

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

- [Initial Idea](#)
- [Early Development of the Project](#)
- [Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users](#)
- [Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty](#)
- [Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working](#)
- [Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Staffing and Resources](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Reach and Impact](#)
- [Learning from Experience](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.



Title	Blether-building community spaces together.
Lead Organisation	Propagate Scotland.
All Organisations	N/A
Category	Established-Project can evidence impact.
Poverty Impact	Mitigation. Enhancing understanding.
Introduction to the Project	
'Blether' is a free-to-access community shop based in Neilston, which aims to tackle food waste and poverty. By redistributing surplus food that otherwise would have gone to landfill, the project helps residents access nutritious, affordable food. The shop provides affordable, ethically sourced products such as plastic-free goods, fairtrade items, and locally grown produce from the edible Neilston planter. Additionally, 'Blether' helps to tackle local poverty by offering workshops aimed at helping individuals build key practical skills. They offer climate- friendly cooking courses and compost creation workshops all whilst promoting sustainable living. With over 6,600 users in 2025, Blether is a vital community resource.	

Blether-building community spaces together.

Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	Cat Train (Project Lead).	
How did the idea for the project come about?		
The project idea developed after COVID when Cat noticed that the community of Neilston lacked an informal community space where individuals could meet and connect. She also recognised that there was no community fridge to redistribute surplus food or to harvest produce from the local, "Incredible Edible" growing spaces that people were hesitant to pick from.		
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	Yes.	
Plans were guided by Propagate Scotland consultations with community members and local producers, which identified a need for better access to healthy local food		
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes.	
• A small group of community members helped develop the idea, including: • The project shops' landlord who runs children's cooking classes • A volunteer from the local gardening project. • A community music tutor. • Other local community members. • Propagate Scotland.		
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes.	
Cat explained that the original steering group included people with a range of experiences, including some who had experienced food poverty. Additionally, the project shop landlord worked closely with community groups from areas identified as deprived through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.		

Blether-building community spaces together.

Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?		Yes.
Which organisation provided funding?	Separate funding was secured to develop the idea.	
How much was required?	Change X	
What was the specific source of funding?	Grant.	
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes.
Staff/Volunteer Time	The project relied heavily on volunteer time, particularly in the early stages as most of the workload fell on a small number of people (around 3).	
Facilities / Workspace	A shop unit was needed to run 'Blether' out of. It provided a location for food distribution and activities such as cooking classes.	
Equipment	Equipment like fridges and freezers were needed to store produce.	
Local Knowledge	N/A	
Food and Drink	Yes, as surplus food collected from sources and produce from local growing projects were central to the purpose and the execution of 'Blether'.	
Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes.
Initial barriers included scepticism about the idea. The challenge of establishing the project without long-term funding. A limited volunteer capacity, as much of the work fell on a small number of people. There were also challenges in getting the local authority to engage and support the project.		
Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?		No.

Blether-building community spaces together.



How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?	Within 2 months of the initial idea.
Who made the decision to introduce the project?	Cat Train.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.



Early Development

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?	No.
---	-----

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.



Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Are potential users referred to your ?	Yes.
The project operates on a walk-in basis. However, other local services may signpost or direct people to the project.	
Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your Project?	Yes.
• Awareness of the project is raised through: • Social media. • Posters in the local area. • Project involvement in networks such as the, Nourish Scotland's Dignity in Practice Network, and the Glasgow Community Food Network. • Participation in the Good Food for All webinar.	
What is the most common way through which users typically access your service?	
Social media.	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?	Yes.
Currently it is just through social media that the project keeps in touch with service users.	

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.



Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	Yes.
People involved in 'Blether' have a range of experiences including some who have direct lived experience with food poverty.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u>?	Yes.
The original group who helped direct the project included individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences, including some with lived experience of food poverty.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?	No.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.



Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Cat Train.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	No.
Not specified at this point in time.	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
About half of it.	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	No.
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	No.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.



Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	Yes.
The project aims to align with existing anti-poverty approaches such as the cash-first model. It does this by providing food vouchers to service users so they may access food with dignity.	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	Yes.
It has made the food that 'Blether' hands out more accessible to residents.	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	Yes.
The project aligns with the local food growing strategy through its community garden, composting, and food growing.	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	No.
In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	Not specified at this point in time.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.

Funding

Is funding used to support the work?		Yes.
Has external funding been secured to support the work?		Yes.
Which organisation provided funding?	• Hubbub food hubs. • Crowdfunder. • Aviva. • Neilston Wind Farm Legacy. • The Greater Renfrewshire Inverclyde Lag fund.	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Funds and grants.	
How much funding was secured?	£3,500 seed funding and an additional £1,500 top up.	
For how long has funding been secured?	Not specified.	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?	Not specified.	
Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?	Not specified.	
What are these conditions?	Not specified.	
Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?	Not specified.	
How much funding was secured?	Not specified.	
For how long has funding been secured?	Not specified.	

Blether-building community spaces together.



Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?	No.
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	
Not specified.	

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.

Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?	Yes.
Role: Core roles such as finance and taking care of social media aspects.	
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?	N/A
Extra hours worked:	
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?	Yes.
Role: External financial roles to deal with project budgets. Social media roles to help promote 'Blether'.	
Is the post permanent or fixed term?	Full time.
Duration: Permanent.	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project??	Yes.
Role: Helping in the project shop.	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?	Yes.
Facilities / Workspace	Rent and facilities have high costs, so funding is needed to help the shop deal with running costs.
Equipment	Fridges and freezers are required for food safety.
Local Knowledge	Each employee/volunteers receives food hygiene training.
Food and Drink	Food and drink is required as this is the core necessity of the shop's operation.

Blether-building community spaces together.



Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	No.
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	No.
Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	Yes.
Food hygiene training was required for all volunteers and staff. It is a legal requirement for all staff who work with food to have food hygiene and safety training to prevent food contamination and associated food bacterial infections. Food hygiene training is paid directly from Propagate Scotland's funds.	

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?	Yes.
Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	No.
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	Yes
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project	Front line staff
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation	Not specified.
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to measure the impact of the project	Feedback from 'Blether' service users.

Blether-building community spaces together.

What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?	
Number of users	Not specified.
Profile of users	Measured through service user feedback.
Experience of users	Number and experience of users is recorded with permission.
Outcomes for users	Not specified.
Anything else	Not specified.
Not specified.	
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	Yes.
The project actively seeks both positive and negative feedback from users and has adapted the service multiple times to accommodate service user feedback.	
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	No.
Has the data that has been collected from this evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?	No.
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	No.
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	No.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.

Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?		Making progress towards meeting aims.
What difference has the project made?		
- The project has significantly reduced food waste in the local area and has helped changed community perceptions on surplus food. - The project has helped to reduce existing stigma towards foodbanks and food bank users. - The project has actively targeted poverty by increasing access to free, good quality food.		
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?		Yes.
The demand has increased, with some service users forming a reliance on the food the project provides.		
Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?		Yes.
At present demand is being met but this could change in the future.		
Has the project changed through time?		Yes.
What changed	It has expanded from a small community fridge to a wider community hub.	
Why has it changed	There has been a change in the amount of people relying on the community hub which has led to an increase in the need for more surplus food. It has also changed by adding workshops and food growing projects to meet demand and improve sustainability overall.	
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		Yes.
People have become reliant on the surplus food, which was unexpected. This can create challenges as it can help people financially in the short term, but it can also create challenges as surplus food is not always available. Another unexpected outcome is the amount of community support that 'Blether' has received.		

Blether-building community spaces together.



In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	Yes.
The project helps to reduce financial pressures by meeting community food needs, and signposting people to other support services when required.	

[Return to Introduction](#)

Blether-building community spaces together.

Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
The project has built a strong volunteer community and is effective in attracting new volunteers, including people who have just recently moved to Neilston. The project is also working well in providing access to food, mitigating financial strain amongst service users, and offering free period products.	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
Securing sustainable core funding is a challenge, as funding opportunities are often more readily available for new initiatives rather than for maintaining existing projects.	
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
The importance of dignity when addressing food poverty. The project was intentionally designed to operate like a shop so that people accessing free food could do so discreetly. In the long term this has helped to reduce existing stigma surrounding food aid.	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	Yes.
The project plans to expand by taking on a lease for a local Market Garden. This would allow for more local organic food production, involve the community in green space usage and maintenance, and the hosting of additional activities with partner organisations.	
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?	
It could be replicated relatively easily with motivated leadership, access to an affordable space, and existing organisational support.	

[Return to Introduction](#)