



Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group



Health and Wellbeing Board

Meeting Date: 13th September 2018

Item Title: Tackling Food Poverty Together – Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

Responsible Officer: Chris Westwood – Customer Services, Service Delivery and Improvement Manager, Shropshire Council

Email: chris.westwood@shropshire.gov.uk

A report is attached.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Lee Chapman
Local Member
All
Appendices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Action Plan 2015 – 2018• Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Action Plan - Final



FOOD POVERTY IN SHROPSHIRE

Report For The Health And Wellbeing Board
August 2018

**TACKLING
FOOD
POVERTY
TOGETHER**

Shropshire Food
Poverty Alliance



Volunteer run food banks across the county provide emergency food parcels, however this assistance is time-limited and is only available to households in extreme financial crisis. Food banks report that people who need emergency food parcels are coming from an increasingly wide range of situations, including families and those who are in work. Currently there is very little provision in Shropshire for households who find themselves in chronic long-term food poverty and the desired outcome of the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance would be the introduction of initiatives across the county such as those implemented in Brighton, which go beyond emergency food provision towards a much wider and more preventative approach to food poverty whilst using existing infrastructure and expertise.

¹Beatty, C & Fothergill, S (2016) The Uneven Impact of Welfare Reform: the financial loses to places and people, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research Sheffield Hallam University.

² End Child Poverty (2017) <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/>



Some of the underlying causes of food poverty have their roots in much larger, national or strategic issues, beyond anything the Alliance can hope to change but we can pragmatically do is to look at what can be done to contain the outcomes for people. Therefore throughout 2018 the Shropshire Food Poverty alliance has been conducting participatory research to develop a Food Poverty Action Plan for Shropshire. We have identified a wide range of potential solutions, some of which are easy wins and some of which will require refocus of existing resources or new funding. The Action Plan will reduce the risk of families in Shropshire experiencing food poverty by connecting up support services and increasing the capacity of families to access low cost healthy food to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet.

2 Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:

- note the purpose, work and aspirations of the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance
- consider and contribute to the development and implementation of the Food Poverty Action Plan.

We would also like to extend an invitation for a representative from the Health and Wellbeing Board to attend future meetings of the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance.

3 Background

The Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance was formed in January 2018 by a consortium of organisations who are committed to work together to tackle food poverty in Shropshire. Our membership includes public, faith and voluntary organisations including food banks from across the county. The Alliance is

currently being co-ordinated by Shrewsbury Food Hub, with a steering group of organisations including Citizens Advice Shropshire, Shropshire Council, Age UK and University Centre, Shrewsbury. Our aims are to:

- 1.1) Tackle food poverty and diet related ill health
- 1.2) Promote a healthy and sustainable diet
- 1.3) Build community food skills and knowledge
- 1.4) Increase access to affordable healthy food
- 1.5) Ensure there is crisis and emergency support so that people do not go hungry
- 1.6) Get food poverty (particularly rural) on the local and national policy agenda
- 1.7) Research and monitor food poverty so we know if we are being effective

Throughout 2018 we are working to develop a Food Poverty Action Plan for Shropshire. The Action Plan will make it clear what we need to do to tackle food poverty. A draft action plan will be issued for consultation in the autumn. As part of this process we have:

- Mapped levels of food poverty
- Interviewed people in food poverty (10+ interviews to date)
- Surveys (Organisations, schools and individuals in food poverty) 100+ responses to date
- Visited food banks across the county
- Run three workshops to create connected solutions (58 attendees)
- Researched best practice from other counties to identify which approaches might work best in Shropshire

We are grateful for the financial support of the Food Power Program (run by national charity Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming), Shropshire Council and University Centre, Shrewsbury.

Snapshot of survey data

Citizen's Advice Shropshire have estimated that a possible 27,000 families in our county may have to cut their food budgets this year. Our survey shows that 81% of respondents feel that food poverty has increased in the last year and that working families as well as those on benefits are being affected.

Quotes from Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance Surveys

"I can't afford healthy food like fruit and vegetables, it breaks my heart because I want to be a good mother" (Survey response from Market Drayton)

"We have several children that come to school on a regular basis without breakfast. We also have children arrive after lunch late, having not had lunch. We also have children that eat a large amount of fruit in the mornings and have seconds at lunch time as hungry (sic)" (Primary school survey response)

Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance Case Study

Peter (not his real name) worked for a housing association for 17 years. Since taking redundancy he has been unable to find permanent employment and is claiming Universal Credit whilst taking on casual jobs via agencies. His food budget is £40 a month. Living in a house share, Peter keeps his food in his bedroom so that it isn't eaten by his 6 housemates. Unable to use the fridge or freezer, he relies on tinned and packaged foods, which he separates out into weekly piles. He tries to make the food last the month, but he says "sometimes you get to the stage where you are just really, really hungry and you've got to eat". As the month goes on he just eats less. This month he has been unable to find any work. "I've been trying to portion my food, but it got down to a tin of soup a day. It got to be a struggle". He came into the food bank on a Friday morning, but had not eaten since Tuesday.

Quotes from Citizens Advice Shropshire Survey³

"I haven't quite got as low as a foodbank, but I have had days sometimes where I've just had crackers but I also make sure my son has a decent meal, he gets free school means so he always has hot food but it has got close sometimes." (Single parent, 35-49 Shrewsbury)

"Its food or my Prescription, and I can't afford to have another stroke" (Single person, 50 -64, rural village)

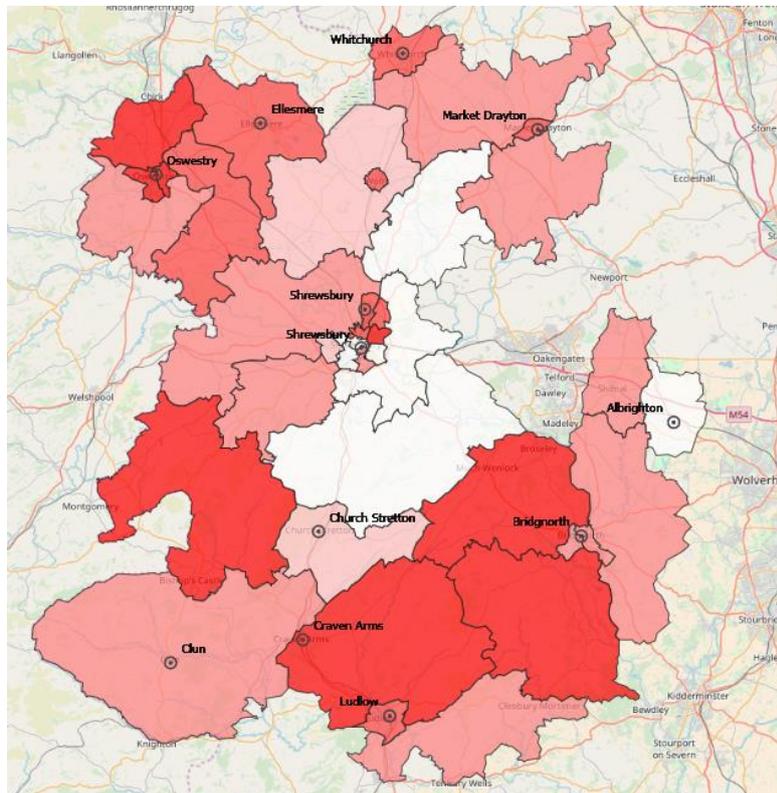
Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance Case Study

David and Emma (not their real names) live in Whitchurch. They have five children, and David stays at home to care for the children whilst his partner works. He has used the food bank in the school holidays in order to feed their children. David says "We are not poor, you know like Oliver Twist poor, please sir, you know, but some weeks you just can't make ends meet. It's like what do you do? The food bank makes that decision for you. If you have the food bank you can pay your bills and that's just how it is."

³ Quotes are from research Citizens Advice Shropshire has carried out in response to the changes to the Council Tax Support scheme in Shropshire.

MAPPING FOOD POVERTY IN SHROPSHIRE

The UK doesn't routinely collect data on levels of food poverty. As an Alliance we want to understand which parts of the county are more likely to be affected by higher levels of food poverty. With the help of CREST at University Centre, Shrewsbury we have explored a number of indicators to examine how the county is affected. The map below combines five key food poverty indicators, with the darker red areas highlighting areas with higher levels of food poverty.



Indicators used:

- Food retail businesses per square km, benefits claimants, adult obesity, households with slow internet access, households without access to a vehicle.

The location of food banks is also marked.

4 Opportunities

Based on our research we have identified a number of opportunities which we feel would positively impact on people in food poverty in Shropshire.

- Improve collaboration and communication between wider support agencies with appropriate consent
- Improve guidance, advice and signposting
- Awareness raising at both a local and national level on key food poverty issues
- A focus on prevention, rather than just emergency food provision
- Skills-based courses to improve confidence with cooking and budgeting
- New initiatives which improve access to affordable healthy food in rural areas
- New initiatives aimed to assist groups particularly hit by food poverty

Shropshire food banks provide highly valued support for people in food crisis across our county but provision may be fragmented as it is entirely run by volunteer organisations often with very little

funding or support. For some people, there is a stigma attached to using foodbanks and we are aware that people will often only come as a last resort. Our research suggests that there are opportunities that would allow us to tap into the existing to work of our food banks whilst enhancing their provision into new models, new community based packages that help to remove the stigma and to enhance their provision particularly in the advice they give to clients and how that is better integrated into the wider support available from other agencies.

These new models are an opportunity to expand the range of assistance offered by food banks and other community organisations so that they can support a wider range of people in food poverty. For example, Ludlow Food bank is experimenting with the provision of fresh fruit and vegetables via a voucher scheme. Oswestry Food bank is working with local primary schools to identify families who are struggling over the summer holidays when there are no free school meals. Whitchurch Food bank is working with the local hospital to provide food parcels to elderly people on release from hospital. Shrewsbury Food Hub is providing surplus food to support holiday clubs, Pay As You Feel Distribution tables at 2 churches and setting up Community Fridges.

These local pilots and our research indicate that there are a range of new initiatives which would assist people across the county in food poverty.

Community Pantries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food membership schemes supplied with food via FareShare • members pay a small weekly fee in return for a selection of food
Community fridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • located in community spaces • open access to surplus/donated food
Community cafes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affordable volunteer operated community run cafe
Good Food Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • based in village halls/community centres • communal meals prepared by volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help overcome social isolation • Rockspring community centre offers a two-course meal for £2 • Communal food ordering • Could also act as an information point/advice hub
Affordable food box schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low cost food boxes delivered to people's doors • similar schemes operate in Derbyshire • work well to combat rural food poverty
Food co-ops run from community centres/schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Wales there are over 300 food co-ops, many of which are run from community halls and schools • communal buying means that communities can access food at lower cost
Promotion of the Healthy Start Voucher scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3.10 per week available to families on low incomes with young children • current take up rate in Shropshire is 62% of eligible families
Voucher schemes for fruit & veg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ludlow food bank is trialling a voucher scheme for fruit & veg • In London fruit & veg is prescribed via Alexandra Rose vouchers
Food for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday projects which offer free food to those in receipt of free school meals • Free breakfast clubs
Food assistance on hospital discharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food buying for elderly patients on discharge • Food banks like Whitchurch are already starting to offer

We have identified a number of key principles to take into account when designing new services:

Services should be dignified, avoid stigma and be provided in an environment where people feel safe

Skills building courses should enhance confidence and autonomy and be useful to the individual

Services should be designed with multiple benefits in mind

Services should be built from the grassroots, building on existing structures rather than undermine existing resources

Services where food is available should have well publicised clear rules on eligibility and food should be offered without judgement

All new services need sufficient funding and co-ordination and a long-term plan

5 Conclusions

There are things that can be done. The action plan, which will be published later this year, will clarify what we feel can be done to combat food poverty in Shropshire. It is a scoping study, designed to identify opportunities and the organisations who could implement them. Further work is needed to develop a detailed implementation plan which makes clear the costs, benefits and phasing of the work.

Being able to implement new initiatives identified in the Action Plan would particularly help to reduce the risk of families in Shropshire experiencing long term food poverty by providing connected support services and increasing the capacity of families to access low cost healthy food to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet. It will clearly benefit families and enable children to grow up healthily and increase concentration at school. However, it will also have wider benefits, including increasing community resilience, bringing people together over food to overcome social isolation, and reducing health related issues connected to poor diet and malnutrition.

The ability of communities to meet their own needs remains a high priority and the issue of food poverty for Shropshire's residents, its causes and potential solutions needs to be part of any planning so that pathways to and from this provision are cemented.

The Food Poverty Action Plan will prioritise opportunities for improving the current situation in Shropshire. Some actions will be "easy wins" such as connecting up existing support, embedding a clear focus on food into existing programmes which are already funded, or improving the knowledge and take-up of Healthy Start Vouchers and maximisation of family income. However, new resources would be needed to implement new concepts like community pantries and food co-ops, wherever possible building on the resources already available within each community such as schools, GP surgeries, existing shops or community halls. Funding will be needed for co-ordination, research work and development of funding bids for implementation.

The detailed implementation plan would identify how resources for work across the county can be secured by integrating actions into existing programmes, through grant funding from statutory bodies and trusts and foundations and through social enterprise.

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None to date

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Action Plan - Final Progress report