

SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2023

This form is for completing an SFP Bronze or Silver Award application. **If you are considering applying for a Gold Award, please contact the SFP team at sfpawards@soilassociation.org to discuss the process.**



Before starting your application, please fully read this form as well as the following documents:

- SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants: [SFP Awards - Guidance for applicants.docx](#)
- SFP Awards: Activity and Impact: [SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx](#)

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= compulsory):

Name of your partnership*:
Bwyd RhCT/RCT Food
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Sam Evans 07385 401 835 Sam.Evans@rctcbc.gov.uk
For any communication after 08/09/23 please contact Dean Emson

07854 334 683

Dean.Emson@rctcbc.gov.uk

Geographic region which this award will represent*:

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Award you are applying for*:

Bronze

Please provide us with background information about your place*: Advisory word limit: 400 words

This is to help the panel understand the context in which you are working. *You may include (but not limited to): Population and demographic information, location/geography & economic and social challenges.*

ANSWER:

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) is a Local Authority in South East Wales that is home to 237,700 people.










The people of RCT live in some of the poorest parts of the UK. They spend more time experiencing poor health and live up to 20 years less than people living in better-off areas. COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis are worsening this situation. Children who are born into poorer areas are more likely to be born early and small, do less well at school, and have illnesses throughout their lives.

RCT has some of the most deprived areas in Wales. 27% of RCT citizens live in the most deprived quintile in Wales & 30.6% were economically inactive (7th highest in UK). RCT has the third highest percentage of over-16 population with no qualifications. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities & the cost-of-living crisis impact in RCT is dramatic, due to higher-than-average proportion of people in receipt of means-tested benefits & below average earnings. RCT is worse than the Wales average for overall life expectancy, children living in poverty, rates of physical activity & proportion of overweight/obese adults.

The county borough is situated in the South Wales Valleys, characterised by its stunning natural landscapes, including the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys. RCT is surrounded by the counties of Merthyr Tydfil to the north, Powys to the north-east, Caerphilly to the east, and Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot to the west. It also shares borders with Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, to the southeast as well as the Vale of Glamorgan.

One of the significant economic challenges in RCT is the transition from a heavily coal-dependent economy to a more diversified one. Historically, the region played a vital role in the coal mining industry, but the decline of this sector has led to high levels of unemployment and economic deprivation. Efforts have been made to attract new industries and investments, focusing on sectors such as manufacturing, services, and tourism.

In terms of demographics, the area has a rich cultural heritage and a strong sense of community. However, like many other areas in the UK, RCT faces social challenges such as poverty, health inequalities, and educational attainment gaps. (Fig 1)

Introduction Page 3 for an introduction to this report			
 <p>Population</p>	<p>There are 237,651 people living in RCT June 2023</p> <p>See pages 4-10 for more information on population by age and gender, ethnicity, country of birth, language, migration, household composition and religion</p>	 <p>Education & skills</p>	<p>24% of people have no qualifications in RCT June 2023 compared with 20% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 40-41 for more information on qualifications, pupil attainment and absences</p>
 <p>Vulnerable groups</p>	<p>23% of children aged 0-19 are in relative low-income families in RCT June 2023 compared with 21% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 11-24 for more information on children in poverty, people out of work, people in deprived areas, disability, pensioners and other vulnerable groups</p>	 <p>Economy</p>	<p>33% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in RCT June 2023 compared with 32% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 42-49 for more information on people's jobs, job opportunities, income and local businesses</p>
 <p>Housing</p>	<p>1% of households lack central heating in RCT June 2023 compared with 1% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 25-33 for more information on housing characteristics: dwelling types, housing tenure, affordability, overcrowding, age of dwelling and communal establishments</p>	 <p>Access & transport</p>	<p>22% of households have no car in RCT June 2023 compared with 19% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 50-52 for more information on transport, distances services and digital services</p>
 <p>Crime and Safety</p>	<p>The overall crime rate is lower than the average across Wales</p> <p>See pages 34-35 for more information on recorded crime and crime rates</p>	 <p>Communities & environment</p>	<p>38% of people live in a flood risk area in RCT June 2023 compared with 41% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 53-54 for more information on physical environment, air quality and neighbourhood classifications</p>
 <p>Health & wellbeing</p>	<p>24% of people have a limiting long-term illness in RCT June 2023 compared with 22% across Wales</p> <p>See pages 36-39 for more information on limited long-term illness, life expectancy and mortality, and general health</p>	<p>Appendix A</p>	<p>Page 57 for information on the geographies used in this report and 55 for acknowledgements</p>

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Figure 1 – Summary of Community Insight Report for Rhondda Cynon Taf June 2023.

Geographically, RCT is characterised by its picturesque valleys, hills, and rivers, offering opportunities for outdoor activities, such as hiking, cycling, and fishing. The natural beauty of the area also contributes to its potential as a tourist destination, attracting visitors to explore its stunning landscapes and historical attractions.

In summary, Rhondda Cynon Taf is a county borough in South Wales, known for its beautiful valleys, a diverse population, and a history deeply rooted in coal mining. It faces economic challenges related to the decline of the coal industry and works towards diversifying its economy. The area also experiences social issues such as poverty and health inequalities, which require targeted interventions. Nonetheless, RCT's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community spirit provide a foundation for growth and development in the region.

How have you considered equity, diversity and inclusion in the structure and work of your partnership *? Advisory word limit: 300 words

ANSWER:

Full and constant consideration is given in the Rhondda Cynon Taf partnership which places a strong emphasis on equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and valued. Inclusion is at the heart of our approach, as we strive to create an environment where individuals from all backgrounds feel welcome, respected, and empowered to participate.

We actively seek input and collaboration from diverse stakeholders, for example Autism Life Centres, Valleys Ethnic Minority Society and multiple 50+ forums which support individuals from a range of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. By engaging with community organisations and representatives from various sectors, we ensure that our partnership reflects proportionately the diversity of the community and considers a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

Inclusive practices are embedded in our partnership structure and activities. We organise meetings, events in venues that are fully accessible including for wheelchair users. Where particular scrutiny is applied as one of the key partnership members is a wheelchair user. We provide information and resources bilingually in compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. For publications, for example, The Vintage Kitchen Cookbook we ensure that language used is plain and simple with lots of visual aids.

Moreover, members actively address barriers that may hinder inclusion in the food system. We implement initiatives such as community gardens, which provide opportunities for individuals from historically marginalized communities to grow their own food, fostering a sense of ownership, empowerment, and community connection.

In collaboration with community organisations, we tackle food insecurity and promote access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food options for all residents. We recognise that inclusion goes beyond physical access and strive to address systemic barriers, ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities to participate and benefit from sustainable food practices.

In summary, our partnership in Rhondda Cynon Taf prioritises inclusion by striving to actively engage diverse stakeholders, creating accessible platforms, addressing barriers, and promoting equitable opportunities in the food system. We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone's voice is heard and respected, working towards a sustainable and inclusive food system that benefits all members of our community. Examples of this include Cynon Valley Organic Adventures who work alongside volunteers and adults with disabilities and Valleys Ethnic Minority Society who proactively support individuals from specific under represented groups. Both of these organisations have received Community Development Team grant funding. All applicants to the food support funding streams need to demonstrate how they ensure that their activities are fully accessible and inclusive in the application process.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

Please read SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants: [SFP Awards - Guidance for applicants.docx](#) before completing this section.

Please describe the activity and impact of local food work delivered in your place within the last three years against the relevant key issues (1-6) and action areas (A and B) below.

We advise that you keep answers to within 600 words for each action area (i.e. for each A and B under the key issues). Whilst you won't be penalised for going over this limit, this will help the panel focus on your main achievements. For sections C, 250 words is the mandatory limit.

For Bronze and Silver awards, there are mandatory actions for some key issues. These are laid out in *SFP Awards - Activity and Impact*: [SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx](#). This document also provides a broad benchmark for each award, rationale for SFP's inclusion of each key issue, and example actions for each action area.

Key Issue 1: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action

Action area A: Establish a broad, representative, and dynamic local food partnership

Following a Community Growing Solutions Network event held by Interlink in July 2020, a decision was made to apply to Sustainable Food Places (SFP) to begin a collaborative approach to Good Food Movement in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

“It is vitally important that we work collaboratively with relevant partners to develop a more strategic approach to food poverty including the establishment of a Food Prosperity Network and a Food Response Pathway that have been successful in some other areas and which provides a more sustainable way ahead.”

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Senior Leadership: Food Poverty Report, 5th November 2020 (Appendix 1)

In December 2020, the Council applied to SFP for a Development Grant to galvanise developments to formulate a strategic approach to the initiation of an **RCT Food Network**. In January 2021, the Council was chosen as one of just four successful applicants across Wales.

Since becoming a member of SFP RCT Food's focus has been on building membership which currently includes 111 individuals across 98 organisations (see below infographic)

98 ORGANISATIONS



Community Food
Support Projects

64

Community
Growing Projects

26

Private Land
Stewards

2

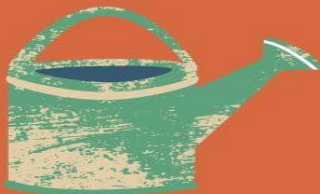
Zero Waste
Shops

3

Interlink RCT



Cwm Taf Morgannwg
University Health
Board



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**



The partnership has 2 active subgroups which continue to meet quarterly to facilitate connections and collaborations between a broad range of food actors.

These are the **Community Growers Subgroup** and the **Food Pantry Subgroup**.

The **RCT Steering Group** Terms of Reference (Appendix 2) meets bimonthly, representing people with experience of health, environmental sustainability, communications, food poverty, community action, and policy. The Steering Group includes:

- 7 core members representing Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC (RCTCBC), Interlink RCT, Bryncynon Strategy, FareShare Cymru, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Public Health Team, Grow Rhondda and Welcome to Our Woods (Figure 3)

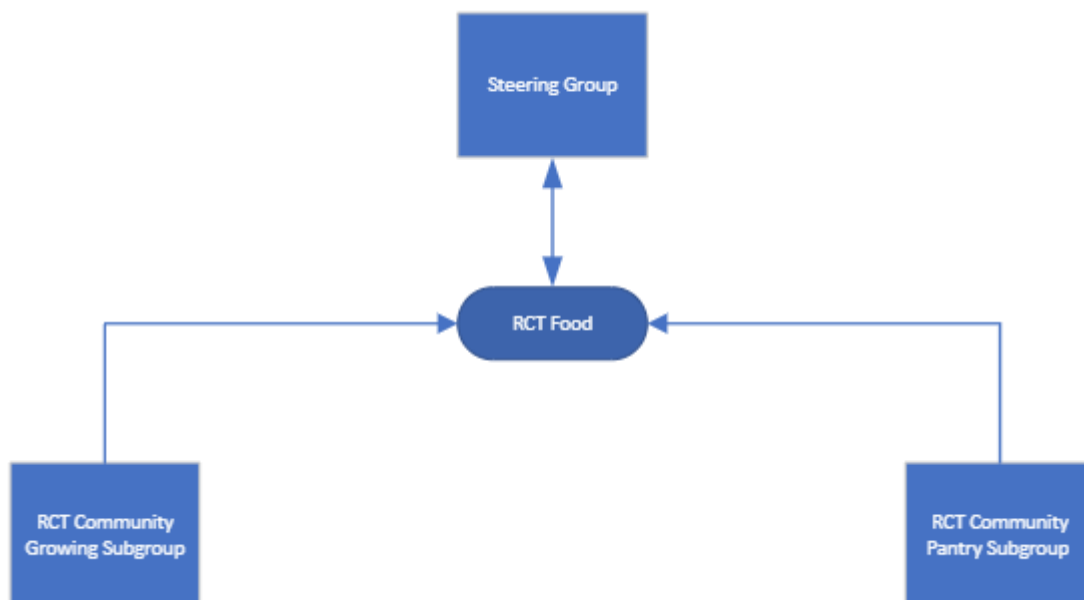


Figure 3 – Diagram showing the structure and subgroups of the RCT Food Partnership

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council host the partnership and provide financial resource for the partnership through various funding sources.

RCT Food has also ensured that the need for a sustainable, equitable and healthy food system is incorporated in the Council's ambitious Climate Change Strategy, Think Climate Rhondda Cynon Taf (Appendix 3). One such ambitious commitment of the Council is to support RCT Food to obtain SFP Gold.

The partnership's first in person event took place at Bryncynon Strategy (22/02/2022), attended by 22 organisations. Participants engaged in a 'Visioning Exercise' (Appendix 4). Following this event, the partnership members have continued to meet at the quarterly subgroup events.

Action area B: Develop, deliver, and monitor a food strategy/action plan

During the first full partnership meeting of RCT Food visioning exercise was undertaken. This was followed by the Coordinator undertaking conversations with multiple actors within the food system in RCT to develop the Vision and Charter for the Food Partnership (Appendix 5). The process was led by the wider partnership and agreed by the Steering Group Members in April 2022. The core aims of the vision and charter to enhance the health and wellbeing of both residents and visitors, fostering a more vibrant, connected, and prosperous Rhondda Cynon Taf through working together to improve our local food system.

Two annual work plans have been implemented by the Partnership 2021/2022 & 2022/2023. Which have focused on key activities involved in setting up the partnership and guiding its work. The latest 12-month action plan covers 2023/2024 (Appendix 6).

An internal partnership communication strategy has been created. The partnership has utilised the Councils main social media platforms to promote its work and events. Which has led to an average reach of 536 people per post (Appendix 7).

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

RCT Food provides regular updates on the work being undertaken by its members, along with resources and potential funding opportunities that may be of interest to them. To maximise our reach and efficiency, the partnership has utilised existing websites and platforms instead of creating a specific RCT Food website at this stage. For example, the partnership has been promoted on the Interlink RCT website, and there is a dedicated page for it on the Food Sense Wales Website. Additionally, the partnership's events have been further promoted through Connect RCT, a platform developed by Interlink RCT the Counties Voluntary Council. As well as multiple member organisations, who have shared them on their own social media platforms.

Through its active subgroups, RCT Food has hosted the following events:

Date	Subgroup	Location
24/05/2022	Community Grower	Meadow Street Community Garden
19/07/2022	Pantry	Bryncynon Strategy
25/08/2022	Community Grower	Cambrian Village Trust

03/10/2022	Pantry	Penderyn Community Pantry
25/10/2022	Community Grower	Cynon Valley Organic Adventures
26/01/2023	Community Grower	Welcome to Our Woods
22/02/2023	Pantry	Llanharan Community Council Pantry
11/05/2023	Community Growers	Down to Zero
13/09/2023	Pantry	RHA
TBC	Community Growers	Grow Rhondda

Members of RCT Food have also hosted a series of community events around food, such as a recent Community Land Access Event held in Pontypridd. (Appendix 8) Members, as a direct result of funding received from the Council, have provided engagement opportunities, such as Bryncynon Strategy, which offered free cooking courses for community members. The Valley Ethnic Minority Society runs an informal meal club where individuals share food from home and access support. Grow Rhondda has hosted health and well-being events at Blaenrhondda Park in an effort to engage community members with growing and making healthier food choices.

RCTCBC also organises an annual food festival in RCT called the Welsh Big Bite, during which members of the public have the opportunity to engage with stalls promoting healthy local diets (Appendix 9).

Through RCT Foods completed Food for the Planet campaign we engaged an intergenerational group to come together to begin exploring a more sustainable and healthy diet. (Appendix 10)

Action Area B: Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement

Throughout RCT there are many active and diverse ranges of community food projects being carried out. Welcome to our Woods has several innovative projects such as agroforestry, Controlled Environment Agriculture and education in green and land-based skills in partnership with Black Mountains Collage. Bleanycwm Chapel run pay as you feel café which utilise surplus food through Fare Share Cymru and provides a hot two course lunch every week. There are 10 Big Bocs Bwyds in RCT which are Pay As You Feel Shops with a small raised bed for the children to start growing. Tonyrefail Community School through its Yr Efail CIC has developed theirs into a pay as you feel zero waste shop which operates from two locations in Tonyrefail. They have also very recently taken on the lease of a shop on the high Street in Tonyrefail to develop a community café and space.

There are 26 community growing spaces in RCT. There are also a number of different approaches to their land use agreements. Some such as Down to Zero which is a project supported by Cynon Taf Housing Association have agreements

with two private landowners. Other such as Cynon Valley Organic Adventures which is a social enterprise owns their site. The council through the proactive and work of its Community Asset Transfer team (Appendix 11) have revised the Community Asset Transfer policy to include land transfers. There are several active land-based community asset transfer cases awaiting guidance from Corporate Estates regarding additional inquiries concerning land. However, one success transfer has been achieved with Welcome to our Woods who now have a lease agreement with the Council for of land in Treherbert at which they plan to explore a community agroforestry project.

RCTCBC Managed Grants available to support Sustainable Food Places in RCT.

The Sustainable Food Coordinator post sits within the Community Programmes & Grants Team within RCTCBCs wider Community Development Team. Within the last calendar year, funding has been made available to community organisation to provide food support to residents through a variety of public facing grants.

Namely:

- Direct Awards to Foodbanks
- Food Support Fund
- Winter Hardship Fund & UKG Shared Prosperity Fund
- UKG Shared Prosperity Fund RCTCBC Community Grant.

Direct Awards to Foodbanks (2022-23)

During 2022-23, the four main Trussell Trust Foodbanks

- Rhondda Foodbank
- Merthyr Cynon Foodbank
- Taf Ely Foodbank
- Pontypridd Foodbank

Were awarded £12,500 each to contribute towards their. As well as this, we utilised the councils Procurement to bulk order items of scarcity. Each Foodbank received orders of circa £4,000. This meant the total financial contribution was £16,500 to each Foodbank with a total of £66,000.

Food Support Fund (2022-23)

Grants of between £500-£1500 are available Food Support Project across RCT. 35 Projects were funded during 2022-23.

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS:

Little Lounge

Little Lounge run a Community Pantry in Cilfynydd every Friday morning. The scheme enables residents to pay a suggested donation of £2 to select a large bag of food produce which would otherwise go to waste. The scheme is in partnership with FareShare Go and Tesco Upper Boat.

Fernhill & Glenboi Community Centre

Throughout the 6 week summer holidays Fernhill & Glenboi Community Centre provided free meals each day for the children in the community and subsidised meals at £1.00 for the adults.

Valleys Ethnic Minority Support CIC provided a series of 10 International Cooking sessions where community members prepared dishes from their country of origin on a rotating basis. Families attending the events had the opportunity to eat meals with others as a shared experience allowing social interaction and friendships to develop between families for both parents and children.

Impact Monitoring - Each Community Group has completed a monitoring form which asked for numbers of beneficiaries & volunteers.

Combined Beneficiaries

The combined the responses from projects funded by the Food Support Fund provide a conservative minimum report of:

Number of beneficiaries – **minimum of 3,215 individuals**

Number of Volunteers – **minimum of 274 individuals**

The Food Support Fund will reopen in September 2023.

Winter Hardship Fund (2022-23)

The Winter Hardship Fund was made available to support Winter Welcome Centres across RCT.

Each Winter Welcome Centre provided a package of support which included all the below as a minimum:

- open access to your facility and activities
- hot drinks & food or snacks
- warm packs for residents to take home

The Winter Hardship Fund is now closed and a total of 50 organisations submitted their monitoring and evaluation form, reporting the following outputs:

Number of individual **adults** supported – **2,824**

Number of individual **children** supported – **617**

Number of Winter Welcome **sessions** provided – **1,309**
 Number of individuals receiving a **warm drink/snack** – **2,980**
 Number of individuals receiving **warm pack items** – **1,816**
 Number of **volunteers** involved in delivery – **315**

The Winter Hardship Fund will reopen in September 2023.

UKG Shared Prosperity Fund RCTCBC Community Grant

The UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund has been made available to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) to enable places to invest in capacity building and infrastructure support to restore community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for social, environmental, economic & cultural development at the neighbourhood-level.

RCTCBC has made a Community Grant available with the intention to:

- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost

Over a 3 year period ending in March 2025 £4.3m will be invested locally.

Through work undertaken with RCT Food, significant Community Grant funding has been awarded to community organisations that directly contributes to Sustainable Food Places in RCT.

UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Community Grant

Awards 2022-23 specifically contributing to Sustainable Food Places:

Group / Organisation	Total Award Offer (Revenue only)
Y Siop Fach CIC	£5,517
Cynon Valley Organic Adventures	£10,500
Growing Space Pontypridd CIC	£7,300
Little Lounge	£14,466
Arts Factory	£14,526.93
Grow Rhondda	£14,999
Darren Las Community Building	£4,183.50
Fernhill Community Centre	£1,508

UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Community Grant

Awards 2023-24 specifically contributing to Sustainable Food Places:

Group / Organisation	Total Award Offer (Revenue/Capital)
Growing Space Pontypridd	£13,610
Tir Pontypridd	£1,000
Taff Ely Foodbank	£14,999
Fernhill and Glenboi over 60's	£4,241.82
Bryncynon Community Revival Strategy	£38,520.20
Dig4health	£7,287.94
Llanharan Community Development Project	£26,755.44
Penderyn Community Centre	£32,757
Pentre Comrades Club Ltd	£23,780.87

UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Community Grant

Awards 2024-25 specifically contributing to Sustainable Food Places:

Group / Organisation	Total Award Offer (Revenue/Capital)
Pentre Comrades Club Ltd	£14,872.43
Bryncynon Community Revival Strategy	£48,059.96
Little Lounge	£25,000

The UKG SPF RCTCBC Community Grant will reopen in January 2023, for application for 2024-25 delivery. We expect to fund more food related projects during this round.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 3: Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

Throughout RCT there are 64 number of community food support projects that have been mapped by the partnership. These project through the Sustainable Food Coordinator have been contacted and supported to join the partnership and gain grant funding. These projects have also been compiled into a pdf document of

community food projects (Appendix 12) that is updated monthly and available to organisation that signpost community members for support.

One of the subgroups within RCT Food is a specific Food Pantry Subgroup which aims to support the development, maintenance and strengthening of food pantries throughout RCT. This subgroup has a wide range of pantries in their size and the aims of their projects. There are currently 13 pantries that are part of the network. As a direct result of the subgroup 3 member pantries developed a joint bid to the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund RCTCBC Community Grant to explore collective buying and shared wrap around activity coordination, which was successful. The collective buying element of the project is going to also explore the feasibility and trial procuring fresh produce from a number of community growing projects in RCT.

Through the RCT Together Team the Council is able to offer residents in need direct monetary support to purchase food through Black Hawk vouchers which can be redeemed at any major supermarket. 198 vouchers have been supplied to residents in RCT since 23/12/2022 to access emergency food.

The partnership has maintained a close eye on the Healthy Start voucher uptake figures for RCT and has provided information to all community food support projects about them. From this promotion FareShare Cymru now also includes this information in their new project starter packs. The current uptake figures for RCT is 69.2% (June 2023)

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has now been accredited as a Living Wage Employer. The Living Wage commitment will see no one working at RCT CBC paid below the current minimum hourly wage of £10.90, higher than the government minimum for over 23s, which currently stands at £10.42 per hour. (Appendix 13)

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

The CTM Health Board area has the highest level of childhood obesity in Wales. With RCT being the second highest (12.7%). 63 % of adults are also obese and only 21% of adults say that they eat 5 fruit and vegetables a day.

As a result of this and in response to Welsh Governments Healthy weight, Healthy Wales strategy. Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB has also embarked on developing a systems approach to Healthy Weight in CTM. The partnership is in its early strategies with several engagement events having taken place. The Food Partnership is seen by the Team coordinating the approach as a vital part in working across the whole food system.

Through the local public health team various members of the partnership have held both Get Cooking and Nutrition Skills for Life courses at various locations throughout RCT.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

In RCT, 51 Lower Super Output Areas are facing the highest level of food insecurity, with the Cynon Valley being the most insecure place in Wales and the Rhondda Valley the 4th most insecure (Appendix 14). To address this pressing issue, the partnership is focusing on food support and community growing projects, aiming to foster community resilience. These initiatives include food banks, meal assistance programs, and community gardens, promoting sustainable solutions and empowerment.

In a recent report to cabinet the Council outlined its priorities when it said that the Council and its partners are working to reduce pressures on households in the short-term while working towards a longer-term plan to improve resilience through the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) programme that aims to work across all aspects of the food system to solve social, environmental, and economic issues. (Appendix 15)

Key Issue 4: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy

Action area A: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

Good Food Enterprise is at the heart of the RCT Food charter. Through its commitment to work to “foster a diverse and vibrant food economy”. The council has also committed within its Climate Change Strategy to work “with Local businesses to help them source more sustainable products locally and sell to local markets.”

RCT Council through its Business Growth Grant programme provides support and guidance to businesses including sustainable food businesses. The food partnership in conjunction with Cywain hosted the first of three business breakfast events at Mallow Beverages on the 20/04/23 at which 9 businesses were present. There are further events to be planned later in the year in the Cynon and Rhondda Valleys.

The 2017 agricultural survey data for Wales shows that there were 385 farms in RCT (figure 1) and of this 277 were designated as very small meaning they were less than 5 hectares.

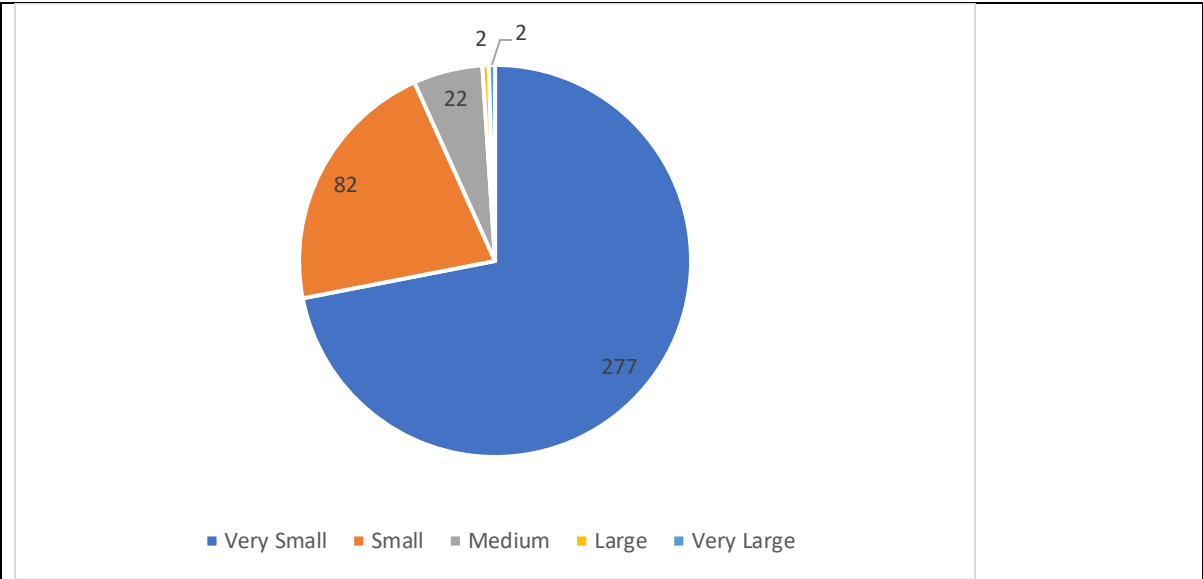


Figure 1 – Total number of farms in RCT in 2017 split in size categories.

There is limited data available on farm gate production in RCT however in the 2017 agricultural survey there was 12hectares of wheat, 5 hectares of winter barley and 6 hectares of sprig barley produced in RCT, whilst 9 hectares were left bare fallow. This is dwarfed by the 127 hectares of stockfeed grown in RCT (Figure 2)

	Wheat	Winter Barley	Spring Barley	Crops for Stockfeeding	Bare Fallow	Total
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12	5	6	127	9	159

Figure 2 – Amount in hectares of different crop types grown in RCT in 2017.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf food pantries and zero waste shops represents a bold step towards placing good food enterprise at the core of local economic development. These innovative initiatives not only offer sustainable shopping options but also foster a vibrant economic ecosystem that revolves around community needs and values. There are also new land-based projects that are looking to start developing supply chains to ensure that economic benefit recirculate within the local economy of RCT for as Long as possible. Such projects include Down to Zeros veg boxes and biochar production and the consortium of Cynon Valley food pantries that are exploring how they join together their buying power to maximise the benefit to the local economy.

Action Area B: Promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers

There are two principal indoor food markets in RCT which are Aberdare and Pontypridd which have a number of independent food businesses. Through the pantry network in RCT there are 13 alternative food retail spaces for consumers. Welcome to Our Woods with funding from The Open Food Network had launched a food hub in 2022 which they used as a pilot before a planned relaunch based on the findings and learning. There are three community interest company run zero waste shops in RCT that are all part of RCT Food. Dant Y Llew, Y Siop Fach Zero & Yr Efail. They have also come together to explore collective buying and have set up a network of Benthyc across RCT using the shops as pick up locations of the items.

There are also a number of private zero waste shops in RCT such as Green Valley in Treorchy. Independent food business in RCT also benefit from the Welsh Big Bite festival held in Pontypridd.

There are 3 Business Improvement Districts in RCT which cover Pontypridd, Treorchy and Aberdare. They all champion local businesses and enterprise and hold various events that support local food businesses.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food supply chains

Action area A: Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates

Through the Climate Change Strategy, the Council has committed to reduce the environmental impact of food provided by the Council through more climate friendly meals choices and procurement. A pilot study has been carried out in Glifach Goch Community Facility to start looking at options around the procurement of more local and climate friendly food. The project focused on looking at the protein content of the menu and whilst largely maintaining the level of protein in dishes reducing the overall amount of animal protein in the menu items. One menu item the Shepard pie in which the meat content was reduced by 50% but the protein content overall was maintained by the additional lentils, was so successful that this is now a permanent addition on the menu. Further work to develop a more seasonal menu is ongoing at the facility (Appendix 16).

The majority of our food suppliers used in the production of School and Community Meals for the Council are based locally in South Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taf are working in collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities and is a member of the WLGA Food Group that is centrally looking at procurement routes to market that will benefit local Welsh supply chains and the foundational economy of Wales.

Action Area B: Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain

The context of food partnerships in Wales has been challenging due to the implementation of the National Procurement Service (NPS) by the Welsh Government in 2013. This move brought public procurement frameworks for food under national control, leading to a significant portion of public sector procurement spend going through the NPS by 2017. While this enabled regional collaboration, it also limited the scope for local actions at the county-level.

A review of the NPS in 2017 highlighted several weaknesses in the system, with concerns raised about its ability to adequately support local suppliers. Subsequently, between 2018 and 2020, public procurement shifted toward a more regional approach, with Rhondda Cynon Taf now being part of the South East Wales group. This change aimed to strike a balance between regional collaboration and promoting local sourcing initiatives for a more sustainable and resilient food supply chain.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 6: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste

Action area A: Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

RCT CBC's emissions for 2021/22 were 120,907.4 tonnes CO₂ which is 1,198 tonnes lower than the Baseline Year 2019/20. Although RCT CBC has not declared a climate emergency a significant amount of work is being undertaken and driven by the Council ambitious Climate Change Strategy In which the council has an ambitious Food section that contains commitments to support the ambition of achieving Sustainable Food Places Gold award, pilot growing in parks and council land, reducing the carbon impact of the food we provide, provide more opportunities to grow, map the land we own to better understand the food growing potential of the land the council owns. This was recognised in the analysis conducted by Sustain in its every mouthful counts report (Appendix 17).

The partnership was successful in receiving funding to run a Food for the Planet Campaign which has started to build community conversations around more sustainable food. The international recipe book is being used by other groups in RCT to produce their own community cookbook and start the conversation and transition to better food by meeting people where they currently are.

RCT does have a Local Nature Partnership which is also hosted by the Local Authority, that communicates regularly with the partnership. Many RCT Food members are also members of the LNP. Hosted by the third sector the RCT Climate Action Network is a wider organisation of which RCT Food has general members and steering group members of this network. The aim of which is to support volunteering and coordination across community climate focused projects throughout RCT.

Supporting and providing opportunities for people to learn green skills is something that RCT Food passionately supports. Cynon Valley Organic Adventures offers woodland management accredited course. Welcome to our Woods Partnership with Black Mountain Collage although only just beginning is bringing these courses into RCT enabling local people to gain skills that would otherwise not be available to them.

Action Area B: Reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste

RCT CBC in its corporate plan is committed to keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint. The Welsh Government's strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality, Beyond Recycling, stipulates the next minimum target for the recycling of household waste is 70% by 2025, as we look to maintain our trajectory towards zero waste nation by 2050. 3.3 Further, Council strategy; Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030, commits the Council to ensuring it recycles or reuses 80% of all municipal waste by 2025 by supporting residents and businesses on initiatives that promote waste minimisation and reuse of materials, as well as investing in technology to increase the amount of waste we recycle and reuse locally. Recent analysis of the Council's recycling rate showed that it is currently at 67.48%. Over 11,000 tonnes of food waste is collected from RCT households every year and it is recycled on site in Llwydcoed and converted in to energy to power over 1000 homes. In the latest survey carried out by Recycle for Wales, around 84% of people say they recycle their food waste in Rhondda Cynon Taf. (Appendix 18)

Although the exact amount of redistributed food across all food support projects in RCT is unknow FareShare Cymru a steering group member of the partnership. Support 16 community groups in RCT providing 1.4 tonnes of food a week.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

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Comments from the panel on your application:
Outcome of application:
Recommendations for onward progress: