

# A “Safe” and “Just” Regional Food System

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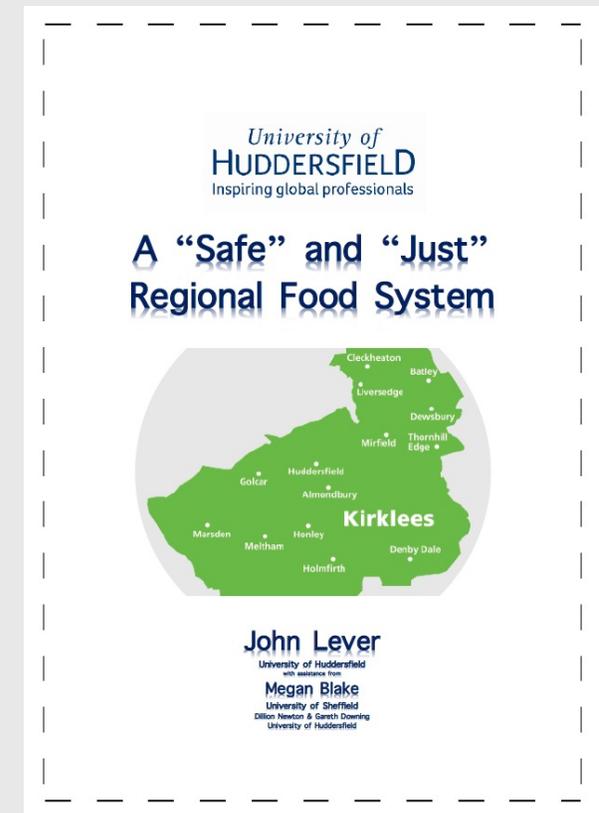
**FEEDING KIRKLEES: WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND A  
SUSTAINABLE LOCAL APPROACH TO FOOD INSECURITY**



This talk draws on University of Huddersfield funded research conducted between April and December 2020, which involved over 30 interviews with regional food system and local/ national policy actors.

The research set out to understand;

1. *the pressure points that emerged in food supply and demand across the Kirklees region during the Covid-19 crisis;*
2. *the solutions that emerged in response to these challenges; and*
3. *the innovations required to enhance food system sustainability and food security for future generations.*



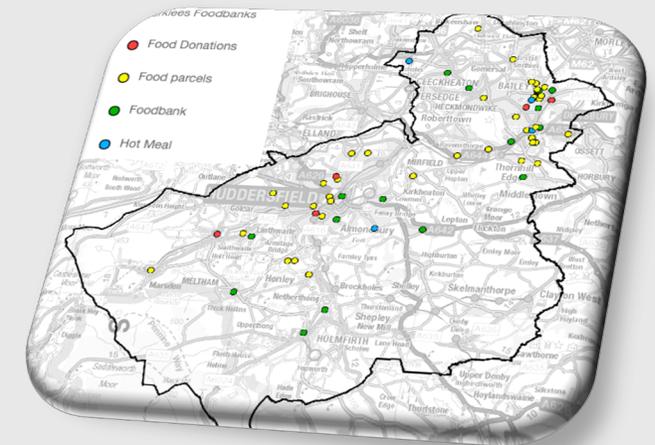
There were two largely separate and to some extent invisible responses to the problems that emerged when the pandemic struck.



The  
*'Regional Kirklees  
Food System'*  
rapidly self-  
organized!



Kirklees Council quickly put in place an *'emergency system of food governance.'*



Farm shops quickly began to provide access to a wide range of fresh local and organic produce from family run farms across the region. Some started delivery services across a wider geographical area, while others started delivery services for the elderly, vulnerable and those advised too self-isolate.

*Discussing the problems supermarkets were having with supply, a farm shop owner explained what happened...*

*'Obviously we didn't have that problem at all, we could adapt straight away with being so much smaller, as did many butchers and other food retailers.'*

As the crisis unfolded, farm shops, independent retailers, home delivery services, amongst others, experienced a rapid and unprecedented surge in demand.



*'What has absolutely gone through the roof has been things like farm shops, local shops, home deliveries, recipe boxes, online selling. All that kind of stuff has absolutely gone bonkers. So we've actually been running absolutely flat out trying to keep up with the demand.'*

*Independent retailers were also heavily involved in delivering and coordinating food supplies, both from regional growers/ farmers, regional wholesalers, and from local allotment owners and growers.*

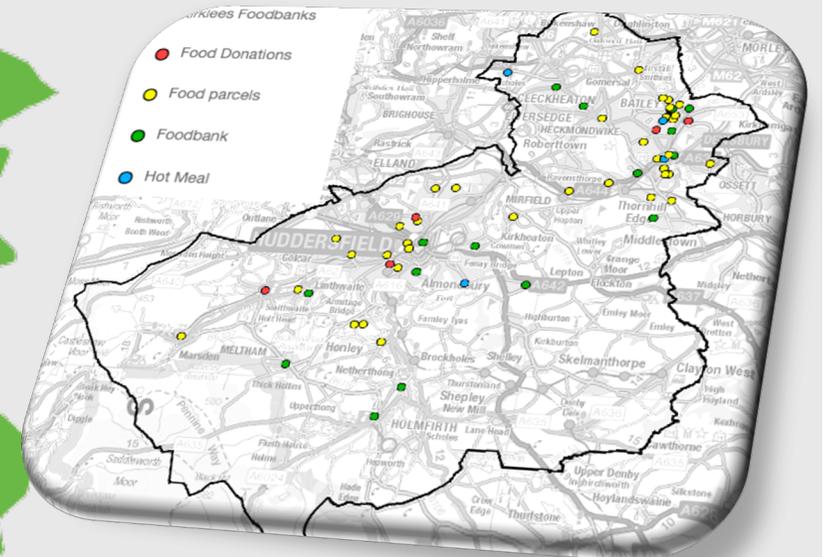
*'A lot of independent high street food retailers have adapted a lot quicker and... been able to get food to a lot of people. I'm not saying they'd be able to compete with supermarkets, but they've definitely adapted faster.'*

By this time, lots of new mutual aid groups were self-organizing to coordinate food supplies and deliveries from fire stations and via independent retailers, for example, and the council offered support!

But as the problems of sourcing food from supermarkets continued, food banks and emergency food providers in the region started to approach independent retailers. One independent retailer in South Kirklees responded by donating supplies of fresh fruit and packaged foods free of charge.

***'We want to make sure that the smaller organisations who've set up are linking in with local welfare provision and the support available locally.'***

As problems mounted, the council began to innovate, mapping out support services across the region, opening old food infrastructure (markets and schools) in towns such as Batley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield as food coordination and distribution points. And public health workers were parachuted into these spaces to help!



Another independent retailer in South Kirklees was involved in new mutual aid networks, working closely with local growers, food banks and local resilience groups to facilitate the coordination and delivery of meals and food parcels to vulnerable households. In North Kirklees, Mosques were also involved!

## Some brief conclusions...

I'm sure you can see the potential to develop and join up these two separate place-based responses to the pandemic.

Taken together, our research illustrates how the local authority can lay the foundations for a more resilient and sustainable regional food system by setting common goals to facilitate food system collaboration and transformation.

Our research also highlights many other opportunities to build on and extend the ways of working that emerged in 2020, thus helping to prepare for other emerging crises and enhancing regional food security for future generations.



Thank you!

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