

**Report of Director of Communities and Environment and Director of Adults and Health**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 12 February 2020**

**Subject: Addressing Food Poverty in Leeds; ensuring residents have access to affordable, nutritious food**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- Food Poverty is a new and growing agenda, and this report is the first time the Council has brought together all the work being done across the city. The report outlines a number of areas in which the Council works with partners in the voluntary, health and private sectors, provides details on the latest projects and initiatives and informs recommendations for further work.
- The factors that lead to the existence of food poverty (or food insecurity as it is formally defined by the UN and others), in our society are multi-faceted but are primarily driven by factors that impact on people's ability to access a reliable and sustainable quantity of affordable, nutritious food. These factors are economic, social and/or environmental in nature and are primarily driven by the prevailing policies that exists across each.
- For example national policy changes to the welfare benefit system, the continued roll out of Universal Credit alongside an insecure jobs market, low wages and increases in the cost of living have all been attributed to being a factor in the rise of food poverty and insecurity.
- Likewise the outcome of Brexit and its future impacts on food prices, food imports and exports is also a cause for concern for the Council and its partners on future plans to tackle secure and sustainable access to food to those most in need in the city.

- Further the UK produces 250,000 tonnes in surplus food that is good enough to eat, yet only 6% is intercepted and redistributed to food providers and charities, while 94% is either converted to animal feed, used in anaerobic digestion to produce energy or thrown away and sent to landfill. If the scale of intercepting surplus food for consumption rather than waste could be increased, it would lead to huge benefits to the environment and for helping those most in need in our city.
- The growing scale of the challenge around this issue is significant. There was an estimated 33,645 people accessing a foodbank in Leeds during 2018/19 up from 27,902 in the previous year (increase of 21%).
- Leeds City Council is working with partners to improve food provision across the city and ensure support is accessible and available to lift people out of food poverty and insecurity.

## 2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The work set out in this report contributes to the Best Council Plan focus of tackling poverty and reducing inequalities, and achieving the council's ambition for a strong economy and compassionate city. The activities set out in this report support the Best City Priorities of Safe, Strong Communities, Inclusive Growth, Health & Wellbeing, Child-Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds and Housing.

## 3. Resource Implications

- All of the projects and services referred to in this report are being undertaken within current budgets and there are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

## Recommendations

The Executive Board are asked to:

- a) Note the work undertaken to tackle food poverty and insecurity and acknowledge the partnerships and joint working to support families out of poverty.
- b) Endorse the work of the Leeds Food Partnership. This group helped Leeds achieve the Bronze Sustainable Food Cities Award in 2019 and is working on an action plan for partners across the city to achieve the Silver Sustainable Food Cities award in 2021.
- c) Note the outlined concerns around resident's ability to access a reliable and sustainable quantity of affordable, nutritious food and how the Council and partners can do more to improve co-ordination, awareness and access to food provision.

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 Food poverty is a new and growing area of work, and this report aims to capture the true picture on what's happening across the city for the first time. The report outlines a number of areas in which the Council works with partners in the voluntary, health and private sectors, provides details on the latest projects and initiatives and informs recommendations for further work.

- 1.2 This is the fourth in a series of Executive Board Reports with a focus on poverty and inequality. With each report in this series, the Council consults with Leeds Poverty Truth Commission to ensure the work reaches and engages people who have lived experience of poverty and inequality in Leeds, and discusses the issues in accordance with the Commission's Humanifesto.
- 1.3 Through discussions with the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission it has become clear that the term Food Poverty does not accurately convey the issue at hand, and the Commission felt strongly that a scarcity of or difficulty accessing food is more accurately understood in terms of security, or insecurity. Their view also aligns with some of the most significant global activity and research on this agenda, perhaps most notable the UN Sustainable Development Goals through which SDG2 considers the imperative to "achieve food security".
- 1.4 This section includes a co-authored introduction by Leeds City Council and Leeds Poverty Truth Commission:
- 1.5 We believe that food should be available for all, yet families are waking up daily without enough money to provide a sufficient amount of nutritious food to fuel their daily lives. Our vision is for Leeds to be a city where food isn't a scarce resource for anyone, but instead is a place where we are able to use food to bring people and communities together in celebration of our diversity. Wouldn't it be an achievement if every person in Leeds had access to an adequate amount of food and could enjoy what makes us such a great and diverse place to live? Food has the power to introduce children to different cultures and develop a positive perspective from a very young age.
- 1.6 Over the last year we have seen a sharp 21% increase in food bank usage. The use of food banks is something that people only do when they have no alternative options – it is unfortunately an avoidable injustice. What's more, we know hunger doesn't only affect people using food banks, so how many families/individuals in Leeds are struggling in silence?
- 1.7 School holidays can cause a significant amount of pressure for families and many people in Leeds struggle to feed their children throughout the holidays, which can have a detrimental impact on a child's mental and physical wellbeing as well as educational attainment. We also know that a third of parents have skipped meals to enable their children to eat. In 2018 the council started to support a Healthy Holidays programme along with the third and private sectors. The scheme is not only focused on food but also on communities coming together, meeting new people and having fun.
- 1.8 Ill health, challenging life experiences, problems with the benefits system and mental health issues all play a substantial part in food poverty and insecurity. Providing people with the right support to overcome these challenges will play a significant part in Leeds achieving its vision.
- 1.9 This report's authors recognise these examples are just the start of all that we can achieve as we seek to make Leeds a city where food is part of a celebration from which nobody is excluded.

## **2. Background information**

### **2.1 Food Poverty and Insecurity – National Context**

- 2.2 Food poverty is increasingly referred to formally (both nationally and internationally) as Food and is defined as the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient

quantity of affordable, nutritious food. This definition is internationally recognised as 'a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food' (USDA, 2006).

2.3 The definition provides a means of measuring hunger, allows for international comparisons, captures the inability to afford a nutritionally adequate diet, and contextualises the lack of food as just one aspect of wider poverty. This definition was used in the Trussel Trust's latest research that looks at hunger affecting people other than just those who have used a food bank.

2.4 In November 2019, the Trussel Trust published the first in a series of research, *State of Hunger: A Study of Poverty and Food Insecurity in the UK*. This report looks at how many people are affected by hunger, which groups of people are most affected, where, and what drives people to use food banks. The results presented in the report will serve as a national benchmark for the subsequent two years of the project.

The key findings of the report revealed:

- Food insecurity in the UK affected around 8-10% of households in 2016-18
- 2% of all UK households used a food bank in 2018/19.
- The proportion of children affected by food insecurity was 11% in 2016, because households with children are more at risk.
- Most of the demographic 'risk factors' for being food insecure were also risk factors for being referred to a food bank, including low income, being a lone parent, having more than two children, living alone, being a renter (particularly a social renter), being unemployed and living in a household affected by ill health.
- The most common sources of income for people referred to food banks were benefits, with Universal Credit increasingly dominant. Relatively few received income from work, pensions or friends/relatives.
- Nearly three-quarters of people referred to food banks reported that someone in their household had a health issue, most commonly poor mental health (half of all users), while a quarter had a household member with a long-term physical condition or illness and over a third (37%) had someone whose daily activities are limited 'a lot' due to health issues.

2.5 A further report also published in November 2019 was, *The Case for Ending Hunger by End Hunger UK*. It was acknowledged that the key drivers of household food insecurity are: low income caused by the operation and processes of the benefits system, low wages, insecure work; and the rising cost of living. The report calls for an approach to do more to prevent people reaching the point of hunger by tackling the underlying causes of income crises, as the need for emergency food aid in the UK is forecast to continue to grow.

2.6 The report highlighted that the right to food was set out in the United Nation's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which the UK government ratified in 1976, meaning that the UK is obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food.

2.7 This report also advocates that the UK Government should commit to developing a cross-departmental action plan to halve household food insecurity by 2025, by addressing the underlying causes of poverty and destitution, in order to make good on its existing commitment within the Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger by 2030.

- 2.8 In April 2019 the Children's Future Food Enquiry report was presented in Parliament. This report was the first attempt to directly and systematically seek the views of children and young people living in poverty across the UK. The project's final report pulls together direct input from hundreds of young people, front line staff, academics and experts. Included within the report is the Right2Food Charter that sets out 5 key recommendations around influencing policies to ensure children can access healthy food, in and out of school, without stigma and calls for more to be done to prevent targeted promotions of junk food to children.
- 2.9 In October 2018, the Wasted Opportunity Report, commissioned by FareShare UK and carried out by New Economics Foundation (NEF), evaluates the economic and social value of redistributed surplus food, as well as the current and potential cost avoided by the UK public sector as a result of the charity's work.
- 2.10 The report found that by collecting food that would otherwise go to waste and redistributing it to charity and community groups, FareShare creates approximately £50.9 million of social-economic impact each year. This is made up of £6.9 million in social value to the beneficiaries themselves and £44 million in saving to the State (in savings to the NHS, the criminal justice system, to schools and in social care).
- 2.11 The UK food industry produces at least 250,000 tonnes of surplus food that is good to eat. Less than (15,000 tonnes) 6% of this is made available to vulnerable people; 94% of it is either converted to animal feed, used in anaerobic digestion to produce energy or thrown away and sent to landfill. The implication of this calculation is that, were FareShare and other charities in the food redistribution sector able to scale up their operational capacity in order to handle 50% of the surplus food available in the UK supply chain, the value back to the State could be as much as £500 million per year.
- 2.12 The environmental impacts of food loss and waste are not only limited to the volumes and greenhouse gas emissions arising from the unused food. There is a significant waste of UK resources higher up the supply chain in terms of energy, fertiliser and feed, water and labour required to grow and harvest this food, then the manufacture, transport and store the food prior to consumption. This all has a further impact of unnecessary additional CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions attributable to the UK and the associated global warming effects of these emissions.
- 2.13 Food Poverty and Insecurity in Leeds
- 2.14 National changes to the welfare benefit system, the continued roll out of Universal Credit, an insecure jobs market, low wages and increases in the cost of living have all been attributed to being a factor in the rise of food poverty and insecurity. The outcome of Brexit and its future impacts on food prices, food imports and exports is also a cause for concern for the Council and its partners on future plans to tackle the issue.
- 2.15 Latest statistics from the Leeds Poverty Fact Book reveal:
- Poverty is estimated to affect 173,000 people in Leeds (after housing costs are deducted from income)
  - A couple with 2 children are in poverty if they earn £425/week or less (after housing costs)
  - A single adult with no children is in poverty on earnings of £152/week or less (after housing costs)
  - An estimated 67,000 Leeds residents earned less than the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage in 2019 of £9.00/hour and over 10,000 Leeds workers were on zero hour contracts.

- Analysis of the Council's housing benefit data from September 2019 reveals welfare reform, including the under-occupancy charges affects over 4,200 Leeds households. The Benefit Cap is set to £20,000 per annum and affected over 550 households during September 2019.
- The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme provides support to housing tenants affected by welfare changes. DHP awards made in 2018/19 reached 3,320 cases. The value in awards and renewals totalled almost £2.9m. Of this over £700,000 (27%) was awarded to 1,803 priority groups with under occupancy cases in the social housing sector.
- Leeds moved to the full service digital platform of Universal Credit in October 2018. Full service means that all new claims to benefits that UC is replacing, known as legacy benefits (Job Seekers Allowance, Employment support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit), are now claimed to UC instead.
- Over 50,000 people were claiming out-of-work legacy benefits (February 2019) and 32,000 were claiming in-work tax credits (April 2019). Almost 28,000 people were claiming UC in Leeds in October 2019, 34% of which were in employment.

- 2.16 In 2018, Leeds City Council commissioned the University of Salford to undertake research into financial exclusion and poverty in the city. This was the third instalment of a series of research involving household surveys which began in 2004 and was repeated in 2010 and 2018.
- 2.17 During the 2004 and 2010 research, food poverty and insecurity had not emerged as an issue, and key areas for concern in this time frame was around high cost lending, lack of access to affordable credit and the emergence of payday lenders. The 2018 survey included a question on foodbank usage for the first time.
- 2.18 The 2018 study emphasised the importance to the Council and partners that work to address financial exclusion and poverty is as important now as it was in 2004. With regards food poverty and insecurity in Leeds, key evidence from the 2018 study revealed that 35% of respondents reported that they are borrowing for day-to-day living expenses. This was seen as significantly higher for those with incomes less than £200/week and for people with a disability/long term illness. This is concerning because it indicates insufficient household income to cover costs of food. This research also found that 6% of low income households had used a foodbank.
- 2.19 Latest statistics from the Leeds Food Aid Network (Leeds FAN) show that 33,645 people have accessed a foodbank in 2018/19. This is a 21% increase on 2017/18, and is approximately 4% of the Leeds population. When compared to national Trussel Trust estimates of 2% of UK households using foodbanks, Leeds is double the national rate.
- 2.20 There are 29 Foodbank Outlets (20 of which are within the 2 large Trussell Trust Foodbanks grouped under Leeds South and East Foodbank and Leeds North and West Food Bank). These 29 foodbanks provide food parcels via a referral from an advice/support agency. In addition to the foodbanks, Fareshare provide food parcels via referrals from the Local Welfare Support Scheme.
- 2.21 There are also 12 informal venues such as soup kitchens and drop in cafes that provide meals, food and sometimes food parcels without the need for a referral and approximately 12 outreach groups supporting people out on the street with food and befriending support. From the more informal approaches, it is known that 104,074 meal packs were provided in 2018/19.

- 2.22 Leeds FAN also supply survey data from Leeds South and East foodbank which provides insight into the impacts of Universal Credit (UC) on foodbank usage. Data from September 2019 reveals that 365 people accessing the foodbank have applied for UC or are in receipt of UC. Of the 365 UC attendees,
- 41% were awaiting their 1<sup>st</sup> payment of UC
  - 43% were having deductions from their UC payment
  - 25% were in work and advised that they did not feel better off under the new system
  - 34% were in rent arrears
  - 39% had received £250 or less for the month's payment (9% had received less than £100 for the month)
- 2.23 In addition to food, food providers have also seen a growing demand for non-food items such as toiletries, sanitary products, clothing and school uniform and have started delivering these items alongside food parcels.
- 2.24 It has been this local evidence and cross collaboration with partners that has driven the work to tackle food poverty and insecurity in Leeds.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 This report provides a review of the ways in which Leeds City Council and partners are working together to combat food poverty and insecurity.
- 3.2 The voluntary, faith and community sector have historically responded to local need and provided support for people in crisis, without access to food, from foodbanks, soup kitchen, churches to Council Community Hubs and housing offices.
- 3.3 There is also a growing awareness and recognition of the issue within the private sector. Partners such as FareShare and Leeds Community Foundation have created important links with private sector employers which has led to investment in local Leeds initiatives and in some cases developed into national programmes.
- 3.4 Food interception to reduce the amount of surplus food going to waste has a great impact on tackling both food poverty and insecurity and carbon emissions. Although nationally only 6% of surplus food is redistributed, the growing partnership in Leeds presents an opportunity to influence Government to do more and increase the proportion of surplus food being redistributed.
- 3.5 The Council and partners have set out how food poverty and insecurity is being addressed through a partnership approach detailed below. There is acknowledgement from all parties that more work needs to be done to address this rapidly growing issue.

### **3.6 Partnership Approach**

- 3.7 The Leeds Food Partnership group (LFP) : The LFP is an unincorporated association that aims to celebrate good food and contribute to city priorities by; addressing health inequalities, reducing food poverty and insecurity, supporting local food businesses, reducing the environmental impact of the production, trade and consumption of food and promoting growing and cooking skills. The Partnership is in a good position to support the development of existing and new work to tackle food poverty and insecurity in the city. LFP works inclusively with all sectors of the local food system, including producers, processors, caterers, retailers, outlets, education and community groups.

- 3.8 Leeds City Council Internal Food Group: In response to food issues in the city, a cross council Internal Food Group has been established to support the Leeds Food Partnership. This group helps consider the Council's role and supports cross departmental working. A recent example of action that has progressed following the meeting is the development of a "Family Food" leaflet which provides information for people at risk of or experiencing food poverty and insecurity about a range of food options including Free School Meals, Food Banks, Healthy Start and also wider support available from community hubs. The group provides a great platform to facilitate discussion and progress action on the cities food issues and includes representation from all directorates.
- 3.9 Representation at this group has also helped bring together many of the Council's key partners to tackle food poverty and insecurity and become an influencing voice on this agenda regionally and nationally.
- 3.10 The LFP was awarded the Sustainable Food Cities Bronze award which recognises the food systems partnership work and action that is undertaken in the city. Most recently the LFP has been working on an application to Sustainable Food Cities to continue the Partnership Co-ordinator post who is responsible for the development of an action plan to work towards the Silver Sustainable Food Cities award in 2021. The application requires match funding which has been agreed across Leeds City Council's Communities and Environment, Adults and Health and Children's and Families directorates. Key partners for the Council and within the LFP that have supported this work include:
- 3.11 FareShare: FareShare is the UK's largest charity fighting hunger and food waste. Through intercepting food from across the food supply chain, they redistribute good quality surplus food from the food industry and send it to nearly 10,000 charities and community groups including homeless hostels, children's breakfast clubs, domestic violence refuges and community cafes. FareShare Yorkshire launched FareShare in Leeds (FiL) in August 2014 in partnership with Leeds City Council, Leeds Food Aid Network and St Georges Crypt. The Council's Communities and Environment Directorate provides funding for FareShare Yorkshire to operate their food distribution centre to supply local foodbanks with food and continue delivery of the Local Welfare Support Scheme on behalf of the Council.
- 3.12 Leeds Food Aid Network (FAN): The Council's Communities and Environment Directorate also provides funding for Leeds FAN to provide coordination and support to food aid providers and provide data and insight into foodbank usage and the causes of food poverty and insecurity. The group helps bring different people, initiatives and institutions together who are involved in tackling food poverty across Leeds. The Network consists of foodbanks, food drop in's/soup kitchens, street outreaches/soup runs, parish/food pantries and certain forms of social enterprise such as 'pay as you feel' cafes.
- 3.13 The organisation produces mapping and signposting material which is shared amongst partners to enable accurate and appropriate referral information to frontline services and advice and support services. Their partnership approach also ensures vulnerable people are referred onto groups and services that can help people deal with their longer term needs such as addiction and homelessness.
- 3.14 Through working with FareShare, Leeds FAN supports foodbanks and parcel providers for the Local Welfare Support Scheme.
- 3.15 Their quarterly partnership meetings with food aid providers and public sector agencies across the city have led to the DWP providing outreach services at three Leeds foodbanks. Linkages have also been formed with Council Community Hub

staff, who visit foodbanks weekly, supporting clients with housing, debt and welfare issues.

- 3.16 The Council also works with other partners and networks that operate outside of the LFP and ensures relevant linkages are made within the LFP and Internal Council Food Group. These partners and networks include:
- 3.17 Leeds Community Foundation (LCF): LCF has been a key partner in Leeds's development of the Healthy Holidays Programme over the last 2 years. LCF has overseen the management, funding and delivery of the programme. Leveraging additional resources from the private and third sectors. The Healthy Holidays work with LCF is detailed in the projects section below.
- 3.18 West Yorkshire Food Poverty Network (WYFPN): The WYFPN, led by Leeds FAN meet quarterly and includes food provider representatives from Kirklees, Wakefield, Bradford, Keighley, Calderdale and Leeds. This group meet to share good practice, feedback on provision and insights into each area and to help facilitate effective distribution of food across the region through FareShare. Leeds City Council is the only local authority represented at this group and recognised as being unique in its support of food provision in Leeds. Other representatives have been encouraged to make similar linkages with their local authority to grow support.
- 3.19 The WYFPN has developed a relationship with Feeding Britain. Feeding Britain is a national network which formed after the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger published a report in 2017 to highlight causes of food insecurity in the UK. Through this working policy group the Feeding Britain network gathers evidence around key issues of food insecurity and undertake actions to push for policy reform.
- 3.20 Taking part in Feeding Britain's calls for evidence has enabled both the Leeds and West Yorkshire Networks to input into debates presented to parliament. Items that this group has contributed to include:
- Case Studies on Welfare Reform and Universal Credit
  - Information and updates on free school meals
  - Progress and the challenges of getting vulnerable people access to Healthy Start Vouchers.
  - Best practice on Healthy Holiday and Breakfast club provision
- 3.21 By working with partners the Council are able to add a collective voice to influence national policies. For example, in September 2019 the Council worked with partners to respond to a Select Committee Call for Evidence on food insecurity in the UK. In response to Leeds' submission, the Committee has highlighted Leeds is an area it would be keen to visit and learn more about, in terms of successful food-related initiatives and the work of local authorities with partners. Work is currently underway to arrange this visit in March 2020.

### **3.22 Projects and Initiatives**

#### **3.23 Local Welfare Support Scheme**

- 3.24 The Local Welfare Support scheme in Leeds, provides emergency provision of goods and services for those in need. In 2018/19 £536,928 was spent on direct award support which has resulted in 3,617 direct awards from the scheme covering items such as food, fuel, white and brown goods, flooring and removals. In addition to the 3,617 direct awards, 467 referrals were made to FareShare for emergency food provision on this scheme.

- 3.25 A review of LWSS is currently underway to improve the way clients access support services. LWS was designed to assist people in crisis once within a 6 month period. However the scheme has been flexible with its criteria due to demand growing each year. This has been a consequence of welfare reform and Universal Credit impacting more people in Leeds. Data has revealed how more people are needing the support for longer and are in crisis more than once in a six month period. The review aims to look at ways of engaging clients needing food to access wider support services and help lift them out of repeat crisis.
- 3.26 Part of this review includes a trial providing food parcels from five Council Community Hubs. This will be a new way of awarding food through the scheme and clients will be able to collect up to 3 parcels of food from their local Community Hub. The trial will initially take place in Headingley, Yeadon, Pudsey, Seacroft North & Seacroft South. The trial will complete in January and if successful, will be rolled out to all Hubs across Leeds.
- 3.27 Since April 2015 FareShare Yorkshire and Leeds FAN have provided the food parcel service for the Local Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS). This has resulted in a reduction in the costs to the scheme associated with supplying food but also allowed continued food supply to those people in the most immediate need.
- 3.28 Key projects delivered with FareShare
- 3.29 FareShare support food aid providers in the city who are engaged in providing food for vulnerable people alongside providing support to help people out of crisis and tackling the underlying causes of food poverty and insecurity.
- 3.30 In the last 12 months, the Council's partnership work with FareShare has led to the following projects and outcomes:
- 172 Charities, Community groups and Schools have accessed food through the work of FareShare in Leeds as often as every week.
  - Total food (Chilled, Ambient and Frozen) provided to registered organisations was 381,000kg (179,000kg in 2018), helping provide over 907,000 meals (426,000 meals in 2018). The approximate retail value of this food is £571,000.
  - In summer 2019, 39 Healthy Holiday Clubs were supported through Leeds Community Foundation and a further 18 sites supported through Catering Leeds with 15.2 tonnes of food (36,000 meals) provided by FareShare.
  - Supported the food element of the Local Welfare Support Scheme, processing referrals and providing emergency food parcels.
  - Partnered with the Council, organisations and local business to increase awareness, share resources and explore new initiatives to source more food and increase support for Leeds residents.
  - In November 2019, through the Council's Healthy Eating advisor, FareShare approached schools across the city with an offer of free fruit. 31 schools took up the opportunity with approximately 11,146 apples distributed to school children.
  - Just over 80 requests were made for crates in Council locations across the city for 2 weeks in October 2019. Locations included hubs, libraries, schools, sports centres as well as individual offices. This resulted in 1.54 tonnes of food collected and was enough food to provide 3,667 meals.
- 3.31 FareShare's work and strong partnership in Leeds has also highlighted the issue of food poverty and insecurity to large local private sector employers:

- Asda's Fight Hunger Create Change programme is a partnership between Asda, FareShare and the Trussell Trust which aims to lift one million people out of food poverty across the UK. Asda has been a key private sector partner in Leeds and their work on this programme aims to grow their existing food donation activities so every store has the ability to donate edible surplus food to local food banks and community groups.
- During 2019, FareShare led 43 corporate volunteering days with ASDA, Yorkshire Building Society, Hitachi, HSBC, First Direct, Royal Mail and Arla. This work has ranged from assisting at the warehouse to providing company vehicles for deliveries.
- FareShare have also received support from the John Lewis Foundation to launch a targeted Employability Programme in September 2018. This bespoke programme worked with referrers across the city to provide placements at FareShare for individuals to build confidence, skills and job prospects. At the end of October 2019 the programme supported 36 people and provided 51 accredited Fork Lift Truck Permits and over 5,200 hours of volunteering. From this support, 15 individuals have moved into full time employment.

### 3.32 Healthy Holidays

- 3.33 In April 2017, a report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger published a report highlighting the issue of Holiday Hunger, revealing that children were returning to school in poor physical and mental condition after school holidays, as families struggled to meet the costs of feeding their children during this time. The report found that 1/4 of parents had skipped a meal to feed their children and concluded that holiday hunger was having a detrimental impact on children's mental and physical wellbeing, as well as their educational attainment.
- 3.34 The Council has supported Healthy Holiday programmes since 2018 and has recognised the importance of this work at a cross-directorate level. This work has also brought together support from the third sector and private sector and is an example of how the city is coming together to tackle food poverty and insecurity and support families out of poverty.
- 3.35 Central to the success of the Healthy Holidays approach is the more holistic way in which it works with families who may be struggling with food poverty. In addition to providing healthy meals and activities during the holiday period, the programme enabled the Council and third sector partners to build relationships with vulnerable families, optimising their access to and use of relevant support services. The events that take place are as much focused on coming together, meeting people and having fun as they are on the food itself – directly supporting the vision for the role that food should play in Leeds set out in the introduction to this report.
- 3.36 With its impact meeting Best Council Plan priorities across directorates, the programme confirmed cross-departmental willingness to work together and unlock resources within the Council and form the Healthy Holidays Task and Finish Working Group.
- 3.37 This Group has recently agreed Council funding of £150,000 to support Healthy Holiday projects in 2020. The funding is from Communities and Environment and Children and Families. Leeds Community Foundation are in discussion with private sector partners to agree match funding and develop a consistent delivery programme for the holidays in 2020.
- 3.38 Sustainable funding will allow future projects to be planned, delivered, resourced and promoted to support more families. The long term ambition is to have

consistent and co-ordinated provision for the school holidays. The Council has also supported Leeds Community Foundation's bid to the DfE's HAF Summer 2020 fund, which is a joint bid with Bradford.

- 3.39 During 2019, funding for the projects totalled £549,598. Of this, LCC's Communities and Environment directorate awarded £82,500, Jimbo's Fund awarded £80,000, Asda Foundation awarded £63,500, Pears Foundation awarded £13,000, and the Department for Education (DfE) awarded £400,000. The average cost per project was £7,138.
- 3.40 Leeds Community Foundation (LCF) managed the delivery of 77 projects, reaching 5,441 unique children, and 903 adults. There was a total headcount of 51,576 young people, and 2,686 adults.
- 3.41 All of the programmes provided lunch, and some also provided breakfast and/or food parcels. Many used food from Rethink Food and FareShare, and Leeds Catering offered food preparation. FareShare alone distributed 15.21 tonnes of intercepted food, which would otherwise have been considered as waste, equating to 4,375 trays/crates of food, with an estimated retail value of £21,645.
- 3.42 The Leeds approach during Summer 2019 used a mixed model of provision, from a range of third sector, local authority and school based projects. This mixed model of provision was found to add value through allowing services to engage families in accessible locations and familiar community based venues.
- 3.43 By working closely with Public Health to supply resources and training, Leeds aimed to balance providing food with good nutritional quality and provided recipes and free fruit as snacks throughout the programme. At Leeds City Council's Community Hubs, wider support was available such as benefit and debt advice services, libraries, free digital access, job shops etc. Families also have access to housing support, voluntary employability support and educational support via the library provision. Healthy Holiday projects brought families to the Hubs for food and activities for children but also led to engagement with the parents beyond the holiday period.
- 3.44 By offering activities in Community Hubs, third sector venues and schools, parents and children had access to the following services:
- Debt/money advice
  - PC/Wi-Fi access for online claims
  - Free period products
  - Free School Meal, Healthy Start vouchers
  - Pay As You Feel cafés
  - Food bank/parcel support
  - Local and Council support schemes
  - School uniform exchanges
  - Emotional and social support/networks

### 3.45 Free School Meals

The free school meal is the only benefit for families that goes directly to the child and this will continue during and after the roll-out of universal credit.

- 3.46 For children and young people from lower income families, the free school meal makes a significant contribution to their overall nutrient intake and therefore it is a priority that children and young people who are entitled to a free meal take up this

right. Providing free school meals for children and young people in poverty is one of the best investments in the health, wellbeing and potential of our poorest children and young people that the government can make.

3.47 With recent amendments to the regulations around free school meals, relating to Universal Credit, it is essential that the Council act to ensure their pupils do not miss out.

3.48 In January 2019, 22,500 pupils were eligible for a FSM of which 4,657 (20.7%) did not take up their entitlement. The number of eligible pupils has increased from 17,321 in 2018. This is likely to be as a result of Transitional Protection (TP) that was introduced in April 2018. TP means that whilst Universal Credit is being rolled out, all existing free school meals claimants continue to receive free school meals, regardless of a change in income or circumstances.

3.49 Initial data from the Council Tax and Benefits Service shows that in January 2020, 25,229 pupils were entitled to a free school meal which has increase by 2,729 since January 2019.

3.50 National take-up for FSM in January 2019 was at 78.8% and Leeds, at 79.3%, was similar to the Yorkshire average take-up of 79.2%. There is a gap in knowledges as to why over 20% of children eligible for FSMs are not taking up their entitlement.

3.51 In order to improve take-up figures the Council has been exploring ways to engage with schools and families within existing resources. This work has included:

- The Health and Wellbeing service work in partnership with the Council Tax and Benefits service to provide training for school staff to support families and pupils with claiming their entitlement. In 2018-19, four training courses were delivered to 66 members of school staff.
- In September 2019, the Health and Wellbeing Service launched a new Free School Meals Toolkit with the support of other services across the council. The toolkits provides essential and clear advice and information to those who are directly involved in free school meals and those who support children and families. It also offers practical tools to be used in schools and settings, such as leaflets and posters, for staff, pupils and parents, that will save schools time and ensure we are all working together using a consistent approach. Currently 30 schools are using the toolkit.

3.52 However this work does not capture the reasons why pupils don't take up their FSM entitlement and has highlighted that further resources could be required in this area. This could involve a research study, working with schools, pupils and families to explore the barriers to FSM entitlement and take up.

### 3.53 Breakfast in schools

For children living in food insecure households, access to a nutritionally balanced breakfast may be limited and in many circumstances, there may not be any access to food whatsoever. Recent research published by Leeds University in November 2019, found that Children who rarely eat breakfast on school days are more likely to achieve worse GCSE grades than those who eat breakfast frequently (Associations Between Habitual School-Day Breakfast Consumption Frequency and Academic Performance in British Adolescents, 2019). In 2018 the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) was established in 2018, to provide start-up funding and free food for schools across the country to deliver free breakfast provision, without

barrier or stigma. The programme is funded by the DfE, using monies from the soft drinks levy, and is being delivered by the charities Family Action and Magic Breakfast.

- 3.54 The NSBP are currently providing a free breakfast for all pupils who would like to access it in 47 schools in Leeds that have an eligibility criteria set by the DfE. At present the delivery of free food funded by the DfE is set to continue until July 2020 at which point schools can apply for a sustainability grant of £500. There is work to be done to ensure that children who are living in poverty and experiencing food insecurity are not arriving to school hungry. Beyond July 2020 schools currently part of the NSBP may no longer be supported by the DfE and we may see an increase in food insecurity becoming a barrier to learning.
- 3.55 This presents a further area of work in which the Council can work with partners and through the LFP to support this initiative and find more sustainable funding options.
- 3.56 Healthy Start
- 3.57 The Council and partners have continue to raise the profile and support the national Healthy Start Scheme. The Healthy Start Scheme provides free vouchers on a weekly basis for pregnant women and families with children up to 4 years old on a low income to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and infant formula milk. The scheme also provides free vitamins.
- 3.58 Families qualify for Healthy Start from 10 weeks pregnancy or if they have a child under four years old and if the families is in receipt of:
- Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Child Tax Credit with a family income of £16,190 or less per year
  - State Pension Credit; or
  - Universal Credit with no earned income or total earned income of £408 or less per month for the family.
  - Women are entitled to the scheme even if they do not get any of the above benefits if they are under 18 and pregnant
- 3.59 The Healthy Start application form requires sign off from a medical professional i.e. GP, Midwife or Health Visitor. Work has been undertaken across the city to ensure that the Healthy Start scheme is promoted to low income families, to ensure medical professionals are aware of their responsibilities to sign off application forms and to empower local families to apply.
- 3.60 Most recently a successful application to Food Power has been submitted to fund a Healthy Start Co-ordinator to work across inner East Leeds. The worker will be tasked with raising awareness of the Healthy Start scheme, working with professionals to encourage signposting and sign off and work with food businesses to register to accept vouchers. This learning from this project will be used to inform city wide action.
- 3.61 Wider support
- 3.62 Food prices are increasing and it is predicted that this will continue to be the case over future years. Increasing food prices are more difficult for low income households to cope with because those on low incomes spend a greater proportion of their income on food - a rise in food prices has a disproportionately large impact

on money available to spend elsewhere. The effects of pricing are complex, as shopping is influenced by a range of concerns about taste, value, convenience and social acceptability and the preferences of partners and children. However, price is the most important feature in buying food for over a third of people and is a commonly cited barrier to consuming a healthier diet. Research suggests that healthier foods are up to three times the cost per calorie of unhealthier food.

3.63 Public Health commission healthy eating and cooking skills programmes which engage the whole family to learn about budgeting and cooking skills which can support families experiencing or at risk of food insecurity. Healthy eating support is also a key element of the city's Integrated Healthy Living Service (One You Leeds) which supports adults to lead a healthy lifestyle, whilst recognising and working on some of the barriers to change i.e. food insecurity. Investment is also made into parent programmes such as Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY) which provides the skills and confidence for parents to promote good approaches to healthy eating and challenge positively children's behaviour to food.

#### 3.64 Universal Credit Research

3.65 In February 2020, the Financial Inclusion Team will commission a research study into the impact of Universal Credit in Leeds. The aim of this research will be to provide evidence of how welfare reforms and Universal Credit are affecting Leeds residents and to assess the impact on support services. This study will include an analysis of foodbank use and food poverty and insecurity in the city.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 The food poverty and insecurity agenda benefits from strong partnership working with a range of partners who are able to reach out to local food aid providers and members of the public to obtain insight to shape work programmes.

4.1.2 In compiling this report, we consulted with the Leeds Poverty Truth commission in order to reflect the lived experience of people on a low income within the report and use appropriate and sensitive language to describe people, families, and communities who struggle against poverty.

### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 A key focus of the food partnership work outlined above has been to support people suffering hardship, poverty and inequality, and therefore issues of equality, diversity, cohesion and integration are key aspects of this work. Projects and initiatives outlined in the report are reviewed annually as part of the annual Equality Improvement Priority updates.

4.2.2 Poverty is an issue that impacts on equality, and financial exclusion as a barrier to an equal society. Poverty and financial exclusion disproportionately affect people within specific equality groups, particularly single parents, and people with mental health problems. In the 2018 research commissioned by Leeds City Council into Financial Exclusion and Poverty in Leeds, it was found that families with children were much less likely to save and therefore less resilient to any changes in their finances. Survey results of 600 low-income area households found that 47% of lone parent households said they never save, compared to 38% of all households surveyed (Vik, Dayson and Curtis, 2018).

### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The work to tackle food poverty and insecurity plays a key role in achieving the Council's ambition to build a compassionate city and tackling poverty and reducing inequalities. The overarching aim of the Best Council Plan is 'Tackling Poverty and Reducing Inequalities'. The activities set out in this report support the Best City Priority of Safe, Strong Communities through;

- Keeping people safe from harm, protecting the most vulnerable.
- Helping people out of financial hardship.
- Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Being responsive to local needs, building thriving, resilient communities.
- Promoting community respect and resilience.

The projects and initiatives outlined to tackle food poverty and insecurity in this report also contribute towards the Best City Priorities of Inclusive Growth through targeting interventions to tackle poverty in priority neighbourhoods. The actions also contribute to the priorities of Health & Wellbeing, Child-Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds and Housing.

### **4.3.2 Climate Emergency**

4.3.3 One key aspect of the work on poverty alleviation is the redirection of surplus food to foodbanks and to support initiatives such as the Holiday Hunger projects. It is estimated that in Leeds approximately 143 tonnes of surplus food is intercepted and therefore saved from disposal to waste (in the year up to end March 2019). Waste food is a contributor to climate change as it results in methane emissions which have a greater impact on climate change than the equivalent amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. However, for consistency of approach it has been calculated that the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of the emissions that have been saved from escape to the atmosphere is 60 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in the year. However, had the food not been redirected and eaten and instead the whole of this 143 tonnes of food had gone to waste, the production, transport and distribution of the food would have to be factored in, and in that event the total emissions would have been the equivalent of 533 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1 All of the projects and services referred to in this report are being undertaken within current budgets, there are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report.

### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 There are no specific risk management issues with this report.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 This report has demonstrated how the Council is working together, across directorate teams and with partners to ensure food is healthy and accessible to families across Leeds. It has also emphasised the importance of food interception in bringing benefits to the environment and in reducing food poverty and insecurity.
- 5.2 Working with partners has provided the Council with a collective voice to feedback to national Government on how food poverty and insecurity is impacting families.
- 5.3 The report highlights the importance of the Council in the work to improve food provision through increasing the interception of surplus food and ensuring families receive access to support.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Executive Board are recommended to:
  - a) Note the work undertaken to tackle food poverty and insecurity and acknowledge the partnerships and joint working to support families out of poverty.
  - b) Endorse the work of the Leeds Food Partnership. This group helped Leeds achieve the Bronze Sustainable Food Cities Award in 2019 and is working on an action plan for partners across the city to achieve the Silver Sustainable Food Cities award in 2021.
  - c) Note the outlined concerns around resident's ability to access a reliable and sustainable quantity of affordable, nutritious food and how the Council and partners can do more to improve co-ordination, awareness and access to food provision.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.