

Midlothian Council Supporting Emergency Food Access

Report by A Lang Strategic Service Redesign Manager (Services with Communities)

Report for Information

1 Recommendations

- Agree council support for direct access to Cyrenians Food share up to £10,000 (20/21) and provision of council vehicles in the event of low food supplies, Covid19, EU exit, increased unemployment, winter weather and close the Midlothian Temporary Food Depot.
- Agree which emergency food options should be explored further and included in the November Food Insecurity/Access with Dignity Report. It is recommended that options for direct payments/food vouchers and a supermarket agreement should be investigated further.
- To note that a full report on access to food with dignity in Midlothian is underway and will be presented to November Council 2020.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to outline the emergency food support options for Midlothian for 2020/21 in order to flexibly respond to emerging issues which could cause or increase food insecurity.

A further more detailed report will be presented to November Council 2020 including recommendations for future development work to ensure we have confidence that those who need access to food can do so as part of their human rights and with dignity.

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3 Background

- 3.1 Currently in Midlothian there are 6 Foodbanks across Midlothian supporting our citizens. The majority are accessed on a referral basis, with collections with a few offering a delivery model. They are mainly operated by volunteers with few of them having limited paid staff. (Appendix B)

The food banks have a number of systems in place to ensure food supplies which include: community donations, arrangements with supermarkets/other suppliers and also through the formal Fare share subscription arrangements with Cyrenians.

During Covid19, Midlothian created a food depot and accessed weekly food supplies through the Scottish Government free fare share scheme operated by Cyrenians in the East of Scotland. On average the food depot supplied between 4 – 6 foodbanks per week, up until week eight and thereafter the number dropped to two. It is believed that when the route map was progressed the demand at each foodbank reduced and indeed this appeared to be replicated in other Local Authority areas.

Staff operating the food depot have analysed the options going forward to address future food insecurity issues. They recommend that a fixed food depot would not be required and instead that a rapid mobile plan is put into place in partnership with the Cyrenians. This would involve the local authority subscribing to the Cyrenians Fare Share food scheme when the need arose. Most likely in the case of an emergency or another pandemic. Currently the Fare Share food we have been accessing, has been funded by the Scottish Government Food Fund. This may not continue after September 2020 however we are awaiting confirmation.

The cost of membership is governed by the weight of food you expect to access ranging from £25.50 to £350 per month depending on weights and delivery/collection methods. (Appendix C). For this financial year these costs could be covered from existing funding/budget arrangements.

The rapid plan would be for Council staff and volunteers to make collections from the Edinburgh depot in Leith and deliver directly to the agreed food banks in Midlothian if supplies were threatened or low. If this model is approved in principle, further work with Cyrenians would be required to explore the practicalities. To date the depot arrangements have operated through the Council and third sector with a coordinated approach involving the Place Directorate and Community Transport.

In winter the current Midlothian Food depot could be challenging to access in relation to snow and ice. The Leith depot even in extreme weather is more likely to remain accessible with 4 by 4 vehicles collecting and then delivering back to each of the 6 foodbanks as required.

This model reduces duplication and costs of operating a localised depot whilst providing direct access to additional food when required. This would take into account winter weather as it is easier to travel in

and out of Midlothian to Edinburgh than across Midlothian in extreme weather.

Therefore it is recommended that the food depot is closed and that a mobile/flexible solution is progressed with the Cyrenians which would include confirmation of the cost model to be used in emergency situations.

3.2 Additional emergency food models

In addition to accessing extra food as described above, three other additional options to support emergency food access have been generated and are described below:

Option 1 – Direct Payment/Vouchers

We have considered practice from other local authorities through the national Covid19 Food fund group. A number of local authorities have operated direct food payment schemes into bank accounts or vouchers. These have operated with an agreed value of payment, an upper limit on the number of times this can be accessed and on condition the individual/family takes part in a session/s to look at maximising income and reducing outgoings. For example limits depending on family circumstances have been from £25 to £150 and this can be accessed 3 times in total in a year. Restrictions around spend on Cigarettes and Alcohol would need to be considered. An approximate budget on this model could be in the region of £100,000 based on 250 people accessing in a year with sliding scale of payments however it is difficult to predict demand in the current context.

The rationale for this option is that the on costs are lower than running a direct access to food provision. In addition those accessing the service can purchase the food they wish. This means they can take into account household food needs rather than struggling to create meals with a limited food range thus increasing dignity and choice. However currently we have no dedicated financial resource or system in place to accommodate this. For August and September 2020 the British Red Cross have managed the referrals to access the food fund support provided by the Scottish Government for Covid19.

If this is a model the Council would wish us to explore further, this can be explored with further details about this financial model being presented in the November Council Food Access with Dignity Report based on further research. It could be directly provided or a commissioned service.

Option 2 – Supermarket Agreement

Explore with a local food supermarkets if they could facilitate those referred by Midlothian Council to undertake an online order or click and collect service or telephone shop with pre agreed selection and financial amount and then to bill Midlothian Council, They would be required to guarantee a slot for those most vulnerable. This option would also require dedicated financial resources. If this is a desired

option then further work can be undertaken to explore viability and forecast financial costs with upper limits.

Option 3 – Food Boxes

Commission or directly provide food boxes similar to the national shielding model. Guidance has been given on contents of food boxes by the food standards agency.

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/food-package-provision-during-covid>

If this is a desired model, further work can be undertaken to consider viability, costs and delivery models. However this can be a resource intensive model and limits choice. Therefore it is not recommended to explore this model further, unless directed otherwise.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital, Risk and Equalities)

4.1 Resource

There will be a direct cost implication for the membership fees for Cyrenians Fare share dependent on weight and delivery/collection models. For example 6 food banks, monthly fee, covering November to March 2020. Lowest rate example total cost £25.50 x 6 x 5 = £765 (extra light), an alternative option is £350x 6 x 5 = £10,500, (900Kg + model). It would be unlikely that the 900kg + model would be viable in Midlothian due to the limited storage space and predicted levels of demand due to size and nature of the local authority area.

If additional models are to be explored then detailed financial forecasting will be a key factor in the report.

4.2 Digital

It is important to consider as we progress, additional options for those who do not have digital access or skills.

4.3 Risk

Food Banks and those supporting our most vulnerable in communities are currently meeting requests. There is concern that a spike in demand will be experienced if there is a local lock down, severe weather, EU exit and increased unemployment when furlough ends. Therefore to reduce these risks in the short term agreement is sought on rapid response measures for access to food. For the longer term a commitment to further develop a holistic approach to food insecurity in Midlothian will require to be developed ensuring dignity and respect, whilst reducing risks.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities

Ensuring equalities is a key principle of partnership working on food insecurity. Any new models would be subject to an IAA.

Appendices

Appendix A Additional Report Implications

Appendix B Food Banks in Midlothian

Appendix C Fare Share Subscription

APPENDIX A – Additional Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The partnership work on food insecurity can have a direct impact on the 4 key outcomes of the Midlothian Community Partnership Plan.

Specifically:

- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes through increasing readiness to learn by ensuring access to food.
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes through increased access to food and nutrition.
- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances through income maximisation as part of the overall food access work thereby improving economic circumstances
- Reducing the impact of climate change through a reduction in food waste.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☒ Holistic Working
- ☒ Hub and Spoke
- ☒ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☒ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☒ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☒ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☒ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☒ Efficient and Modern
- ☒ Innovative and Ambitious

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The food insecurity partnership work has Best Value at its core. The intention of this work is to reduce duplication, maximise the attraction of resources to Midlothian and providing the most dignified and accessible models for those in need within our communities.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Food and Health Alliance is a sub group of the community planning partnership and members actively link and consult with those operating food banks. To date these options have not been presented to the wider stakeholder group until governance is secured through this report.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcome

Food insecurity work is essential if we are to ensure positive outcomes for our communities through partnership working.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Our partnership with the third sector across a number of key areas adopts preventative approaches. The November Food access report will further explore this approach.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Sustainable development work is also a key area of partnership work between the Council and third sector partners. With Climate change specifically identified as a key area of joint partnership working which is directly relevant to food insecurity, fare share and food waste

Individual and Families Profiles and Options

- Families with dependent children (or care experienced Young Adults)**

AREA	PROVIDER	Contact	
Dalkeith Area including Danderhall, Woodburn & Pathhead	Dalkeith Storehouse. (Full Gospel Church)	Referral service from a professional working with the family. Phone or text referral.	Will deliver to the home same day or within 24 hours
Newbattle Area Including: Mayfield Easthouses, Kippilaw, Newbattle and Newtongrange	Newbattle Storehouse (Newbattle Churches)	Referral service from a professional working with the family. Phone referral	Will deliver same day or within 24 hours
Penicuik – Area: Including Roslin / Roswell/ Auchindinny/ Bilston etc.	FoodStore@ PNK Penicuik North Kirk, 95 John Street, Penicuik.	Referral service from a professional working with the family. Phone referral	Referrer / staff collection at Penicuik North Kirk at noon on Thursdays at Church hall (they do not deliver)
Bonnyrigg - Area	Bonnyrigg Development Trust anne Elliotbasc@gmail.com By Telephone 1 to 4pm 01316632555	Referral service from a professional working with the family. Phone referral Further Development Work Planned	

All Populations:

Serves All areas of Midlothian	Gorebridge Church Trussell Trust Gorebridge Church	Any professional can refer Phone mobile - 07789 173 276 (Janice) or 07597 359 910 A referral must be made by an agency and no-one can self-refer.	Client collects: from Gorebridge Parish Church Mon-Fri 10am until 2pm All population
Penicuik – will accept other areas.	Food Fact Friends	Any professional can refer & under normal circumstances will accept walk-in referrals & offers Café/ befriending role. Penicuik - St Mungo's Church Hall Monday & Friday 10. 30 -1pm Moving to purpose build premises on 17 September at 42 John Street Penicuik & open 5 days per week.	Referrals only no walk in service. Families can take the referral form with them or it can be sent to foodfactsfriends@gmail.com 07507 697109
Woodburn - will accept other areas.	Food Fact Friends	Any professional can refer & under normal circumstances will accept walk-in referrals & offers Café/ befriending role. Woodburn - MARC building on Woodburn Road Monday 3.30-5pm & Thursday 11am – 2pm	Referrals only no walk in service. Families can take the referral form with them or it can be sent to foodfactsfriends@gmail.com 07507 697109
Bonnyrigg Area – will accept other areas	Bonnyrigg Development Trust	anne Elliotbasc@gmail.com By Telephone 1 to 4pm 01316632555	Bonnyrigg Development Trust anne Elliotbasc@gmail.com By Telephone 1 to 4pm 01316632555

Appendix C (April 2020 figures)

Membership level	Monthly Weight (kg)	Collection from Depot		Delivery		Local Collection Point	
		Monthly 2020/21 Fees	Yearly 2020/21	Monthly 2020/21	Yearly 2020/21	Monthly 2020/21	Yearly 2020/21
Extra light	>100	£25.50	£306.00	£66.30	£795.60	£45.90	£550.80
Small	100- 300	£51.00	£612.00	£91.80	£1,101.60	£71.40	£856.80
Regular	300-600	£102.00	£1,224.00	£142.80	£1,713.60	£122.40	£1,468.80
Large	600-900	n/a		£244.80	£2,937.60	£224.40	£2,692.80
SUPER	900+	n/a		£350.00	£4,200.00	£320.00	£3,840.00
Multiple deliveries	600+	Should be charged at £10.20 per extra delivery					