

Adults and Health Committee

Date of Meeting:	21 st November 2022
Report Title:	Right to Food Report
Report of:	Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration
Report Reference No:	AH/40/2022-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report, explores the issues of food poverty and insecurity in Cheshire East following a Spotlight Review Event on the 'Right to Food' and seeks approval to move forward with recommended actions.
- 1.2. The Spotlight Review¹ held on Thursday, 30th June 2022, followed the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Critchley to Full Council on the 22nd June 2021 that the 'Right to Food' be incorporated in to the 'National Food Strategy'. Having been referred to the Adults and Health Committee, the Committee on the 27th September 2021 it was agreed that the Council "should develop its own Right to Food Strategy that meets local anticipated need over the next 4 years which aligns to the Corporate plan; to include a spotlight review to develop the strategy".

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report presents the findings from key research plus evidence from the Spotlight Review and outlines the projections in relation to food poverty in Cheshire East together with a number of options to support a motion to end food insecurity.

¹ Right to Food Spotlight Review Report ICE Creates

- 2.2 Right to food is a basic right², yet food poverty affects 1 in 5 households. The use of food banks is predicted to increase as the cost of living is forcing many to choose whether to 'eat or heat'³. [Appendix 1] Right to Food Event – Spotlight Review Report by ICE Creates for Cheshire East Council July 2022.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To acknowledge and approve the Five [5] key strategic recommendations which have been made. [Appendix 1] Right to Food Event – Spotlight Review Report by ICE Creates for Cheshire East Council July 2022.
1. Establish a **working group** and co-create a '**Right to Food**' **strategy** with service users.
 2. Establish a referral **pathway and process**. Providing residents with long-term support to reduce the dependence on food banks.
 3. Utilise and upskill a **volunteer workforce** to advise, signpost and make referrals.
 4. In collaboration with the Food Network, provide a **social space** for information sharing.
 5. Collaborate with producers and manufacturers to **support a food surplus model of food procurement**.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The recommendations were co-designed following the presentations and exploration of the current challenges experienced by our external and internal stakeholders. Reports of continuous high demand for food, combined with the sharp drop in donations is causing extreme pressure on services with food bank referrals increasing to as much as 150% over the recent months.
- 4.2. By establishing a working group and subsequent co-creation of a 'Right to Food' strategy allows for joined up working with Cheshire East Council and key stakeholders including the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise [VCFSE] sector. This approach promotes 'buy in' from the community and supports coproduction of outcomes reducing resource implications for Cheshire East Council.
- 4.3. Cheshire East Council, Communities Team has existing infrastructure to support with a referral pathway and process which would provide residents with long-term support to reduce the dependence on food banks.
- 4.4. Existing infrastructure exists within Cheshire East Council, Communities Team, Cheshire East Social Action Partnership (CESAP) and Community & Voluntary Services Cheshire East (CVSCE) and Cheshire Community

² Right to Food Spotlight Review Report ICE Creates

³ Right to Food Spotlight Review Report ICE Creates

Foundation (CCF) which can be used to utilise and upskill a volunteer workforce to advice, signpost and make referrals.

- 4.5. Engagement has taken place with CVSCE regarding the collaboration with the Food Network, provide a social space for information sharing and they are eager to be involved with this recommendation.
- 4.6. A jointly funded Food Poverty Coordinator role with Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Community Foundation [CCF] is in progress. The role specification will incorporate a number of the recommendations including establishing a working group and joining up existing food resources.
- 4.7. National action mirrors our recommended approach. According to the Trussell Trust which is the UK’s largest network of food banks, involving food banks and people with lived experience in shaping the plan to end the need for food banks is a key requirement. The UK Government should harness the expertise and commitment in communities across the country to end the need for food banks. The plan should be development across UK Government departments, recognising the interconnected issues which drive people to food banks.

The APPG [All Party Parliamentary Group] on Ending the Need for Food Banks is undertaking a landmark inquiry to explore the most effective and dignified solutions to tackle the growing need for food banks across the UK and needs to hear from people with experience, knowledge, or informed opinions on the issues that the inquiry is looking into. [Appendix 4] [APPG Ending Food Banks - The Trussell Trust](#)

5. Other Options Considered

5.1. All Options Considered 3.1 Recommendations

Option	Impact	Risk
Do Nothing	Food poverty in Cheshire East will become exacerbated. The number of parcels distributed in Cheshire East shows an increase up to the twelve months ending 31/01/21. ⁴	Risk to Cheshire East Council reputation due to coproduction of recommended actions undertaken at the Spotlight Review. Also, additional strain on existing CEC resources. The Cheshire East Emergency Assistance

⁴ Trussell Trust, End of Year stats 2021/22, (April 2022), available from <https://www.Trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/End-of-Year-stats-2021-22-FOR-PUBLIC-USE.xlsx>, accessed June 2022.

		<p>scheme is currently a safety net for people in crisis.</p> <p>The number of claims increased 32% in the 12 months ending April 21 compared to the previous 12 months (from 1263 to 1670). The number of allowed claims grew by 50% (from 675 to 1018).⁵</p>
--	--	---

6. Background

- 6.1.** Cheshire East Council (CEC) organised a collaborative 'Right to Food' - Spotlight Review Event which brought together a range of stakeholders, including local councillors, council officers and representatives of community, voluntary and faith (CVF) sector organisations who support local people to access food. The key findings of the report are reflected in the recommendations. [Appendix 1 Food Poverty - Right to Food Event – Spotlight Review Report by ICE Creates for Cheshire East Council July 2022.
- 6.2.** Overall, the Spotlight Review and additional research identifies a projection of increased food poverty with the rise in UK inflation having a significant impact. In the year ending 31/03/22, more food parcels were distributed than in any year apart from the previous twelve months. The number of parcels distributed in Cheshire East also shows an increase up to the twelve months ending 31/01/21. The Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) rose by 7.8% in the 12 months to April 2022, up from 6.2% in March. The Bank of England has warned that this is set to rise to 10% by Autumn 2022 and the Monetary Policy Committee expects unemployment to rise from 3.6% to around 5% in 2024. [Appendix 2] Poverty – JSNA. Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK wide network distributed over 2.1 million emergency food parcels to people facing hardship. This is an increase of 14% compared to the same period in 2019/20 and shockingly, 832,000 of these parcels went to children. [Appendix 3] State of Hunger – Building the Evidence on Poverty, Destitution and Food insecurity in the UK May 2021 The Trussell Trust
- 6.3.** The recommendations support interventions to reduce or mitigate the inequalities of food insecurity experienced by residents across Cheshire East.

⁵ Source: Benefits Section, Cheshire East Council, (09/05/2022).

6.4. In Cheshire East there has been a sharp rise in the number of people accessing food banks, which a recent study explains is due to low incomes, unemployment, delays in benefit claims and mental health problems. It is likely that the current figures do not reflect the true extent of food poverty, as the stigma and shame attached to using food banks prevents many residents and families from using food banks and from getting the support they need. The Poverty JSNA first phase recently completed, identified these key messages: [Appendix 3]

- Nationally and locally, there is concern about increasing levels of poverty in recent months which is projected to continue and worsen.
- Although not a proxy for all food insecurity, there is evidence to demonstrate a general increase in food bank usage in Cheshire East, which matches the national picture.
- There is food bank provision across Cheshire East to support areas of deprivation and also less deprived localities.
- The cost-of-living crisis will drive more people to experience poverty who will not necessarily live in the most deprived areas of Cheshire East.
- Further work is required to develop greater understanding of poverty through the next phase of the deep dive review.

6.5 It is recognised that food poverty will not be existing in isolation and that households facing food poverty will also be struggling to pay energy bill, transport costs etc. The working group preparing the Right to Food Strategy will take into account the other cost of living' issues as they undertake their work. There is also a parallel piece of work looking at the totality of the Cost-of-Living Crisis and creating an implementation plan to be clear on the Councils offer.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** Extensive engagement has taken place including the Spotlight Review which was attended by Adults and Health Committee members, Councillor Rhodes, Councillor Critchley and Councillor Clowes along with members of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector and internal stakeholders.
- 7.2.** The Spotlight Review – Right to Food rationale has been shared in key meetings such as the Winter Wellbeing Planning Meeting, Poverty Action Group Meeting and Food Poverty Network. Collectively these meetings are attended by CEC, VCFSE, private sector, NHS.
- 7.3.** Following the Spotlight Review a number of external stakeholder workshops have taken place where a presentation was delivered on the strategic recommendations.

- 7.4. The recommendations if approved would also lead into some planned Participatory Democracy work to discuss with residents about the impact Cost of Living Crisis which is being led by Public Health and the Director of Policy and Change.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1 Legal Services will provide advice and support to the working group and on the development of the suggested outcomes as may be necessary.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. The financial implications identified to date will be covered from existing budgets, for example, existing staffing resources. Should additional resources over and above those contained in current budgets be identified in the future these will be requested through future rounds of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1 There are no Policy implications that can be foreseen to date.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. The Poverty - JSNA found ethnicity plays a role with food insecurity in the UK with 21% of Black households, 17% of Pakistani and 12% of Bangladeshi households were food insecure [Appendix 2] special focus is needed with engagement with this community.

- 8.4.2. An EIA will be completed as part of this work

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1 Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Community Foundation (CCF) are working in partnership to secure a role for a Food Poverty Coordinator to cover Cheshire East. This will be on full time post. CCF will secure a host organisation for this post.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. Risk mapping exercise would be completed with any significant risks being escalated for action where appropriate.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. The recommendations will take into consideration the rural needs highlighted within the Rural Action Plan. Engagement of the rural areas will be an important principle. Engagement will take place with people from rural areas so they can inform the Right to Food Strategy.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1. Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK wide network distributed over 2.1 million emergency food parcels to people facing hardship. This is an increase of 14% compared to the same period in 2019/20 and shockingly, 832,000 of these parcels went to children [Appendix 3] Evidence shows that food poverty has significant impact on children's physical health and wellbeing.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1. There is strong evidence which links health inequalities to limited budget and low-income households often rely on strategic and complex shopping and budgeting practices to ensure that households are fed. Such strategies include skipping meals or reducing the amount eaten. This is often deployed by parents to cope with financial constraints in order to prioritise children's meals. This can result in nutritionally inadequate diets of more processed food, high in sugar and salt with very little fresh food resulting in poor physical health.

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1. The recommendation "Collaborate with producers and manufactures to **support a food surplus model of food procurement**" will prevent food wastage.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Kerry Ball Kerry.ball@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07929 842798
Appendices:	[Appendix 1] Food Poverty - Right to Food Event – Spotlight Review Report By ICE Creates for Cheshire East Council July 2022. [Appendix 2] Poverty JSNA – Public Health Intelligence Team [Appendix 3] State of Hunger – Building the Evidence on Poverty, Destitution and Food insecurity in the UK May 2021 The Trussell Trust [Appendix 4] APPG Ending Food Banks - The Trussell Trust
Background Papers:	Notice of Motion at Full Council that was referred to the Adults and Health Committee. https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=239&MIId=8651&Ver=4 Notice of Motion report that came to Adults and Health Committee on 27 th September requesting the Spotlight Review

	https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=964&MId=8691&Ver=4
--	---