

The impact of Covid-19 on food systems and practices in the East of England

Measures to control the spread of Covid-19 are impacting upon food systems, household food practices, and organisations supporting vulnerable people. Local councils are putting together regional multi-sector working groups to support those at risk and make sure they have enough food.

This project aims to understand how Covid-19 is affecting local food systems, household food practices across the life course, and local efforts to mitigate dietary health inequalities in the East of England.

In order to address this aim, we started conducting in-depth telephone and video call interviews in May 2020 and talked to:

- i. Up to 80 East of England residents. We focused on: those with infants and young children; those aged 70 years+; those on a low income; families eligible for free school meals; households including people self-isolating due to a health condition; and households including key workers
- ii. Up to 60 professionals or volunteers based in the East of England, working with the above groups by providing support around dietary health

In June 2020 we presented preliminary findings at the ENUF conference ([2nd UK Research Conference on Food and Poverty: Evidence for change](#)). In September 2020 we published a report of our [preliminary findings](#). These findings suggest that Covid-19 and the mitigation measures put in place from March 2020 (e.g. 'lockdown' and social distancing) are serving to amplify existing dietary health inequalities. Older people living alone and/or on low incomes have had to contend with difficulties in accessing food and a lack of opportunities to eat socially. Foodbanks have seen a rapid increase in need for their services and have had to change their operating practices. Despite ongoing difficulties, local groups across the region have devised a range of schemes to support and feed vulnerable people.

This made local news and appeared on BBC Look East on Thursday the 8th of October featuring a package from one of our partners, [Hertfordshire Independent Living Service](#) and an interview with ARC EoE, Prevention and Early Detection Theme Lead, [Professor Wendy Wills](#).

Data collection continues into 2021.

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