



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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### **SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – FOOD POVERTY**

**25 SEPTEMBER 2019**

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would attend various site visits to inform its evidence base.

## **2 SITE VISITS**

### **RESTORE Food Bank, Central Vineyard Church, Sheep Street, Northampton**

- 2.1 On Thursday 22 August 2019, Councillor Dennis Meredith (Chair), together with Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager, met with the lead Support Worker for the Food Bank
- 2.2 Key information gathered from the site visit:
- Restore’s hope for the town is to see people’s lives restored and for the town to be renewed, the town thriving, businesses growing and people happy and enjoying themselves.
  - Restore has over 100 referral Agencies and began over ten years ago.
  - Restore costs £100,000 to run and currently it receives a partnership grant from NBC of £6,000 per year.
  - The Foodbank and Café is open from 10am to 12 noon, it is open to anyone who can have a free tea/coffee/squash and a pastry. The pastries have been donated by a local supermarket. Originally the HUB was open twice weekly but it was not an appropriate setting for families so it changed to a café style. On average there are normally around 30 attendees with 10-20 food parcels given out. Most food is donated by the public and there are various food drop off points. Fresh vegetables such as onions, potatoes, green vegetables, and root vegetables are useful.
  - A number of the main supermarkets have a contract with “Fareshare” where donations made to the supermarkets go to the distribution centre of Fareshare and foodbanks have to pay for the distribution costs to receive the donations.
  - Restore offers a wide variety of services in addition to being a foodbank – including: Tuesdays – “Growbaby” - family services and attendees can pick up clothes, food, toys and baby equipment. It is for children 0-5

years. CAB are present during each session as are Health Visitors, Homestart. This is the only centre in the town that also provides for families and is not just a foodbank.

- Dental hygiene is a problem with children with a number having to have their milk teeth extracted due to decay. A dental hygienist attends the family sessions.
- Tuesdays and Wednesdays are dedicated to family days. Around 50-60 come in. Music is played, children play and can have a snack. In the school holiday period more is offered for older children too and on a Wednesday a free school dinner is offered; around 20 attend but the centre could accommodate 60.
- 25% of people are living in poverty in Northampton.
- The organisation – Inspire, supports people to reach their maximum potential, providing mentoring and supporting people into volunteering. An example was provided whereby a woman had come in for a food parcel five years ago and now runs the Inspire Project.
- Individuals are referred to restore from specialist Agencies, schools, GPs, Children's services, Money Advice etc.
- Restore receives very little help for donations from the main food outlets
- The Support Worker reported that zero hours contracts can create poverty. For example a Warehouse operative, on zero hour's contract, works nights and also volunteers at the Foodbank. Should he have no work at any given period, he still has the regular bills to be paid and does not receive benefits whilst working. He often gets ready for work, arrives at the depot to be told there is no work available that night
- The Support Worker advised that often individuals and families do not have a network to turn to should they have financial difficulties and pressures. They often then turn to high interest loan companies and pay day loans which can re-inforce the spiral of poverty.
- General referrals come mainly from CAB, Jesus Centre, and One stop shop. Individuals must meet generic criteria to be referred. People can access food parcels five times a year. Each food parcel is aimed to last three days. Should a repeat referral be required, there needs to be a new referral. Once referred, individuals can access foodbanks at different locations and times, which best suits them – for example Duston or Eastfield. The food voucher is valid for one week and it then expires.
- When individuals come for a food parcel from this Foodbank they fill out a tick list of the types of food and supplies they require. Whilst the pack is being made up they are directed to the café for a drink and a pastry. An example was given of client B who was seven months pregnant but had not told anyone. Restore helped her and got equipment for her such as a pram, mosses basket, baby clothes etc.
- In May 2019, 936 items were given out and £70,000 of food is given out each year, all of which is provided via donations. Restore does not spend over £800-£1,000 per year on extra supplies.
- From April to the end of the summer is the period when supplies are at their lowest and it would be useful if schools could be contacted regarding



**Seventh Day Adventist Church, 74 Highlands Ave, Spinney Hill, NN3 6BQ**

2.3 On Monday 2 September 2019, Councillor Catherine Russell, together with Geraldine Mahney, Customer Services Manager, visited the foodbank, met with key volunteers and visitors. This was a hands on visit where we greeted and supported visitors which gave us a great insight into how the bank operated.

2.4 Key information gathered from the site visit:

- Seventh Day Adventist Church are one of the six food banks and are part of RESTORE. Restore are a charity that support vulnerable people in Northampton through practical means. Below are the Restore food banks:

**DISTRIBUTION POINTS:**

**MONDAY**  
**12pm - 2pm**  
**Seventh Day Adventist Church**  
74 Highlands Ave  
Spinney Hill, NN3 6BQ  
**Closed on Bank Holidays**

**WEDNESDAY**  
**11am - 1pm**  
**Here 4 You Shop**  
2 Park Square  
Kings Heath  
NN5 7LQ

**THURSDAY**  
**10am - 12pm**  
**Central Vineyard**  
42 Sheep Street  
Northampton  
NN1 2LZ

**FRIDAY**  
**10am - 12pm**  
**Duston URC**  
Main Road  
Duston NN5 6JF

**FRIDAY**  
**9am - 12pm**  
**St Alban the Martyr**  
Broadmead Avenue  
Northampton NN3 2RA

**SATURDAY**  
**10am - 12pm**  
**Duston URC**  
Main Road  
Duston NN5 6JF

- All foodbanks have access to RESTORE data base. Visitors will already have a voucher number and the volunteers will access the system and record those who have used the voucher.
- On Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> there were 65 open vouchers awaiting for people to visit a bank within Northampton.
- We saw 11 visitors on Monday, of which 5 families (3 with 2 Children and 2 with 1) and 6 individuals.
- Vouchers are valid for 7 days but discretion can be used allowing an expired voucher to be used.

- We met a lovely community of volunteers who regularly support Seventh Day Adventist Church foodbank. It is a huge commitment as the food bank needs setting up the Sunday evening in readiness for Monday.
- This particular food bank have 5 regular volunteers who attend most Monday's, a further 3 who attend occasionally.
- Setting up on a Sunday is done by the same four regular volunteers. This is due to the physical nature of moving boxes etc.
- Storage within premises is not ideal as storage is upstairs.
- Each week approximately £100.00 a week is spent to replenish (this food bank only).
- Good relationships are formed with some supermarkets but there are discrepancies between what some supermarkets will and will not donate.
- There is an additional cost for the large plastic storage boxes.
- Bread is collected from Tesco on Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon, from 2 local Tesco stores. This is strongly reliant on two volunteers.
- Monday AM fresh goods are collected from four Aldi and one Lidl stores. This can include more bread, fruit, veg, flowers etc. This is strongly reliant on two volunteers driving around to collect this produce before the food bank opens.
- The products in the greatest demand include:
  - Long life milk, cereals, beans, pasta, rice, pasta sauce, drinks and toiletries, especially wet-wipes, shampoo and deodorant.

**Actions/concerns to consider:**

- Form relationships with companies who would donate boxes.
- Obtain premises within this area that would accommodate a permanent food bank,
- One thing that would help tremendously is if premises were provided to allow the Foodbank to be setup all through the week and thus enable to doors to open on other days or evenings. It would also help to have it in a location in another part of town where there might be a greater concentration of people who require help from a Foodbank.
- Complete research on local supermarkets to identify what they do with food that is close to the expiry date and what additional support is available.
- Increase communication to encourage donations and support. NBC are part of the Northants Chambers networking group who meet regularly. Could we arrange for a presentation on food poverty and support from these business and provide contact details for RESTORE to make arrangements.



### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 From the evidence gathered a potential recommendation for the final report could be around promoting the work of foodbanks to schools in the borough and how they can encourage parents to donate during the year; not just at harvest festival.
- 3.2 From the evidence gathered a potential recommendation for the final report could be around promoting how allotment holders can donate excess fresh produce to the foodbanks.

### **4 RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Review.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager, on behalf of Councillor Dennis Meredith, Chair of Scrutiny Panel 1

23 August 2019