



SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD Report

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| Meeting Date | 18th April 2024 | | | |
| Title of report | Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance Report | | | |
| This report is for (You will have been advised which applies) | Discussion and agreement of recommendations | Approval of recommendations (With discussion by exception) | x | Information only (No recommendations) |
| Reporting Officer & email | Helen Brown, Coordinator Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance HelenBrown@cabshropshire.org.uk | | | |
| Which Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this report address? Please tick all that apply | Children & Young People | x | Joined up working | x |
| | Mental Health | x | Improving Population Health | x |
| | Healthy Weight & Physical Activity | x | Working with and building strong and vibrant communities | x |
| | Workforce | | Reduce inequalities (see below) | |
| What inequalities does this report address? | This report looks at how wider national trends in foodbank demand, usage, and sustainability are being reflected in Shropshire. In particular there is information on the people using food banks. | | | |

Report content

1. Executive Summary

This brief report sets out the current climate for food banks in Shropshire. Post-pandemic and during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis heading into the winter of 2023. As the new coordinator for the SFPA, I wanted to observe how food banks are operating in an increasingly difficult environment. Moreover, what as an alliance we can do to support them.

2. Recommendations

Income Maximisation - Our research estimates there is up to £24 million in unclaimed in Universal Credit, £9 million in Council Tax support, and £8 million in unclaimed Housing Benefit (pension age) per year, in Shropshire alone. This research is based upon the Policy in Practice methodology in: 'Missing out: £19 billion of support goes unclaimed each year'.

This analysis shows there is a need to raise awareness in Shropshire of how incomes can be maximised. We need to create an understanding with the public, especially users of food banks, that there may be additional income they are entitled to or budget changes they could make. In the hopes of relieving some of the pressure on food banks and with the aim, it can protect some from falling into food poverty.

Whilst not an option open to all those in vulnerable situations, e.g. those on negative budgets, it could alleviate the financial pressures for others. Food bank coordinators noted that when benefit recipients received the cost-of-living payments the demand went down, demonstrating the power and importance of a cash-first approach.

Partnership Working - A food banks' role is changing, once viewed as a rarity they are becoming part of British daily and cultural life, and the institutions expected to help the most vulnerable in society.

The shift in the role of food banks has coincided with the expansion of services offered by food banks

e.g. access to face-to-face Citizens Advice advisors, blood pressure checks, housing advice, etc. This support offered to clients works well and offers clients a wraparound service that supports people with their underlying issues which is leading to food insecurity.

However, the complexity of needs now presenting at food banks means there is more that needs to be done. The geographically patchy nature of support offered means there are vulnerable clients not getting the same level of wraparound support as others. What this does provide, however, is an opportunity for partners across the system to work more closely together. For example, those accessing support from food banks overwhelmingly have long term health conditions or disabilities. This is a place in which health care providers can forge valuable links with potentially underrepresented communities.

The SFPA can help to forge these links by co-ordinating the support available to those using the food banks through the valuable links we have created with the food banks across the county.

Continued Support for Food Banks - Finally, the biggest challenge facing food banks is the drop in donations and the rise in demand. Donation levels are often affected by national and international influences on people's income. As this report has shown food banks are under increasing strain and there is a risk that food banks will not be available in some parts of the county. We recommend this situation is closely monitored by those across the system and organisations consider what support they can offer to their local food bank.

The Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance will continue to provide infrastructure support to food banks and sharing information about the challenges food bank and food bank clients face.

3. Report

See Appendix 1 - Food Banks in Shropshire Report

<https://www.shropshirefoodpoverty.org.uk/general-6>

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| Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal (NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation) | N/A | |
| Financial implications (Any financial implications of note) | N/A | |
| Climate Change Appraisal as applicable | N/A | |
| Where else has the paper been presented? | System Partnership Boards | |
| | Voluntary Sector | |
| | Other | SHIPP and GP board. It has been discussed at the Healthy Lives Steering Group. |

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) Portfolio holders can be found [here](#) or your organisational lead e.g., Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Food Banks in Shropshire Report