so that's marvellous...people that come here, it's like a community for them, they know each other and they sit with each other and it's somewhere for them to meet'*.

[Moir]... *'I think it's that mini community, people of all ages, all backgrounds, all wanting to be there, there's never been anyone who's been awkward or rude, it is a very friendly happy place so yes, just that feelgood factor really'*.

[Fred].. *'You can go and have a hot meal and go and have a cuppa and it's nice in the community centre for a couple of hours for people to go and have a meal, sit in the warm and meet other people'*.

This element of 'community' had multiple meanings; in addition to volunteers seeing themselves as **servicing their local community**, volunteers themselves were a **friendly community** serving clients who attended.

[Chris].. *'We've got other helpers that are talking to people in the queue, asking them what they'd like, relaying it to me and asking them where they'd like to sit and it's very sociable...and we will always, I will chat to them and ask them how they are and what, if they're having a good day and 'Can we help?' and even if it's the only chat they get all day, it's a little bit of social interaction'*.

[Hannah]... *'All the volunteers, we all start knowing people. All of us, we have a little badge with our name on and so we are not just anonymous helpers. For me personally, it's good social interaction that you have and it's that knowing them and knowing what they like. If they carry on coming, certain people, it means that it's a nice environment, otherwise they wouldn't stay'*.

[Astrid]... *'It was very rewarding, when you were just talking to somebody and they were sharing their life stories with you or how bad their week has been and you were able to listen, so you'd come away feeling like you'd been useful and helped in a practical way and in an emotional way, I would say'*.

[Imogen]... *'we talk to them as well, we chat to everybody who comes in...it serves a lot of people which is lovely and you see the same people every week, have a chat, 'how are you doing?'...it's lovely, a really lovely atmosphere and the people who are in charge are lovely'*.

[Laura]... *'I think some people come a lot for the company. A lot of them know each other, so on the whole, there's a really good atmosphere there.*

In addition, the volunteers themselves formed a supportive group and this **friendship** was described as an important benefit of volunteering highlighted by several:

[Chris].. *'I think importantly, we're a nice group of people, we're a pretty steady group so you know everybody and we seem to work well together, yeah'*.

[Silvie].. *'They're a really nice bunch, I really enjoy going, it's just a good laugh as well, we do good work but it's also very pleasant...People are there because they want to be there'*.

[Bella].. *'I think the fact that people need some sort of interaction, they need some social interaction, not just the food or hot food or collecting food throughout the days when there is no foodbank but I think they needed to talk to people. There was a lot of people there with various talents, one person write poetry and the other one sang and played music, they need people to talk to'*.

[Dolores]... *'I gain a strong sense of community that I belong to a vibrant community of volunteers, and I've made friendships through it, and I think that I'm a person who needs to be part of something and therefore it meets that need. It gives me a great sense of community and the sense of belonging'*.

[Millie]... *'The group of people we work with are brilliant and I think that's one of the things that has meant that I've stayed'*.

[Moiria]... *'Making friends with people I wouldn't otherwise have met, I've met one really good friend and then a couple of others. It's just the whole team spirit and meeting new people, it's a really nice group..[..].but we have a good laugh and it's good fun'*.

Benefits to volunteers

Being involved in work that is both **valued by others** and seen as **personally important** mattered to volunteers.

[Millie]... *'.. You feel as if you're giving something back and it's nice to be valued as well'*.

[Astrid].. *'Because it's nice to feel that you've been useful and helpful and made a difference to somebody's day and I think with The Real Junk Food Project, that's what I really feel that it was, the project was making a difference to people's lives'*.

[Laura].... *'People come for different reasons but I think that fact that it is a good atmosphere there and I usually, even if I feel tired at the end of a shift, I usually feel quite high'*.

[Fred]... *'I just feel like I'm putting a little bit back. I've got some, little bit of time on my hands and I can do a little bit to help others'*.

[Chris]... *'You do get a satisfaction from working in a team, from producing something that actually is appreciated and you get a lovely response from the clients, so yes, I d get a satisfaction from it otherwise I wouldn't be there'*.

They also valued **flexibility**, both in relation to the hours they could work but also the flexible mindset of other volunteers, which meant that people pitched in to help wherever help was needed:

[Mandy]...*'.. They're absolutely lovely. Someone comes in and just washes up, or someone washes the floors, everybody just works well together, it's fab, a fab day...I don't mind what I do, I'm just glad to be part of it'*.

[Laura]...*'I think we work very much as a team. It's sort of people slot in as and when...yeah. Basically, I'm on my feet, so I'll go and do something [laughs] if there is something that I see needs doing, yeah'*.

[Conor]...*'That was another attraction of the Real Junk food Project in that it wasn't every day, it was one or two days a week which is helpful to fit things in'*.

[Pauline]...*'If it was a commitment where I had to do it, or it was a commitment to do it all the time or don't do it at all, I wouldn't do it at all'*.

[Chris]...*'I just wanted a day's work and flexibility...it's pretty much you do what suits you and the management will fit those hours to a job that works'*.

[Frank]...*'Certainly if you want variety, that's available. Um, they sort of, work on a model of, um, fitting around whatever you're willing to give, really, rather than putting people in rigid roles or having everything tied down'*.

The **structure** that voluntary work offers was also a benefit:

[Millie]...*'I think if you're somebody that actually likes to have a structure for your day or your week, then that's what voluntary work can offer'*.

[Frank]...*'I had time to spare and I wanted to do something productive with it. So it's, kind of, filled that gap really nicely. I feel like it's a really worthwhile way to spend some time'*.

Perceived value of the project

The mixed clientele that use TRJFP was seen as valuable, that people who would not normally mix together had an opportunity to mix in a safe and welcoming space:

[Millie]...*'I think the fact that people from all walks of life are able to access it and there's a sense of, also I think it's one of those projects where you get a lot of word of mouth in terms of people being able to access it'*.

[Maeve]...*'You do get businesspeople occasionally coming there for lunch and they give, so it's not just for people that can't afford it because everyone gets a nice meal and people that work in the building as well, they come down for their lunch so you get all sorts really'*.

This extended to the volunteers themselves, some of whom commented that they **met people they would not normally have met**, and taking part in the project was seen as a **privilege**, broadening **horizons** and giving **insight**, even changing volunteers' **own behaviours**:

[Laura]...*'it's a big privilege, actually, just to be able to give things to people. I think that makes you feel good and most people are....on the whole people are appreciative and it's really nice to, it's nice when you recognise so many faces*

and I think it's just nice to think that you're doing something positive with people really'.

[Ben].. *'It's a sense of making a contribution, of being involved in something that's quite a big project nationally that's obviously very well thought out and planned. It's quite a privilege to be part of something like that. It just gives you a feeling that in some small way you're helping to make the world a better place'*.

[Georgia]... *'In day-to-day life generally human beings, we all meet people who are kind of like us so to spend time with people who I wouldn't normally... I mean not all our clients are in this category, but spending time with people who I wouldn't normally other than if I pass them in the street wrapped in a blanket, but probably wouldn't interact in a way, whereas in this circumstance I can properly interact and actually hear stories about how and why they ended up in situations of need and destitution... I gain a huge amount of self-worth from doing it. I feel good about doing it'*.

[Conor]... *'I gain different insights into the community around me. I gain different skills and learn different skills. I meet people that I wouldn't otherwise meet'*.

Both the **mixed clientele** and the **environmental ethos** were also identified as important in helping to reduce **stigma**:

[Conor]... *'Rather than it being seen purely as a soup kitchen to dole out food to people who can't otherwise manage, so it's a good mix of people in different walks of life or different aspects of life, so it's probably a good thing that the mix is happening, rather than people being categorised or stigmatised by going to such a place'*.

[Millie].. *'I think in a way the project's kind of I guess opened my eyes to that and made me become much more aware about food and waste and landfill, to the point where it's changed my shopping habits'*.

The **openness** of TRJFP was also viewed positively, compared with other forms of food provision where proof of need may be needed:

[Conor]... *'No questions asked, no forms to fill in or hoops to jump through to get it... you don't have to wear special clothes or go to a special government venue or something like that'*.

[Millie].. *'Because it's not a food bank and it's access for all, I think it's one of the few. I see lots of other food projects and I think with food banks you have to be referred and it's very different. I think because we see people all across the board in terms of class and ethnicity etc, I think that's a value, that it's open to all'*.

[Hannah]... *'There are other food banks that you have to register, you have to show that you are on Income support and everything else. Here no, we accept everyone and that is the beauty of it'*.

The **non-judgmental** atmosphere and **acceptance** of people, regardless of their circumstances, was also highlighted by many volunteers:

[Astrid]... 'You get a real mix of people, a real mixture of ages, race, abilities and I like that because it's life and I like the fact that we are encouraged which also comes naturally to me, to treat everyone the same and chat to them and make it a safe place for them to be to chat and be warm and for some, to be fed an essential meal or take food home that was going to make a real difference to their domestic situation'.

[Bella]... 'I don't think it's just about handing out food but I think you've got to treat people equally. I thin it was fairly fair. There were no preconceptions of anybody generally, I would say, from the volunteers'.

[Laura].. 'It should be for everyone, it should be a community café'.

[Moir].. 'We don't know what their background is at all so obviously, there are some in need of financial, there's a financial reason, for others it's because of the environment or waste, maybe they're not eligible for a foodbank but particularly at the moment, things are much harder'.

[Imogen]... 'I think that's at the forefront of their minds, that it is inclusive to everyone in the community'.

[Mandy]... 'It's amazing, you see all sorts of people talking and sometimes one of the guests will, you go over to give them something or take them their cup of tea and they will start talking to you. You sit down, you engage with them, it's really good. I've seen some extraordinary mixes sometimes'.

In addition, the **organisation of the venues and care taken to ensure the preparedness of volunteers (via training) and the safe management of the spaces** to the benefit of both clients and volunteers was very much appreciated.

[Astrid].. 'I never felt threatened because I knew there were people keeping an eye out and people understood the rules. I think there was even once an incident but it was so discreetly managed that I didn't know anything about it until the end of the shift, which again is all part of the ethos, that everyone is welcome. There was enough supervision and structure and awareness, the leaders understood people that were either vulnerable or potentially a risk to the setup and it was managed'.

[Frank]... 'The quality of training they put into volunteers and the regularity of training and the way they make sure it's a safe space where volunteers as much as anyone feel safe, and there's a clear structure if something goes wrong again...I value that'.

The pay-as-you feel (PAYF) model: volunteer views.

Generally, the volunteers were **positive** about the PAYF model. Many recognised that **anything else would be difficult** to operate given the mixed clientele of the project, and their different reasons for using TRJFP. The contribution of the PAYF model to **reducing stigma** was also recognised:

[Laura]... 'I always thank people if I see them putting in money but I don't know...[.]. I'm not clear in my head how many people pay – I know that some people

just put in a few bob and that's fine. I assume that's what they can afford and I wouldn't like anyone feeling that they couldn't take anything because they didn't have the money'.

[Bella].. 'I don't think there's another model really that you could use, I don't think without people feeling slightly intimidated or put off, especially that they're not put off. It's a bit of a catch all, it's like benefits and things, you have to throw the net wide really, don't you'.

[Dolores]... 'If we get people who come in from an environmental point of view and they appreciate what we're doing but they might only visit us now and again, they feel quite comfortable and they are very generous with how much money they put in'.

[Imogen]... 'I think it's brilliant, and people are quite generous because it's not just people that don't have a lot of money that come, anyone can come, it's open to anybody and you can give whatever you want'.

[Astrid]... 'I think it's an important concept for social inclusion so it doesn't say it's free food for those that can't afford to pay for it and I think that helps with the social inclusion, and makes people feel maybe less embarrassed about going or less of a stigma maybe..... Then you sometimes get some people rocking up in their Range Rover and paying anything, it was that sort of thing that I used to find a little bit frustrating. But I think how they thought of it was that they were doing their bit because they were saving food from being wasted. So that is equally valuable, it wasn't my place to judge that because someone might have a Range Rover but they might not have any money left for that and that was very clear, our training was that we wouldn't judge people'.

[Pauline]... 'To me it seems like a very sensible way of doing things because I think the area in which [TRJFP] operates, there's a real breadth of socioeconomic groups and you're going to have quite a lot of I guess well-off middle class people who are going to happily come along and pay some money to contribute to the costs whilst buying products that would otherwise have been wasted, so they're doing it for green motivations. But at the same time you've got people who are just in need, particularly with the cost of living crisis, so I think it's that flexibility that it provides so that those who can afford to pay do and those who can't don't have to'.

[Silvie].. 'Generally people appreciate what's provided and they will, whatever they can put in the tin, they can also make a payment by card using the machine'.

[Fred]... 'They don't want to put people off by putting a price on things but presumably, some people will love it and they might give a donation or they'll put some pennies or whatever towards things, so it all helps'.

[Maeve].. 'I think as long as it works and we can afford to do that, as long as the food keeps coming and it's free from the shop and all that, it's fine and I think

that's really, really nice, that people who can't afford anything don't have to pay. I think it's a really good model'.

[Chris]... 'I don't think there's a better way around it, you don't want to be charging on the door because this is a charity but you will get some people that will come in and donate a nice amount. But definitely not everyone will donate. I think it's got to be discreetly done on a voluntary basis'.

[Frank]... 'You can't have it both ways really. You can't judge who looks like they might be able to pay and remind them and then not remind someone else'.

However, others **struggled** with the PAYF model. They recognised it was part of the organisational ethos but still found implementing it difficult, finding it **hard to avoid judgment about who could (and should) pay**, and who could afford to do so:

[Moiria].. 'I don't know, I have reservations about the pay as you feel. I would say the guy with the rucksack [recently evicted from flat and homeless] is obviously on hard times whereas there's one guy that comes in, his wife is still working and he takes loads but probably puts in two 10p coins, for example. So yes, I guess you'll always have people with differing views or people don't put any in at all...you'll always get people who take advantage and other people that don't, other people will say 'I don't want to take too much because I'm not sure I'll use it and I don't want it to go to waste'.

[Georgia]... 'I kind of feel sometimes that there are definitely people who could do a bit more on the money side of things who almost take pleasure in getting away with it. I just find that really disappointing. In their heads it's missing the element of it being a charitable endeavour'.

This struggle was well exemplified by Mandy who said on the one hand 'we all give our time free, there's no costs really apart from venue hire, and it's all done on the cheap', but also said 'I'm afraid I do, if I'm going to be slightly judgmental here, you do find yourself thinking 'Well, he's opened his wallet and I can see notes in there, £10 and £20 notes, and he scrabbles around for some change and tries to hide his hand when he puts it in the box'. In my head I am probably being a bit judgmental, but I've learnt that you always get that from people. Some people always take it for free and some people don't put anything in at all when they could, but do you know, that's their problem not mine'.

In addition, some queried whether the food would be **more valued** if a cost was attached, and whether the current PAYF model created **confusion** among clients about how much to donate:

[Millie]... 'I think that people feel that it's good to make a donation, it gives them a sense of worth but I'm not sure we've actually got it right but I haven't got an answer as to how to get it right....'Well, I don't know how much to put in'. It then becomes, you can't tell them how much to put in and it becomes a bit clumsy sometimes and we don't want that'.

Environmental benefits

The environmental aspects of the project were a major reason for many volunteers to become involved in the project (see above). In addition to using surplus food, **how TRJFP approached** this was seen as important – using cargo bikes and establishing multiple ways of using surplus including excess bread going to the ponies rather than being wasted.

[Bella]... *'There are people that use electric cars and they use a bike to deliver and collect the things, so they try to be sustainable, and that's a very important part of it in my book. Keep it sustainable, don't save food and then spend it on cars'.*

[Hannah]... *'It's the fact that the food that's being collected and being cooked will be thrown away, so although the production of the companies, the food companies will be the same, the food doesn't get wasted and that it will help the environment in that way. We try not to waste anything at all and recycle as well all the packaging and everything else, so we have two different bins to recycle. We have the food bins, some people if they don't like the food or whatever. Also, when they cook, the peeling of vegetables, it's all being recycled as well, so it's like a chain. You start with from the supermarket, they will throw the food away, up to the point it's being eaten by us and the clients'.*

[Mandy]... *'We have very little wasted. The credit for this goes to the management and the team here at that level because they find that like horses can eat bread because it's wheat, and so somebody comes and takes bread for the horses if there's bread left over'.*

The project also highlighted to supermarkets and the wider community the extent of food being wasted:

[Astrid]... *'I think it highlights to the supermarkets how much they're having to give away and I think it also highlights not only to the volunteers but also to the guests that actually this food would be wasted if it wasn't used and look at it, it's fine and you can use it'.*

[Ben]... *'I guess there's a network of supermarkets who they're dealing with who are now thinking more about food waste...it all raises awareness at a local and national level that it would be a good thing for the supermarket to actually reduce the amount of waste that they produce'.*

Nonetheless, there were some interesting **tensions** identified between taking food waste from supermarkets and the true benefit of this for the environment. The difficulties of **managing an uncertain food flow** and reliance on **individual supermarket staff** was also raised.

[Pauline]... *'Sometimes there's a long drive to somewhere where there's nothing to collect, or very little, and on those occasions the net eco benefit is questionable'.*

[Jack]...*'People go to collect the food and there isn't any there because new staff are on and they've got rid of the wrong bin or something. I normally go in and I say 'what, not even a banana?'. Then they usually give you something. Actually getting the message to the local network of managers and supervisors at the supermarket, I don't know enough about how that works. Depending on what manager or whoever you get in the supermarket, sometimes they're a bit half-hearted about it. Sometimes they're really cheerful and they go looking for extra things, so that's a question for internal workings of the supermarket I guess'*

[Ben]...*'There's still the environmental footprint of the lorries having driven the stuff to the supermarket and then if it's sent to us I guess we're spending time in cars to pick it up. I guess there is some saving because food is a precious resource and it takes a lot of environmental resources to produce it so I guess as we're saving some then that's a little bit. I don't know how much real environmental impact there is'*

For some, the link with the supermarkets was uncomfortable since they wondered if their involvement was effectively **greenwashing** for the supermarkets. It also was uncomfortable since there was a suspicion that the project might **impede change** at the supermarket level. Finally, there was a disparity between some of the food being supplied by supermarkets and the wish of the volunteers to provide **healthy food** to recipients:

[Christopher]...*'Let's say they donated 100 doughnuts, is it really good food to be giving out?'*

[Jack]...*'Perhaps the supermarkets have got more work to do there but then why would they want to, it's not in their profit is it?'*

[Christopher]...*'You are waiting for them to offload what they don't want but it should really be their responsibility to redistribute that, not a bunch of volunteers who are giving up their time for free....thinking about systems change, the supermarket should be dealing with their own waste and developing systems themselves that redistribute food to appropriate end users and it does feel a little, that's what I worry about sometimes, am I basically doing their dirty work for them for free?'*

What could be improved?

Overall, volunteers were overwhelmingly **positive** about the project and how it is **managed**, as well as the **ethos** which comes from the top. Many were also highly complimentary of the work that the **chefs** do, recognising their ingenuity and creativity in producing nutritious, tasty and appealing food at speed when they may have very limited food to work with and do not know until almost the last minute what will be available. Some were also specifically complimentary of the **organisation** of sessions at ETNA, where specific work was done to ensure a safe and management environment for all which was nonetheless supportive of clients, who could be signposted to additional support where needed by a member who knew many of them.

Nonetheless, a number of suggestions for improvement were made. These included giving volunteers the opportunity to give their **thoughts and feedback** on how things were running, and improving the communications from the bottom up as well as the top down:

‘A meeting to have our views, we’re not asked about ‘do you think we should do this?’, just once a term or once a season feedback session. We are all very capable...input in terms of a volunteer forum would be a nice thing to have’.

Having **regular updates** would also be helpful including on the financial situation (which might additionally help volunteers struggling with PAYF to understand that the work is not contingent on donations from clients:

‘Volunteers are all intelligent people with good understanding, and at least there should be a quarterly update’.

In addition, ensuring that volunteers are clear about how much food is saved, how many meals are produced at each site, how many hours of volunteer time are going into TRJFP and so on is important in order to **highlight the benefits** of the project, not just to volunteers but to those visiting:

‘The amount of tonnes of food that we’ve saved is on the front page online but it’s not passed on to volunteers, the goals that they’re achieving’.

Those collecting food from supermarkets are somewhat removed from what actually happened in sessions, and it would be worth considering how they can be included more so they know the end product of what they are contributing to. For them it was difficult to comment on aspects like social inclusion since they do not see the sessions in action. Bi-directional communication, e.g. through a regular volunteers forum, could help alleviate things plus the concerns that some expressed about the nutritional value of the food that supermarkets were donating, concerns which were raised not only by volunteers collecting the food but those involved in managing the food hubs.

Knowing the senior leadership and being known by them was raised by some volunteers, who felt there was sometimes a distance between themselves and the organisers. All of the points raised above would be alleviated by mechanisms to meet with volunteers and both give and invite feedback and views, not necessarily often but regularly.

In addition, having some way of **identifying** those picking up food from the supermarkets with the project might raise awareness of the project (not individually identifying volunteers, not personal ID), but possibly something like a tabard or a badge:

“Some way of identifying people who go and pick up the products. It might be more of a visible, recognisable thing when you walk into the supermarket, then they might be ‘Oh, here’s the Junk Food people’”.

Final words

The project clearly meant a great deal to the volunteers, who were passionately committed to it. Many of their words were extremely moving. The most moving have been chosen to finish this report, to highlight some of what it means to them. In addition, some thought-provoking comments have been chosen to finish.

[Georgia].. *'Well it's the best thing I do in my week. It's the highlight of my week because I don't do anything else that's worthwhile'.*

[Imogen].. *'Is it shameful? Yes, is it shameful that kids go to school hungry? Absolutely and families are struggling to put food on the table, just food, let alone healthy food because I can get a Coca Cola and a bag of doughnuts for £1.50, it's just disgusting but I can't buy a bag of fruit for £1.50. I think TRJFP, it's good but it's sad at the same time'.*

[Astrid].. *'It's blending the needs of the community with the needs of the planet. It's dealing with the food waste as well as serving the community. I think that is the unique thing about it. I think it's a great project'.*

[Silvie].. *'I think it's highly valued by people who eat the food, highly valued by people who volunteer because they know what the purpose and aim are and how much food has been saved'.*

[Georgia] ... *'I spend a few hours on my volunteer day just smiling at people'.*

[Christopher]... *'I guess I don't want it to have to rely on food that supermarkets give away for free, that doesn't feel like it's the cornerstone of the good. The cornerstone is that you're bringing people together to feed them good food in an affordable way and if the input needs to be subsidised or if the government needs to enable there to be affordable healthy, food at a system level then I think that's a better solution than going and asking the supermarket what they didn't sell that day and then sadly sometimes giving people mostly quite unhealthy food'.*

As for the clients, they too were hugely supportive of the work of TRJFP, the organisation and the volunteers:

[Frank, ETNA client]... *'...[...] gives me a big hello when I come in, and a greeting and that's...you know, supporting the staff to be able to have agency to do stuff like that is what's good. But yeah. A good example of a social enterprise project working really well. I'm a big supporter of the Junk Food Project, so I think it works well. I hope that it has a sustainable base to carry on.'*

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