

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING WITH CABINET MEMBER, HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

02 December 2014

Report of the Director of Public Health

SUPPORTING GRANTS TO FOOD BANKS 2014/15

1 Purpose of the Report:

To seek approval to extend the support for food banks during 2014/15 to continue the County Council's commitment to reducing food poverty in its communities.

2 Information and Analysis:

At the meeting on 7 October 2013 approval was given for a small grants scheme to support the growing number of food banks in Derbyshire. An initial fund of £108,000 was established and the criteria for allocation agreed.

Nineteen of the 22 food banks operating in Derbyshire made an application for a small grant and all were successful. The value of the grants ranged from £573 to £10,000, the latter being the maximum grant available. Food banks used the grants for items such as storage boxes, shelving, freezers, volunteer expenses and to pay part-time staff. The food banks were very grateful for this support and many emails and letters of gratitude were received.

The County Council also facilitated the Food Bank Forum, a regular meeting of food banks to share best practice and to provide an opportunity to network.

The County Council has asked food banks to provide a minimum set of data so the use of food banks can be monitored at a County level. The data is routinely collected by food banks and includes:

- The number of clients using a food bank, including adults and children
- The reason for needing an emergency food parcel
- The agency that referred the client(s) to a food bank
- The first four digits of the clients post-code.

Data collection began on 1 April 2014. Sixteen out of the 22 food banks submitted data for quarter 1 and the others are being reminded to provide it. The first set of data showed that 1469 families used a food bank during the first three months of 2014/15, of whom 3644 were adults and 2452 were children. The total number of people receiving food was 6096 which excludes those six food banks still to report, but it reflects the scale of the intervention. It should be noted that the main referral agency were Job Centres and the second most common Children's Centres.

It is clear from the data emerging from the food banks that the need for emergency food is not decreasing and is increasing in some instances. In early 2014, a gap analysis was undertaken to map need and deprivation as identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2010) against existing food banks and the areas they serve. This highlighted that some areas of relative deprivation in Derbyshire do not have good access to a food bank. This remains a public health issue as food is a basic necessity and lack of food will impair health in the short and long term. Specific examples of especially vulnerable groups include pregnant women, children and people who need to eat before taking their medicines.

At the meeting on 15 July 2014, Cabinet approved £55,000 from the Public Health Resource Fund to continue support for local food banks. However, demand is now expected to continue throughout 2014/15 so it is considered appropriate to increase this sum by a further £70,000 to be met from the Public Health budget. Some food banks are at risk of losing staff and others are very pressed for resources, such as transport and food storage equipment, potentially limiting their ability to provide emergency food parcels. It is therefore important that the grant scheme is made operational as urgently as possible and, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, a press release has been issued inviting applications subject to a formal decision to increase the fund.

Food banks are located in the voluntary and community sector and many require structural support to help them with grant funding applications and monitoring requirements. Rural Action Derbyshire (RAD – Derbyshire's Rural Community Council) has offered to host the Food Bank Forum meetings and to administer the grant scheme on behalf of Derbyshire County Council for an administration fee of £10,000. This will support the tradition of food banks remaining in the voluntary sector and will facilitate any development support that food banks need to become eligible to apply for grants. RAD also hosts Derbyshire's financial inclusion partnership – Financial Action and Advice Derbyshire, providing expertise and synergy between the two functions.

Applications from food banks will be considered by a small group comprising Cllr Ellie Wilcox, Julie Hirst (Public Health, DCC), Sylvia Green (RAD) and Stella Collishaw (Derby Diocese). Recommendations for grant funding will be made to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities in line with the previous approval process.

3 Financial Considerations:

The costs will be met from the 2014/5 Public Health budget.

4 Legal Considerations:

By awarding grant payments, the recipient organisations will not be contractually obliged to deliver any particular services although the Council may be able to claw back grant which has not been spent or is misapplied.

The Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, has a duty to act fairly, reasonably and rationally when making decisions on grant awards based on the criteria set out in the report.

5 Other Considerations:

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

6 Key Decision:

No

7 Call-In:

Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No

8 Background Papers:

Previous Cabinet and Cabinet Member reports

9 Officer's Recommendations:

1. To approve an additional £70,000 to the grant scheme to support food banks;
2. To agree that the administration of the Food Bank Forum and the grant scheme be managed by Rural Action Derbyshire for a management fee of £10,000;
3. To delegate decisions on the allocation of the grant scheme to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities.

Elaine Michel
Director of Public Health