



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 23 February 2023

Report of the Director - Public Health

**Continued provision of food pantries in Derbyshire pending
commissioning provision**

1. Divisions Affected

1.1- County-wide

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral areas in the County.

3. Purpose

3.1 This report seeks to gain Cabinet approval to:

1. Grant fund Rural Action Derbyshire (RAD) £0.150 million to ensure continuity of provision of the Affordable Food Network initiative (food pantries) from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 while a commissioning exercise is undertaken.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 Cost-of-living pressures have the potential to negatively impact communities across Derbyshire. The National Health Service (NHS)

Confederation noted that soaring costs of household essentials could cause a public health emergency, which would further strain services. Recent findings from the Office of National Statistics suggests that the cost of food has risen by 14.6% in the past year, with the average food shop expected to rise by £643. Data from the Food Foundation's food insecurity tracker identified that in September 2022, up to 9.7 million adults and up to one (1) in four (4) households with children experience moderate or severe food insecurity every month – this has a cost implication for local services, as malnutrition is estimated to cost the NHS £19.6 billion per year. This contributes the increasing prevalence of physical and mental health conditions caused by acute and chronic hunger and obesity caused by cheaper, unhealthy foods.

- 4.2 The impact of inflation, and consequently the risk of food insecurity is not faced equally: lowest income households face the highest rates of inflation, which was estimated by the Institute for Fiscal Studies to be around 7% in October 2022. This higher level is driven by lower income households spending a larger proportion of their overall income on energy bills, leaving many low-income families, people with disabilities, older people, and undocumented migrant families, at a greater risk of food insecurity. This has been confirmed in a recent health needs assessment (HNA).
- 4.3 On 11 March 2021, Cabinet approved the allocation of £0.300 million over two (2) years to RAD to provide a steppingstone out of crisis by creating a more sustainable alternative to food banks. The Affordable Food Network initiative was established in response. It focuses on building networks of community pantries that give people access to good quality, affordable and nutritious food.
- 4.4 There are seven (7) established food pantries, with an additional five (5) in development. Current localities with access to a pantry include Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, North East Derbyshire and Amber Valley. Given the geographical nature of Derbyshire, multiple areas of deprivation, and the challenges around supporting existing pantry users, additional resources are needed to develop further pantries in 2023/24.
- 4.5 The project initially estimated an output of 100 families per food pantry, however uptake by the public has significantly exceeded the supply. The current seven (7) food pantries have seen over 2000 households access their support, leading to some pantries having to establish a waiting list. This demonstrates the considerable unmet need in Derbyshire and the need for increased funding of this initiative. Challenges faced by this initiative include rising cost of food, rising cost

of energy, rising cost of petrol, reduced donations from the public and reduced availability of volunteers. This has been exacerbated by the cost-of-living pressures.

4.6 Given the unprecedented demand for this intervention, rising costs for households, and potential unmet need across Derbyshire, Public Health Senior Management Team (SMT) agreed to include this initiative as part of the substantive contract to be commissioned by April 2024, however this leaves a period without confirmed funding which this paper seeks to address.

4.7 Anticipated outcomes include:

- Reduced reliance and dependency on emergency food banks,
- Improved self-esteem and mental wellbeing for households who can access affordable food without relying on a foodbank,
- Improved self-reliance and community resilience by supporting households to help their budgets go further and reduce the risk of falling into debt and crisis,
- Increased opportunities to provide community pantry customers with additional services which may include a wrap-around financial advice service and/or healthy eating on a budget skills.

Cost of Living: Food insecurity and Winter Pressure

4.8 The Trussell Trust (an anti-poverty charity) issued a briefing paper which presented new research highlighting the negative impact that the cost-of-living pressure is having on people who survive on the lowest income. They detail the accelerating need – including from people who are working – as more households are pushed into poverty. Although central government issued payment to mitigate against the worst of the pressures, inflation continued to rise, and the cost of essentials continued to soar. In a survey, the Trussell Trust found that 64% of respondents had used their first cost of living payment to buy food.

4.9 In Derbyshire, the Trussell Trust reported that there had been an increase of 117.4% rise in food banks in Erewash, 47.7% in Bolsover and 31% in North East Derbyshire. Although food banks are available across Derbyshire, they are an emergency provision and unsuitable for long-term support.

4.10 Food pantries provide a service that differs from food banks: they strengthen communities and improve community connections, improve health and wellbeing (physical and mental), improves household finances which allows families to meet other essential costs, supports a

healthy diet, tackles food waste and nurture a sense of dignity and agency.

- 4.11 The requested funding is separate from monies requested in a recent Cabinet Member paper (23 January 2023) which seeks to grant £0.100 million from the Covid Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to Foundation Derbyshire to administer the emergency funding to food banks.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 There is no statutory requirement to undertake a public consultation on this proposal, however an online stakeholder engagement survey was carried as part of the Health Needs Assessment which provided insights from community pantry providers to explore the level of need and inform commissioning intentions.

6. Alternative Options Considered

6.1 Option One: Do not grant fund this organisation

This is not a preferred option as it risks the security of this provision and the residents who access it and poses a reputational risk to the Council as it has been demonstrated that there is an ongoing high level of need in Derbyshire with regards to food insecurity.

6.2 Option Two: Partially grant fund this organisation

This is not a preferred option as it would not meet the needs of Derbyshire residents due to the overwhelming demand already experienced by the food pantries. This poses a reputational risk to the Council as it has been demonstrated that there is an ongoing high level of need with regards to food insecurity.

6.3 Option Three: Commission a separate service

This is not a preferred option as would duplicate the existing provision. Although there is a planned commissioning exercise currently underway, there is not enough time to commission a service and ensure there would not be a gap in provision. This poses a risk to the residents who access it and poses a reputational risk to the Council.

7. Implications

7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8. Background Papers

Feeding Derbyshire and Financial Action and Advice Derbyshire grant extension, Cabinet member paper 20.06.22

<https://democracy.derbyshire.gov.uk/documents/s15260/Feeding%20Derbyshire%20Grant%20Extension.pdf>

Feeding Derbyshire: Affordable Food Network, Cabinet paper 11.03.2021

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

10. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

1. Approve a grant to Rural Action Derbyshire (RAD) for a total of £0.150 million to ensure continuity of provision of the Affordable Food Network initiative (food pantries) 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 while a commissioning exercise is undertaken.

11. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 11.1 To ensure continuity of service provision for households and to make best use of existing relationships, training materials and work already commenced by Rural Action Derbyshire to develop further pantries.
- 11.2 To meet the ongoing and increasing need in the Derbyshire population during 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 to enable more residents to be able to access a community pantry and reduce their food insecurity.
- 11.3 To support identified Public Health priorities to tackle issues related to food insecurity

12. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

12.1 No

Report Author: Victoria Clarke, Public Health Lead, Health Improvement Team

Contact details: 01629 536105 | Victoria.clarke@derbyshire.gov.uk

Implications

Financial

- 1.1 The proposed grant to Rural Action Derbyshire of £0.150 million from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 will be met from the Public Health Grant.
- 1.2 Total cost of grants to Rural Action Derbyshire is £0.150 million
- 1.3 This grant is separate from the additional funding to Foundation Derbyshire via Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) of £0.100 million for emergency funding to food banks enabling the purchase of food and associated costs due to cost-of-living pressures.

Legal

- 2.1 The Council has power to provide grants to voluntary and community sector organisations under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 Under the Council's Financial Regulations, grants of over £100,000 require Cabinet authorisation.
- 2.3 The Council's standard grant agreement shall be used to set out the terms and conditions for which the grant is made, it will also stipulate that the Council is not liable for any employment liabilities

Human Resources

- 3.1 There are no anticipated negative HR related implications attached to this proposal.

Information Technology

- 4.1 There are no tangible IT related implications attached to this proposal.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex.

There are no anticipated negative impacts from this decision.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 This initiative links to the Public Health Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) priorities on health risking behaviours and also supports priorities

included in the Council Plan: Resilient, Healthy and Safe Communities and Effective Early Help for Individuals and Communities

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

There are no anticipated negative impacts from this decision