
Appendix B

Event notes and feedback report Emergency Food Forum held on 22 February 2016 at City Hall, hosted by Leicester City Council's Revenues & Customer Support Service

Over 56 delegates attended from the following organisations and departments:

- The Bridge Project
- One Roof
- Mosaic Church Food Bank
- Leicester South Trussell Trust Food Bank
- FareShare East Midlands
- The Centre Project
- Khidmah Cares
- The Peace Centre Food Bank
- Citizens Advice LeicesterShire
- Christ the King Food Bank
- Leicester City Vineyard Storehouse
- B-Inspired
- Barley Croft Community Centre
- Leicester CharityLink
- The Race Equality Centre
- Open Hands
- Community Advice & Legal Support
- Holy Trinity Church
- Kingsgate
- The Diocese of Leicester
- Faith in People
- Leicestershire AIDS Support Service
- The Trussell Trust
- The Real Junk Food Project
- Queen Mary University
- De Montfort University
- Leicestershire Nutrition & Dietetic Services
- Leicester Mamas
- STAR
- Leicester City Council Children, Young People Family Centres
- Leicester City Council Food Safety Team
- Leicester City Council Equalities Department
- Delivery, Communications & Political Governance
- Public Health

16 May 2016

Emergency Food Forum 22 February 2016: What are the key issues for emergency food partners in the City?

1. Key Issues

1.1 Welfare reform

- Welfare reform – cannot get volunteers, people have to be in work and therefore cannot volunteer. This can also be a positive however with volunteers moving into work

- Further welfare reforms are planned, need is on the increase; not just food but clothing, fuel and other special requirements
- Length of time before benefits reach the claimant can be problematic
- Welfare advice - cause and resolution

1.2 Sourcing food

- Where to source food from?
- ASDA are no longer supporting food banks
- Continuity of supply, there isn't a shortage, but marrying the food available to the need
- Supermarkets doing trolley with tins collections as opposed to food parcels previously
- Does the supply meet the demand?

1.3 Food itself/other items

- Aren't enough of the right types of food, make sure it's the right food for the right people
- Need a good balance of foodstuffs
- Not enough healthy (nutritious) foods
- Worried that we receive food from supermarkets that people don't want anyway
- Surplus of some foods and lacking in other areas e.g. lots of pasta but little sauce
- Lucky in the city with access to fresh produce from wholesale, not everyone in city has access to this
- Food wastage is a problem
- With regard to provision, alternatives to donation bins in supermarkets were suggested, including purchasing items wholesale as is currently the case in East London. Additionally requests were made for assistance with the provision of toiletries as these are not provided by supermarkets.
- With regard to provisions and raising additional funds, Catherine Wray of offered an initiative that has worked in the Christ The King Foodbank: Unwanted foodstuffs e.g. table sauces could be sold on a 'pay as you feel' basis to local residents if the base of the foodbank is for example, at a community centre which has additional visitors.

1.4 Finance

- Financial capability of foodbanks a key issue
- The cost of providing food can be extensive
- Investment costs in items such as freezers/chillers which are a big expense
- Difficult to see how advocacy funding will work – still do it

1.5 Referrals

- Standard referral method is not the way to go
- Information sharing for referrals is cumbersome at present
- Some have been referred and turned up at the wrong foodbank
- Difficult to refer onto other government services, reluctance among families, busy social workers
- Still difficulty in recognising/ raising awareness of the best places to be fed
- Difficult to log and share points of contact between foodbanks, schools and social workers

- Issue spotting was highlighted as a major problem by Fred Jennings of the Leicester South Foodbank (Trussell Trust) where they ensured that they held electronic records of their users and with repeat customers, their problems were logged and they were sign posted to relevant advice organisations.
- Some Leicester City Council referrals to foodbanks in effect. Question posed to the council – ‘Are sanctions being taken with the knowledge that foodbanks will form a safety net? ***There is an important clarification that needs to be made, that sanctions are in fact administered by the DWP, not LCC.***

1.6 Fraud & duplication

- Understanding that fraud/misuse does happen with foodbanks however we do not want to make accessing a foodbank even more stigmatised
- Understanding of greater needs, ensuring we are holistic with individuals
- A network could help stop duplication, help refer and rationalise
- It was noted that there was greater clarity needed on eligibility criteria as there was current pressure on supplies and concerns of duplication in service users across foodbanks. This concern has arisen as a result of systematic, regular food insecurity for some clients (e.g. Christ the King Foodbank had clients who arrived weekly for over a year).
- It was offered by Jon May of QMUL that there ought to be greater focus on supply of provisions, rather than concern over duplication as that only consisted of a small minority of service users.

1.7 Over-regulation

- Overregulation may scare people away
- Transforming Neighbourhood Services – venues uncertain where to get help now

1.8 Communications

- Media representations e.g. ‘benefit cheats’
- Breaking the chain of stigma
- Knowing the location of other food banks, a list of hot food providers in particular is needed e.g. Gurdwaras
- It was suggested that an overall bigger picture could be provided
- Informal support networks – Derbyshire has a coordinator at the council
- Communication between foodbanks is difficult
- Lack of information about the rest of the city
- Use Facebook to maintain a network (should be kept secret); this can be used for clothes bank purposes and for sharing other resources such as transport. Perhaps one person could maintain to keep secret
- Recognition that the council will not be able to facilitate it but support it
- Aileen Smith from Leicester Nutrition and Dietetic Services (NHS) also offered suggestions for better support to service users on the nutritional value of foods and the use of suggestion lists for donors in local publications on which items are most needed in the local foodbanks.

1.9 Distribution/logistics

- Allocation of resources and greater transparency of resources

- Duplication of hot food provision – increase in demand in this area as well
- How to ensure the fair distribution of food
- Food to central distribution depots and central purchasing power
- Food miles – how long it takes for food to reach the right destination varies wildly
- More distribution needed and better co-ordination
- Advice and capacity
- Transport – i.e. getting food to the centre for one foodbank
- Happy that foodbanks are so diverse
- Back of store supplies should be linked with social distribution – Leicester wholesale market network could facilitate
- Soon Tesco will be introducing a paid coordinator who will work in Leicester

1.10 Collection and distribution

- Collecting the food from Tesco, many customers had trouble with transport i.e. not having a car

1.11 Volunteering

- Getting volunteers involved with food drives
- Recruiting volunteers can be difficult
- Suitability of volunteers – i.e. one bad volunteer may take up all the time of a good volunteer

1.12 Marketing

- There should be a clear marketing campaign surrounding foodbanks

1.13 Recipient

- There is a need to address the individual needs of the person receiving the food parcel/hot food provision
- There are many individual, complex cases and these can easily slip through the net and because it is the food banks sole responsibility
- It was noted that it would be better not to have standardised eligibility criteria. It was suggested by Jim Munton of Charity Link that we could therefore have tailored questionnaires per area to determine the specificities of need and differing demands across the city.

1.14 Responsibilities

- Most foodbanks tend to acquire additional responsibilities: shelter/deliveries etc.
- Foodbanks are often important to users in maintaining social networks
- Signposting, currently work done mainly with Citizen's Advice and STAR
- Expectations of what foodbanks should be must be recognised, especially their limitations

1.15 Research

- How do we measure the impact on food poverty – requires money (council or university)

2. Network to Partnership

2.1 Structure

- Ownership – needs to be simplistic in structure
- It needs to reflect the uniqueness of the partners
- Linking provision with other services
- Focussed with clear objectives but also overarching strategies needed
- Current system doesn't work
- Danger of standardisation, in particular if it's just Leicester City Council coordinating
- Non-foodbank charities could also be involved and help
- Definitions:
 - Partnership – working together
 - Network – information sharing
- It would be ideal to have an enhanced network instead of a partnership to avoid standardisation
- What are the benefits of having a network? Would need to be discussed
- Equal share = equal effort?
- Will the foodbanks remain independent?
- City and County boundaries separate, but work could be integrated
- In order to ensure these meetings are constructive, it was suggested that we have smaller foodbank meetings to operate as a working party. It was suggested by Catherine Wray that Leicester City Council could host representatives from separate foodbanks to gather at these meetings and that each member be left with tasks e.g. to build relationships with certain supermarkets and use these contacts to ensure the supply needs are met across the city.

2.2 Procurement

- A few providers to choose from: Fareshare, Trussell Trust etc.

2.3 Regulation

- Information sharing is needed whilst respecting the uniqueness of the foodbanks ,not imposing too many rules or having no regulation at all
- Look at the capacity of each foodbank

2.4 Means of communication

- Possibly use an online network (suggested twice)
- Suggestion of having bulletins to update foodbanks/food providers
- The importance of communication in the process
- Run surveys, gather information and dispel myths
- Need quality information
- Could have an internet-based postcode search facility, this would need to have a dedicated individual who would monitor and update, coordinating this would be an important role
- Diversity of access from one portal
- Get the county involved as there is a lot of overlap with foodbanks
- It was agreed by all attendees that the partnership would be particularly useful to co-ordinate opening hours between foodbanks so as to ensure daily provision for residents in Leicester and that foodbanks were not only open during working hours, as appeared to be

the case for many.

3. Food options for all in the future?

3.1 Education

- 'Cooking on a budget' classes could be provided
- 'Growing produce' programmes could be implemented
- It was noted by Sally Etheridge of Leicester Mamas that issue spotting ought to also involve education for service users, to help their financial spend on essentials. For example, the knowledge that baby formulas all met standard criteria and that there was almost no difference in nutritional value between brands despite the differences in cost.

3.2 Food provision

- Retailers are changing their attitude to us and they are coming to us rather than us approaching them all the time
- Food availability will not decrease and foodbanks can now suggest "we need this..."
- Incumbent upon the foodbanks to want fresh foods, but also to want the chillers/freezers to support this
- Possibility of bypassing the supermarkets entirely and instead contacting wholesalers direct
- Current foodbanks receive updates from providers "we have..." and a price but 'if it is not delivered for free why should I buy it? Also it may not necessarily be products that I need.'

3.3 Finance

- Foodbanks are fighting for the same funding, the core finance
- Donation amounts, these can fluctuate
- Capital investment – Fridge freezers for one foodbank acquired from monies raised at a charity event. Buildings are also needed all the time for storage. Kitchen facilities were lacking with one foodbank despite having storage space.

3.4 Community Supermarkets

- This may require a membership scheme similar to co-operatives, no restrictions would be a problem
- More community based or community-led activity
- Run by the community, and heavily discounted
- The local community decides who needs help the most
- Run by volunteers, would need good management
- A community shop would be ideal, but would still need to have an emergency provision

3.5 Outlook

- Decrease in funding potentially in the future
- Less holistic, looking at re-use/ furniture
- Other resources come into play more, not just food
- ESPO – pot to buy staples for the family (suggested twice)
- Seeing customers make informed decisions
- Sustainability – future sustainability of food provision

- Funding to start community supermarkets to keep them going?
- Community hub? Organic – local grown
- Community shop/supermarket staff – costs – business model would be needed
- Eligibility – green shield stamps
- Food availability in the future?
- It was noted that school holidays led to increased pressure on foodbanks as more families asked for help at this time. Breakfast clubs are already at capacity and are very much in demand
- Discussions around the downsizing of supermarkets. If they do downsize this could be an opportunity for foodbanks to acquire additional food

3.6 Communication

- Contact with supermarkets, contact levels may change between retailers
- Better communication is needed with the supermarkets, together we can present a stronger voice and are able to request items rather than have what is left over
- Getting the message out to everyone – particularly with ‘missed’ groups
- Communication needn’t be too complex, it could be a WhatsApp group or private Facebook page saying “I have... available”. Also suggested was Googlesheets/Dropbox
- Suggested an equivalent of Freecycle network for food

3.7 Logistics

- Biggest problem is having a supply chain – ideally similar to supermarkets, they have plentiful transport
- A central distribution network is needed, also in a way that works for that location. Whilst there is a current barter system running successfully across some foodbanks, it was suggested that this could be improved if there were a centralised foodbank resource/ depository in the city. This would eliminate competition between foodbanks and ensure that the different areas in the city were better catered for. For example, it was noted by Catherine Wray of Christ the King Foodbank and Eric Waweru of the Centre Project that whilst there was a need for cereal in Braunstone due to large families in the area, the Centre Project had surplus cereal that service users did not need.

3.8 Advice

- Providing advice as part of the service will be more commonplace in the future

3.9 Volunteers

- What will the volunteering landscape be in the future?
- It was also noted that there were concerns at present about the high turnover of volunteers
- Managing volunteers is a full-time job in itself
- Continuity of volunteers, intention is there but may not follow through
- DWP can provide volunteers for 8 weeks at a time

3.10 Welfare

- It was noted by Cath Lewis from STAR that we were in danger of missing the broader crisis, and that following on from the implications of Universal Credit, long term support will be needed for food bank users. It is therefore important to address problems within the benefits

system an recognise difficulties such as the benefit cap which will mean that some service users (e.g. large families) will remain dependent of foodbanks indefinitely.