

The **Communities Scrutiny Panel** have asked to monitor progress on the following issues. This briefing contains the latest position as at 19 September 2019

Subject : Food Banks and Food Poverty

The following outlines work currently taking place to better co-ordinate the provision of emergency food. The first part of the update relates to work that has recently taken place and the second part is a working paper looking at options to move from looking at emergency food provision to more of an approach that takes a prevention approach to supporting families to avoid crisis. This is a proposal for discussion at a multi agency working group and there is currently no commitment from any organisation to implement the actions outlined in the paper.

Briefing Paper – Food Banks and Emergency Food Provision

A multi-agency working group is currently looking at ways to better co-ordinate emergency food referrals and provision. Following the decision made by Care to refocus their Grimsby activities on housing there was a potential for the system of food collection and distribution (which Care had set up and operated for a number of years) to break down. Partner agencies came together to look at the options moving forward and the Rock Foundation agreed to be the lead food bank provider. A single referral form was developed so that all referral agencies could send people to Rock to receive food.

During the meetings on options it also became clear that a number of other organisations were operating as food banks

or provide access to emergency food. The attached leaflet shows organisations that have agreed to have their details shared with referral organisations so there is some choice in terms of how people in need of food can access it.

At the multi-agency meetings we have also tried to capture what data is collected by referral organisation to try to establish a picture of the individuals and families in need of food and the underlying reason for the referral. We are trying (although it is proving rather difficult) to move away from referring because someone says they need food to finding out the cause of the need for food and then signposting to the most appropriate organisation to address that issue. Problems we have encountered with this include;

- VCS organisations don't want to be seen as the 'food police'
- VCS organisations don't have the capacity to do a proper assessment of the individual so don't know what the real issue is (and may not be able to effectively signpost if they do find out the real issue as they don't know who the best organisation is to deal with the issue)
- If someone needs food unless support is given where they are getting the food from they are then unlikely to go elsewhere for the support that someone else thinks they need – they basically want food!

So where we are currently at is;

- All food providers have been contacted to share their details with referring organisations – the attached poster is now used by

- referrers and gives a bit of choice and geographical spread
- We have a single referral form that tries to capture the wider reason as to why the person is presenting with a food need (although see issues above)
- Rock act as the main food bank provider – they have seen a huge increase in demand for food over the school holidays and expected this to taper off but so far it is remaining at a high level. There are also issues with where they operate from which may become an issue in the medium to long term (on a recent visit the communal area is clearly suffering from water damage)
- All providers are providing various data sets on numbers using the service, we are trying to capture and analyse this to see if it highlights any families in crisis that we need to capture and do more work with. We are also trying to find out the real need when people present at food banks. At the minute the offer is a 'standard' food package but we need to be better at identifying sanitary, baby and other items that the family really requires. There is also the issue of whether people can cook any of the food that they are provided with given that the wider underlying issue for the need for food maybe lack of money to buy food which may also mean lack of money to pay for utility bills which may mead an inability to cook or reheat the food provided.
- Potential wider implications of general food shortages and lack of access to food has been raised with the Brexit working group as if there are food shortages across the board donations to food banks may seriously fall off meaning there will

be little emergency food available to those in real need. Some potential actions which could be funded from the Brexit preparation fund have been identified that are aimed at minimising some of the risks that have been identified locally and nationally.

We are now working with Rock to try to identify new volunteers. There are also issues with food being donated to national charities outside of the borough and then having to be brought back to the area for a payment. Supermarkets want to support local organisations but are sometimes directed by their head office to use the national providers. We are looking at possible ways to work with the local supermarkets to ensure locally donated food is collected and distributed within NEL with no need for it to be sent to Hull or Lincoln. There is also a similar issues with local seafood suppliers who are sending surplus food to Hull and again if we want to bring the food back to NEL a payment has to be made.

Food is the primary focus of our efforts at the moment but we are aware that there are organisations that provide other equipment to vulnerable families. There is no data sharing so we as yet do not know if the same individuals / families are accessing a range of support from multiple organisations and whether that range of support is actually addressing the reason why the family is in need of support. This will be looked at next when we have an agreed way forward on food. The next multi-agency meeting is on 26th September and the minutes can be shared if they would be of interest.

Draft Discussion Paper (paper 2)

Food poverty can be defined as “the inability of individuals and households to obtain an adequate and nutritious diet because they cannot afford healthy food”. People can find themselves in food poverty due to a financial crisis, but in many cases people find themselves unable to afford healthy food over extended periods of time. Food poverty is an issue affecting many households in North East Lincolnshire. Families and individuals may be increasingly financially squeezed as a result of increases in the cost of living combined with slow wage increases and the cumulative impact of welfare reforms on both working and non-working households. In many cases the food budget is the only area where households can cut their spending.

We have formed a multi-agency working group that is committed to work together to tackle food poverty. Our membership includes public, faith and voluntary organisations including food banks. The group is exploring a more co-ordinated approach to food poverty that also recognises the causation factors which could be prevented. The following are the suggested areas of action;

Enhancing emergency support for people in food crisis

Food banks provide invaluable support to people in food crisis. Recent changes have reduced the access points for food banks and collection and distribution has become more challenging. Food banks are run on limited resources, relying on the goodwill of the community for food donations and volunteers to run each session.

Food banks do much more than provide emergency food parcels to people in food crisis. Trained volunteers try to ensure that referrals are made to services that can help

clients with the underlying causes of their situation.

Action 1: Support food banks to build on the services they currently offer to tackle the causes of food poverty

Many food banks offer more than an emergency food parcel, however the services offered vary as do the client groups supported. With more structured use of existing resources and training for food bank volunteers or building partnerships with other organisations there is potential to extend the range of services offered to people in food crisis to help them move out of food poverty. Sousing and other support is available within the Rock food bank but further work is needed to check whether this is having the desired impact or whether users of the food bank are turning up for food and not accessing the additional support available to them during their visit.

Action 2: Enhance the range of food and non-food items provided in emergency parcels

Food banks rely on the generosity of the community to donate food items. A food parcel is made up of mainly long-life foods, and may also contain toiletries, household essentials and pet food. However, we do not have the data that confirms that what is provided is meeting the demand or the specific dietary needs of food bank clients. Food parcels for people living in emergency accommodation can be particularly challenging, as often there is no access to cooking facilities apart from a kettle.

A focus on prevention

Many people on low incomes are at risk of falling into food poverty. What is needed is initiatives which work with people before

they reach a crisis point. Many organisations are already involved in preventative action providing community meals, and access to low cost food.

The causes of food poverty are complex. For people with low financial resilience an unexpected life event can quickly spiral into financial crisis and food poverty. In many cases food poverty is caused by a combination of factors, including:

- **Financial:** Low wages combined with a high rate of part time and insecure work makes it difficult for many households to keep pace with the increases in the cost of living. The complex nature of welfare changes since 2010 have also left many households temporarily without payments or confused about their eligibility for support.
- **Access to healthy affordable food:** People on low incomes need access to low cost, healthy food. However, many people living in poverty do not have a car and cuts to public transport, particularly in rural areas, makes it difficult for families to access cheaper supermarkets. Even in towns access is an issue for those without their own transport.
- **Nutritional & cooking skills:** The UK government recommends that we all plan our meals using the nutritional advice in the Eatwell Guide, costing an estimated £41.93 per person per week. Households living on low incomes will spend significantly less, focusing on foods which are filling, rather than foods which have optimum health benefits. Building cooking and nutritional skills will help people to stretch their budget further and improve diets.

Action 3: Enhance advice & support for people on low incomes to help them increase their financial resilience and maximise income

The first step to preventing food poverty is to build financial resilience, however many services in this area have been impacted by reduced resources. Actions may include:

- Ensuring that people know where to go for advice and support on money issues, especially where to get debt advice and collating budgeting tips and local advice to reduce outgoings such as household bills
- Providing benefit checks to ensure that people are getting all the financial support they are entitled to and promoting benefits like Healthy Start which are currently under
- Promoting changes to policy which would increase incomes (the living wage, welfare reform) and working with local schools to ensure they develop the financial management skills of future generations

Action 4: Increase access to affordable healthy food through community meals, cafes, pantries, growing projects and surplus food

Increasing access to free or low-cost healthy food can provide invaluable assistance to people on low incomes. Both existing food projects and new food initiatives can be developed to increase access. Community projects have the potential to increase access at the same time as increasing well-being, for example by bringing people together for a meal. Projects need to focus on groups who are at high risk of food poverty, including children, people with a long term illness or disability, and the elderly. Actions could include:

- supporting community growing projects and linking farms to food co-ops at schools and community centres
- community cafes and meals,
- accessing surplus food through community food hubs, pantries and fridges
- food delivery services to target areas through partnerships with existing services
- building on innovations in social prescribing and voucher schemes for healthy food

Action 5: Encourage initiatives which improve nutrition and cooking skills

Building nutrition and cooking skills will improve cooking confidence and help improve diets. Skills can be developed through cookery courses, mentoring or sharing information via social media. A focus should also be made to ensure that future generations have strong cooking skills through ensuring that local schools are prioritising the delivery of the curriculum in these areas. Information could include:

- Meal planning and shopping on a budget. How to ensure a healthy diet on even the smallest of shopping budgets
- Nutritional knowledge and promotion of the Eat well guide to encourage people to eat a healthy diet
- Cooking confidence to encourage people to cook healthily from scratch with cheaper ingredients

Action 6: Improved access to cooking equipment, particularly in emergency housing

Many people in emergency housing are placed in hotel rooms where the only cooking facilities are a kettle, or at best a

microwave. People can find themselves living in this type of accommodation for extended periods of time. In these situations, alternative means of cooking a healthy diet should be explored, for example through the provision of a slow cooker.

Changing the landscape

Action 7: Build awareness of food poverty amongst policy makers, front line staff and the general public

Many people in food poverty do not seek assistance due to feelings of shame and stigma. Raising awareness of the issue and avenues for assistance should encourage more people to seek help when they need it. Training for frontline staff will ensure that people receive the best advice when they need it.

Action 8: Embed food poverty in council and NHS policy

Food poverty is an issue which is related to many areas of local policy. Decision makers should be briefed in the impact of food poverty so that they can take the issue into account when considering future policy decisions.

Action 9: Bring agencies together to provide a co-ordinated approach to food poverty

People in food poverty come into contact with a wide range of organisations across the borough. Bringing agencies together to work effectively in partnership will create greater impact and make best use of the available resources.



Scrutiny

... in brief

Contact Officer:

**Jamie Dunn, Commissioning and Relationship
Manager, Tel: 325952**

**If you require any further information please contact
the named officer or alternatively,**

Laura Cowie Scrutiny Adviser Tel: 324139

If you would like to find out more about scrutiny you can
contact us:

by email democracy@nelincs.gov.uk

or by post

NELC Scrutiny Team,
Municipal Offices,
Town Hall Square,
GRIMSBY DN31 1HU.

Or go to: [www.nelc.gov.uk/council/councillors-
democracy-elections-scrutiny/](http://www.nelc.gov.uk/council/councillors-democracy-elections-scrutiny/)



Crisis food poverty

Food banks and hunger are just the tip of the iceberg

Long term food poverty

Our approach focuses on the much larger group of people struggling long term to eat a healthy diet, and aims to prevent them reaching crisis point.



Food poverty: A preventative approach

What prevents food poverty?





EMERGENCY FOOD PROVISION IN NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE



Immingham Access Point
Immingham Civic Hub, Pelham road,
Immingham, DN40 1QF
Monday – Friday 12pm – 3:30pm
Tel: 01469 727214
(food referral form needed)



Grimsby Food Kitchen
18 Cleethorpe Road, Grimsby
Over 18's only
Sundays 11:30am
Tel: 07926 516857
and occasional Tuesday's at
11:00am



Holme Hill School, Heneage
Road / Wellington Street
Junction, Grimsby.
(Entrance: large gate facing
St Mary's Church, carpark
at the back).
Opening times: Monday
Wednesday, Friday
1pm – 3:30pm
Willow's Community
Church, Wingate Rd
Tuesday, Thursdays
1pm – 3:30pm
(Food referral &
carrier bags needed)
Tel: 07731849397
(line open for referrals
Mon – Fri 10:30 to 12 & 1 to 3)



16 – 25 yrs Emergency
Food parcels
Monday to Friday
1pm – 4pm
111-115 Pasture
Street, Grimsby,
DN32 9EE
Tel: 01472 321444



Centre4 / Community Shop
Opening times:
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday &
Friday 9:00 – 4:45pm
Thursday 9:00am – 6:45pm
Saturday 9:00am – 3:45pm
It is open to all who meet
the eligibility criteria.
Professionals may also refer
members in who are not in
the area and would benefit
from the service. To refer
Please email
Sharon.lines@companyshop.ltd.uk
with person's name, address,
telephone number and what
benefit they are on. We will then
contact the person to get them
registered.



MEGGIES WELLBEING AND
RECOVERY SERVICE – St Peters
Church Hall, Cleethorpes
Drop-in: Monday 9:30am –
12:30pm
Bread distribution with the
addition of cake, quiches and pies
Open to everyone. To order food
parcels please call Clair Mcdaid
Tel: 07982 910015



Oasis Community Space
Oasis Academy, Nunsthorpe,
Grimsby, DN33 0AZ
Tuesday, Thursday & Friday
1pm – 3pm
We provide food parcels
and supply free fresh food that
has been donated. We
support anyone coming in
need. Referrals taken from
professionals – will attend
with a support worker or can
take referral forms or emails.



Family & Elderly meals on
Friday 4pm – 6pm from St
Andrews Church Hall,
Albion Street, Grimsby.
Homeless or Vulnerable
adults in need (Adults
only) on a Saturday 5pm –
7pm from St Andrews
Church Hall



Offer hot and cold food on
Wednesday 12:00 – 2pm and
Saturdays 6pm – 8pm. Food
parcels can be ordered and
delivered on the same day. Open
to all, no referral needed.
Located underneath flyover near
old Telegraph building

YMCA HUMBER

YMCA Humber
Peaks Lane, Grimsby,
DN32 9ET
Opening times:
Mon, Wed, Fri 4:30pm –
5:30pm
Sat 9am – 10am
YMCA provide a hot meal
for £1.50 this includes
meal and pudding. A
vending machine is also
stocked with sandwiches
and snacks at low cost.
Residents / visitors /
friends / public are
welcome. Must book in
for meal at reception
desk on entry and sign in



