

Report subject	Eliminating Food Insecurity: Access to Food partnership update
Meeting date	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an update on the work of the BCP Access to Food Partnership. There is much to celebrate in what the partnership has so far achieved, and local community partners are demonstrably helping families to build more food resilience. However, the challenge is growing – although the BCP area has some outstanding food support, Sheffield University research suggests people seriously struggle to afford food in BCP, which attracted negative local press coverage. In addition, rising food and fuel prices combined with changes in universal credit going into the winter will mean more residents are likely to struggle with access to food. Therefore, the Board are asked to redouble their efforts to collaborate on communicating key messages around finding help within and across all statutory partners, and support the continuation and sustainability of the partnership beyond March 2022.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Board members consider how they can help to support the longer term sustainability of the Access to Food partnership beyond March 2022.</li> <li>b) Board members identify how their partner organisations are able to help communicate key messages and share information to help residents more easily identify and ask for relevant support if they are struggling with food insecurity.</li> <li>c) Board members identify a dedicated representative from their organisation to be part of the Access to Food partnership and lead on the food insecurity agenda within their organisations.</li> <li>d) Board members allocate a future agenda item to discuss macro level changes that are needed to help improve the situation around food insecurity.</li> </ul>

Reason for recommendations	<p>To demonstrate support for the Board's priority to promote healthy lives through one of its key themes to eliminate food insecurity in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2023.</p> <p>To recognise that the funding for BCP Council's Community Food Coordinator post ends in March 2022. The partnership is exploring funding options to sustain the work of the partnership. It has submitted a preliminary application for 3 years' funding to the National Lottery and awaiting feedback.</p> <p>BCP Council has committed £30,000 in match funding to support the bid. It is requested that other partner organisations consider funding as well in order to strengthen the bid. Without this dedicated resource, the partnership will not be able to continue.</p> <p>To note that data and insight from multiple sources have highlighted that the combination of upcoming changes in universal credit and furlough ending, coupled with rising food costs will result in more residents struggling to afford and access food during the coming months and this crisis needs to be recognised by the Board.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Nicola Greene, Portfolio Holder for Covid Resilience, Public Health Dorset
Corporate Director	Kate Ryan, Chief Operating Officer
Report Authors	<p>Access to Food steering group including</p> <p>BCP Council - Amy Gallacher, Community Partnerships Officer and Daisy Carr, Community Food Coordinator.</p> <p>Public Health Dorset - Michelle Smith, Health Programme Advisor, Faithworks Wessex - Alistair Doxat-Purser, Chief Executive and Chair of Access to Food partnership</p>
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	Recommendations

## Refresh on the BCP Access to Food partnership

1. BCP's Access to Food partnership has a strength-based approach to its Vision that is to create "*a Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole where everyone is able to feed themselves and their family nutritious food, all of the time*".
2. At the March 2021 meeting, we agreed that:
  - Cllr Nicola Greene would be the Champion for the Board
  - Others would champion the issues in their own organisation
  - The issue would be linked into existing ICS development and strength-based approaches
  - We would collectively pursue prevention of food insecurity actions
  - We would build capacity in this area
  - Keep the momentum beyond the immediate Covid crisis

## Current status on food insecurity challenges for BCP

3. With the universal credit uplift (£20 per week less from 1st October) and furlough ending, alongside rising energy and food prices, the coming months will create financial difficulties for many, in particular lower incomes households.
4. BCP Citizen's Advice expects these combined changes to create a more difficult winter than seen over the last two years, with further insight "Universal Credit & Food Bank Briefing Paper September 2021" (see Background papers).
5. As a resident explained "The same weekly shop with Asda online and the 'same basket' which used to be £42 per week is now £57 with no extra's added in".
6. A recent report published by Sheffield University (see Background papers) compared local authorities nationally and identified the BCP Council area as 8<sup>th</sup> highest for estimated population who are worried about their food security (18.75%) and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest for estimated population who are struggling with food insecurity (23.82%).
7. In BCP, approximately 9,000 people in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are on furlough, which will also come to an end on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, many of which may become redundant. The number of families with dependent children on Universal Credit has risen approximately 50% in the last year (from 7,380 in March 2020 to 11,401 in May 2021).
8. Pupils eligible for free school meals has risen from 13.9% in 2018/19 Spring Term to 17.3% by Summer Term 2020/21. This coupled with BCP having higher than average rent levels is likely to mean a significant number of households will be struggling to pay rents and avoid eviction (now the eviction ban is lifted).
9. The Access to Food partner network continue to see increased demand compared to pre-pandemic levels. For example, Christchurch Foodbank are experiencing demand levels 3% higher now than in 2020. They are now feeding 614 individuals compared to 465 last year.
10. On 30<sup>th</sup> September, the government announced £500m of grants to help families struggling with the cost of living as other previous government local support schemes come to an end. The new fund will help households pay for essentials like food and bills and be distributed through local councils. We are awaiting further details at this stage and will update the Board at the meeting.

11. A more detailed analysis is provided in Appendix 2 by BCP Council Insights team on the “Current and Future situation in relation to Food Insecurity in BCP”.

## **Access to Food Partnership activity update since March 2021**

12. Since the last update in March 2021 to the Board, the Partnership has worked together to achieve the following actions. A full report is available in Appendix 1.

- a) Ensure everyone can access food when in crisis
  - Launched the ‘Listening Broadly’ work
  - 81% of the schools that have the highest level of pupils eligible for Free School Meals have been connected to a local community food projects to help support their pupils in some way.
  
- b) Equip individuals & families with the confidence, skills & resources to consistently feed themselves nourishing food
  - White goods given to those moving into temporary accommodation to enable people to cook nutritious food straight away
  - “Cookbags” and “Meal-in-a-bag” being distributed through Friendly Food Club and Food Banks
  
- c) Bring local communities together to identify needs, seize opportunities and solve problems, using local strengths and community assets
  - Neighbourhood Conversations organised in West Howe & Kinson and Bourne & Alderney have led to communities exploring the idea of setting up a community fridge and a community store with residents
  - Gathered lunch clubs and community meals to enable re-opening with confidence
  - Gathering growing initiatives to share ideas to distribute locally grown food accessibly
  
- d) Share good information about the local community food offering
  - Community Food Posters have been distributed to public community hubs all over the conurbation.
  - Trained 50+ additional frontline staff in identifying food insecurity and the community food offer
  
- e) Make access to food a priority in local policy and decision making
  - Worked with Southampton University and BCP Council Insights team to measure the cases of food insecurity and the future impact
  
- f) Built capacity in the local food network
  - Set up PPE hubs across the conurbation to provide free PPE supplies to community food projects.
  - 10 volunteers trained to Level 2 Food Hygiene, through free food hygiene training for the partnership

## **Activity with HWB partners since the last meeting**

13. NHS Dorset CCG: The partnership presented to Dorset NHS CCG Members including GPs across Dorset and are linking with other programmes to raise awareness of the partnership through Our Dorset's Integrated Care System
  - Building Health Partnerships
  - Joint Primary Care Relationship and Business Manager meetings to facilitate conversations with individual PCN Partnership Boards and explore how the work links closely with the PCN Population Health Management and Prevention at scale work as part of their CCLIP's as we move beyond COVID.
  - Social Prescribing Community of practice agenda
14. Dorset Healthcare: Initial discussion on how as an organisation they can promote food resilience in the community both as an employer as well as a health care provider (particularly in terms of their more vulnerable cohorts).
15. Poole Hospital: Working with Community Action Network to explore how the partnership can support the Home First project
16. Dorset & Wilts Fire and Rescue Service: Officially joined the partnership by signing the Access to Food Charter. Training was delivered to the Safe and Well team – focusing on identifying food insecurity during visits and learning the breadth of community food support available in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. The Safe and Well team are participating in the Listening Broadly work and we are exploring ways to gather insight from the team on their knowledge of behaviours regarding older people asking for food support and their coping mechanisms, and helping frontline staff to signpost to support.
17. BCP Council: Presented to ASC Senior Management Team at Access to Food and strength-based approaches workshop and continuing to work together to look at opportunities to connect this work more closely with the ASC teams. Training on the range of community food support available has been delivered to the Emergency Duty Service team. Training has also been delivered to BCP Council Housing teams – specifically 20 staff with the Resettlement Officers Team and Early Prevention Service, both working with those moving into temporary accommodation.

## **Priorities for the partnership for the next 6 months**

18. The following priorities for the next 6 months against the 5 mission statements, are outlined in more detail in Appendix 2. This includes:
  - a) Campaign to encourage continued donations of food from public
  - b) Encourage new community meals and add to food map
  - c) Creating info pack to make it easy to start new cooking initiatives, identify crowdfunding and sharing and sharing a list of cooking skills courses more broadly
  - d) BU and AUB developing plan with Access to Food team to ensure students are aware of how to get help and how to give help
  - e) Bring as many “growing” groups together to plan what to grow in 2022 and how to link in with food network

## Overcoming barriers to progress

19. The Access to Food partnership is working hard on limited resources to support the Health and Wellbeing Board's priority to eliminate food insecurity across BCP.
20. The work is currently delivered through a part-time dedicated Community Food Coordinator post that has been funded by BCP Council for the past two years until March 2022.
21. There is additional capacity provided by staff from key stakeholders through generous partnership working (BCP Council, Faithworks Wessex, Public Health Dorset and Community Action Network). Alistair Doxat-Purser, Chief Executive for Faithworks Wessex is an active Chair for the partnership and is fundamental in leading the strategic development and direction of the partnership.
22. The partnership is exploring funding options to sustain the work of the partnership beyond March 2022.
23. It has submitted a preliminary application to the National Lottery for £186,000 for a three year period, which includes a proposed budget for a partnership coordinator, communications and campaigns, website development, insights and research, network training and listening to those with lived experience project.
24. BCP Council has committed £30,000 in match funding to support the bid.
25. It is requested that other partner organisations consider funding as well in order to strengthen the bid. Further commitment from the Health and Wellbeing Board will greatly improve the likelihood of a successful Lottery bid or other funding applications.
26. It is requested that the Board discuss the longer term sustainability of the partnership.
27. Public Health Dorset funded a similar post a few years ago using non recurrent funds as it was considered beyond core business. It is open to debate whether this work should now be considered as part of core business going forward.
28. The partnership would like the Board to recognise that with the gradual return to the "new normal", the generous and dedicated partnership working that existed during the pandemic is becoming more challenging with other work commitments starting to take priority. In order to sustain momentum we need to allocate staff resources from across the partnership.
29. In addition, a member of staff from Public Health Dorset that is the representative on the partnership is leaving and we hope there will be continued dedicated resource and representation from across Our Dorset's Integrated Care System in order for issues and solutions to be addressed effectively.
30. As detailed in section 2, we expect there to be growing demand in the number of residents struggling to afford and access food over the coming months and increased demand on local community food projects since pre-pandemic levels. The Access to Food partner network is currently coping with the demand.
31. Community Action Network recently carried out a State of the Sector survey with local voluntary and community sector organisations (not just those related to community food) and identified the significant impact the pandemic has had on the local sector. About half (51%) of the responding organisations said that they are at risk of permanent closure within 12 months if funding is not made available to them and 56% of the 31 organisations who wish to continue their expanded services will need to access funding to enable this.

32. BCP's Access to Food partnership is focused on strength-based approaches to build community skills and confidence with access to food, including skills for growing, cooking and feeding themselves and their families nutritious food, and in turn build resilience within communities.
33. In order to support the voluntary and community sector with providing access to food to the most vulnerable within our communities, the Access to Food partnership and the work of the Community Food co-ordinator provides the space to connect organisations and groups together to share ideas, challenges and opportunities for change by working collaboratively. It helps to build additional support to help strengthen and build capacity and growth within the network, through sharing information, training and making connections, and in turn broaden the network of people that are able to effectively support and help those experiencing food insecurity out of crisis or to avoid and prevent it in the first place. This is particularly important as we experience those newly into crisis now needing to access support.
34. This work requires the ownership and support of the Board to ensure that food insecurity remains on the agenda and is seen as everyone's problem. We need to strengthen the 'no wrong door' approach so that frontline staff across Our Dorset ICS are prepared and knowledgeable to be able to help people out of crisis. It is important that food insecurity is recognised as a shared problem and that we collaborate to identify opportunities to help our communities. What more can we do as a system to help identify hidden hunger and the impact it has on resident's health and wellbeing?
35. This work links to the anchor institutions work of the system and having discussions around supporting staff and living wages.

### **Recommendations to the Board:**

36. Board members consider how they can help to support the longer term sustainability of the Access to Food partnership beyond March 2022.
37. Board members identify how their partner organisations are able to help communicate key messages and share information to help residents more easily identify and ask for relevant support if they are struggling with food insecurity.
38. Board members identify a dedicated representative from their organisation to be part of the Access to Food partnership and lead on the food insecurity agenda within their organisations.
39. Board members allocate a future agenda item to discuss macro level changes that are needed to help improve the situation around food insecurity. For instance, the Board and large employers together need to consider new standards in staffing contracts across BCP to raise incomes for those most at risk of food insecurity by widespread encouraging adoption of real living wage levels salaries, and an end to zero-hours contracts.

### **Summary of financial implications**

40. No set financial implications for the Board except the request to consider how the Board can help with the long term sustainability of the partnership.

## **Summary of legal implications**

41. None identified at present

## **Summary of human resources implications**

42. The funding for BCP Council's Community Food Coordinator post will end on March 2022 unless further funding is identified.

## **Summary of sustainability impact**

43. The partnership is focusing on growing initiatives and in turn this will help to reduce carbon emissions by growing local food. It also identifies surplus food wastage within the system and redirects this resource to local community food projects.

## **Summary of public health implications**

44. Pre-pandemic, nationally there was a rising trend in levels of household food insecurity (The Food Standards Agency, The Lived Experience of Food Insecurity under COVID-19, July 2020) which was demonstrated locally through 2019 Dorset Hidden Hunger event.

45. A recent report by The Food Foundation (see background papers) cited that Covid-19 has left more people than before struggling to afford or access a nutritious diet. It highlights that emergency interventions appear to have prevented the situation from worsening in recent months but warns the ending of this support risks elevated levels of hunger and deprivation with poor diets and the increased risk of associated health problems becoming the new normal

46. The report goes on to say that Covid-19 has dramatically widened inequalities in food security and access to nutritional food stating that throughout the crisis, the following groups have consistently encountered disproportionately higher levels of food insecurity, compared with other population groups, finding it harder to put nutritious food on the table - BAME communities; Adults with disabilities or life limiting health problems; Clinically vulnerable adults; Households with children (particularly low income families and lone parent households).

47. The other public health implications surrounding food insecurity remain the same as when the partnership first presented to the board in March and these are included below again for reference.

## **Summary of equality implications**

48. The partnership includes a workstream to focus on lived experience. This work seeks to engage with those that have experience food insecurity to better understand how they can be supported to access food and enable recovery and prevention. The partnership gathers feedback from community food partners and frontline staff about how all communities and residents access food and any barriers or impacts resulting from service changes.

## **Summary of risk assessment**



49. The Access to Food Partnership is currently reliant on limited resource and generous partnership working. The Partnership lacks a longer-term sustainable resource and funding strategy.
50. If the Access to Food partnership do not secure funding beyond March 2022, the majority of the work of the partnership will come to an end. This will have an impact on how local residents are supported in being able to access community food support when needed.
51. The Partnership's action plan includes several short-term objectives that could become delayed without sufficient focus and resources.

### **Background papers**

- [BCP Access to Food map](#)
- Sheffield University – Comparing local responses to household food insecurity across the UK – Executive Summary
- Sheffield University – Local Food Insecurity Estimates – Jan 2021
- Citizen's Advice – Universal Credit & Food Bank Briefing Letter
- The Food Foundation- The Impact of COVID -19 on Household Food Insecurity.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1. Access to Food Partnership – Progress report on 5 key elements of the Partnership mission

Appendix 2. BCP Council Insights – Current and Future situation in relation to Food Insecurity in BCP

Appendix 3. BCP Access to Food partnership Action plan