

#### **5.2.4 Allotments and Community Gardens**

Community gardening can be a means of combating social isolation and promoting social cohesion by encouraging the development of social networks. It also brings positive health benefits including improved access to fresh and healthy food, increased physical activity and improved mental health. Factors which promote the use of community gardens include safety, proximity to users' homes and secured tenure.

The Council has a large number of allotments in a variety of locations across Walsall. Management of these is split between the Council and several Local Management Associations, and facilities within sites may vary.

Of two sites which were derelict and declared surplus, one has recently been brought back into use as a community garden. There is also 1 private allotment in Willenhall.

The distribution of these spaces varies significantly with 13 allotment sites in St Matthew's/Paddock/Palfrey/Pleck partnership area and just 2 in Aldridge/Streetly /Pheasey/Walsall Wood.

The Community Gardens Officer is working with groups to develop two community gardens in Darlaston; George Rose in Herberts Park Road, and Victoria Road, and is also part of a steering group to develop a Community Garden project with partners in Bentley. Other projects in Walsall borough include Goscote Green Acres and Caldmore Community Garden.

#### **5.2.5 Walsall Allotments Strategy**

A new Community Garden and Allotment Strategy is due to commence production in 2014/15 which will include a focus on the future management of Walsall's allotments and new opportunities to create allotments and or community gardens in areas of present deficiency and high waiting lists.

Priorities for action:

- *Develop self-sustaining allotments and community gardens which develop community capacity and volunteering.*
- *Heighten the profile and increase the quality and quantity of food growing spaces and opportunities which may take the form of shared community gardens. This will help increase the number of people, and extend the age range of communities involved in growing, and also increase educational and volunteering opportunities which will have benefits to health and well being.*
- *Promote allotments and gardens to local schools to encourage connections with food growing, which becomes part of Key Stage 4 curriculum in 2014. Community growing spaces can also help support other school health programmes such as school catering, encouraging a healthy diet and reducing childhood obesity through the Food Dudes behavioural change programme.*
- *Other links are being explored within community growing spaces to promote the food bank programme.*

The map below was created to show the location of food banks, allotments and community gardens (correct as of July 2013)

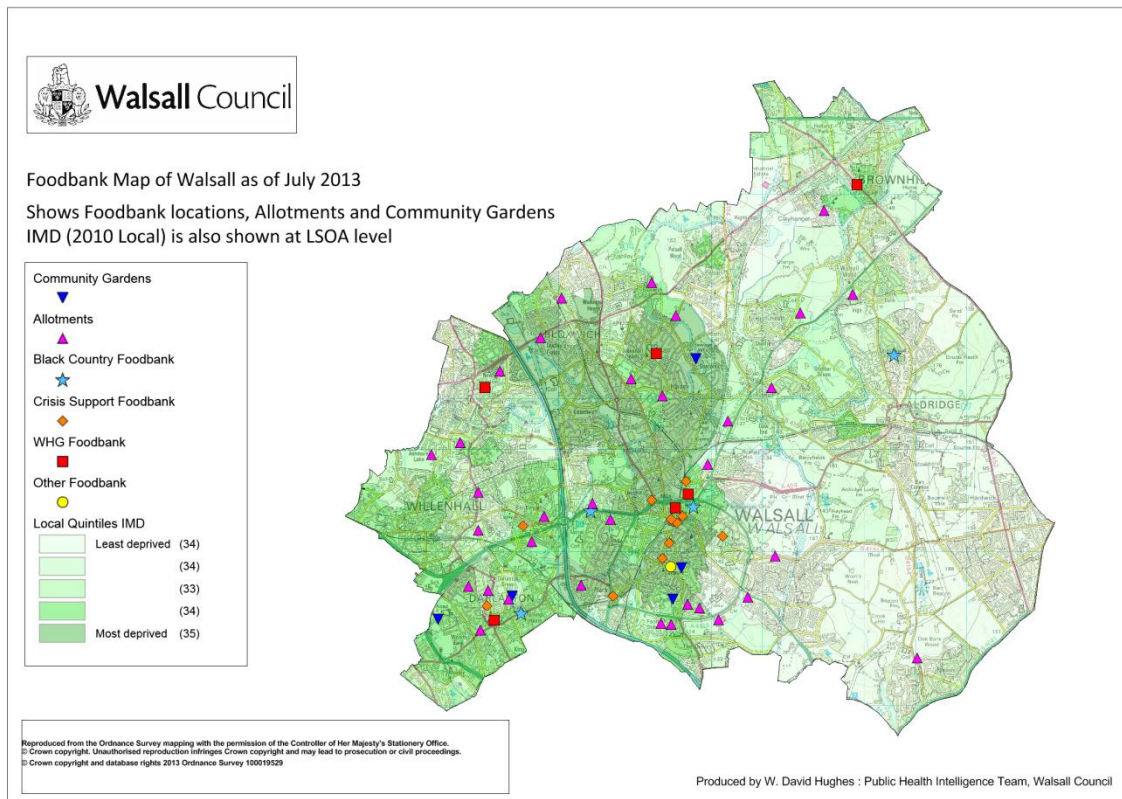


Figure 1 Foodbanks, Allotment & Community Gardens Map (Source: Walsall MBC)