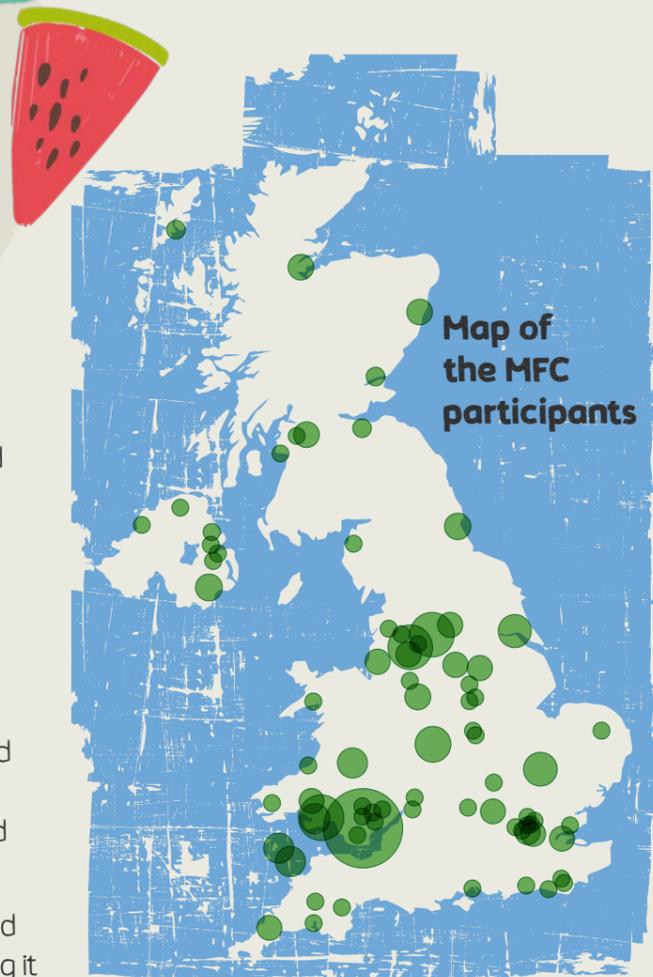


# My Food Community: A Network for Good Food Champions

Over the past few years a spotlight has been shone on the role of community food organisers. They have met challenges, built food resilience, tackled poverty and become activists of a broken food system. The skills, experiences and tools developed through My food Community (MFC) have helped communities promote sustainable, healthy and affordable diets. There was a growing need to come together to share, support and learn from one another.

MFC, originating from Food for Life Get Togethers, is a community leadership programme intended to create a network for good food champions to learn, connect and take action. The online and face-to-face environments enhanced flexibility to engage with the programme and connectivity by bridging geographical barriers.

Central to the MFC design has been an ethos of 'test and learn', making the programme flexible and agile, allowing it to evolve and adapt according to feedback during delivery.



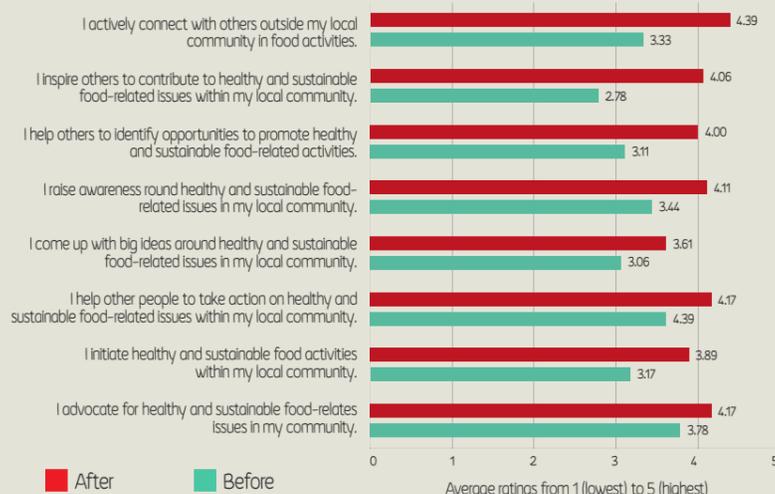
**TWO** Cohorts  
**114** food leaders



**138** training hours

**£50,000** funding for Leadership Action Grants

## Differences in ratings of leadership competencies Before and After MFC



## Effectiveness in Developing Personal Networks, Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

Significant improvements were reported by the participants in all the leadership competencies, knowledge and skills after six months of engaging in the MFC programme. The strongest areas of improvement were around **raising awareness, helping others to identify opportunities, inspiring others and actively connecting with others outside their local communities** in relation to healthy and sustainable food-related activities.

**My Food Community has been invaluable in gaining confidence to approach businesses, community leaders and individuals with my ideas. Previously I felt like the person with lots of, albeit great, ideas but perhaps without the confidence or knowledge that they were achievable. Since MFC I have had the confidence to know that they are, if I build the right network, I learned how to place myself and learn skills in listening, how to position myself and how to succeed. Two years ago, I think I would have struggled to get this project to be a success.**

**Eilish Blade, nutritional therapist, second cohort of the MFC**

Self-reported feedback showed that the participants:

- grew confidence and kudos from the programme
- developed personal networks at a national level,
- increased knowledge in food citizenship,
- improved their ideas around leadership and their own aspirations

## After taking part in MFC

**27%** developed 'extremely high' confidence in community leadership around food systems

**41%** had 'extremely strong' knowledge of food citizenship

**46%** developed 'extremely strong' skills to create change in food systems

**68%** regarded themselves as a community leader in food activities.



## Learning has most meaning when it supports and leads to action

MFC participants were given the opportunity to put their newly developed skills into practice by implementing a food-based project in their local area with a small **Leadership Action Grant** provided by the MFC programme.

The grants were also useful in enhancing partnership working and were empowering in initiating and applying the knowledge and skills learnt from the My Food Community programme.

**73%** strongly agreed that the grant helped them to apply their learning from MFC

Data and feedback from the members provide good evidence that participants continue to derive value from MFC many months after they complete the online training. There is significant potential for participants to continue to benefit over time with the delivery of further programmes run and the growth a network of MFC alumni.

## Lightbulb moments and opening doors

Joy O'Neill, Director of Oxford Climate Alumni from the second cohort, didn't have a food background, MFC helped her with ideas around leadership: "I feel different and more confident, previously I felt like I was playing at food leadership and now I can say I am a food leader. My mindset has changed. Whereas before we would have tentatively asked academics to speak or ask for research, I think it felt like our group was an underdog but now people are approaching us. I am more knowledgeable; I sound more assured and more confident, and I think that comes across when I seek research and people now want to engage with us, and that is a result of My Food Community for sure."