

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND
PUBLIC HEALTH****FOOD REDISTRIBUTION SCHEMES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To set out the findings of a review of food redistribution schemes in Nottinghamshire.
2. To recommend the use of the Local Communities Fund for continued investment to support food redistribution schemes in the voluntary and community sector which have positive impacts for health and wellbeing.

Background

3. Good food is essential for a healthy balanced diet, good nutrition, growth and development, and physical and mental health and wellbeing. People's ability to eat a healthy balanced diet is affected by the accessibility, availability, and affordability of food. Food insecurity (sometimes referred to as food poverty) is the state of being without reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food. Food insecurity impacts child development, and academic achievement and increases risk of weight gain and childhood obesity. In working age adults' food insecurity is associated with increased risk of high blood pressure, obesity, cardiovascular disease, poor sleep, depression, and stress. In older people food insecurity is associated with increased risk of limitations to activities of daily living, depression, and anxiety.
4. The latest national survey data (The Food Foundation, 2022) indicates an increase in moderate or severe food insecurity from 6.9% of households in August 2020, to 18.4% of households in October 2022. This equates to 65,707 households in Nottinghamshire. Nearly half of households on universal credit have experienced food insecurity in the past 6 months. This equates to 20,187 households in Nottinghamshire, with Ashfield, Mansfield and Bassetlaw having the greatest number in this situation. Food insecurity is more prevalent in more deprived areas, amongst people with disabilities, people from non-white ethnic groups, and households with children.
5. In May 2022, Cabinet approved investment from the Public Health Grant against a range of Public Health priorities, including a proposal titled HEALTHY FOOD – Early Years Food Environment and Insecurity. This investment was intended to build on the learning and successes of the Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme and aligned with a previous motion unanimously agreed by Full Council in 2022 and the food insecurity priority in the Nottinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26.

6. Since early 2022, there has continued to be innovation, development, and proliferation of food redistribution schemes within the community and voluntary sector in response to cost-of-living pressures and local need. These sit alongside a range of other community food schemes such as social eating, community food growing, social prescribing and community kitchens. It is therefore important that the County Council reviews its approach to investing in food redistribution schemes as part of its strategic approach to food and nutrition and response to cost-of-living pressures that communities and residents in Nottinghamshire are facing. This includes reviewing how the investment of Public Health Reserves funding from 2023 to 2026 approved in May 2022 is best utilised to optimise outcomes, to support this need.
7. A review has been undertaken during September to October 2022 by Public Health together with Early Childhood Services, using available data and with input from stakeholders including District and Borough Council officers, community and voluntary sector organisations, and residents. This report summarises the findings of the review and makes recommendations for continued investment.
8. During 2020-2021 as part of the COVID-19 Pandemic humanitarian response, 11 food redistribution schemes were hosted in Children’s Centre Service buildings. This initiative was funded through County Council COVID Grants, and this funding ended in June 2022. As an interim measure, £50,000 from the Cabinet approved Public Health Reserves investment was authorised by the Corporate Director of Adult Social Care as grant award for these 11 schemes to allow them to be extended until 31st March 2023, whilst this review was undertaken.

Summary of Review of Food Redistribution Schemes In Nottinghamshire

9. In 2020, there were no known food distribution schemes in the county. The review has identified there are now at least 37 food redistribution schemes in the county, in addition to the 11 schemes hosted in the Children’s Centre Service buildings. The schemes share similar characteristics including using Fareshare (the UK’s national network of charitable food distributors) or local donations as the main supplier of food, being volunteer led, operating from a community venue (schools, libraries, community centres or churches), and serving a specific local community. Table 1 lists the range of identified schemes in each district and borough hosted by community and voluntary sector organisations or groups. Analysis of the location of schemes indicates that they are aligned well with local need measured by the index of multiple deprivation.

Table 1 Identified Food Redistribution Schemes in Nottinghamshire (October 2022)

District	Name and address of food redistribution scheme
Ashfield	St John’s Methodist Church CO-OP Food share (sharing food with our community), Skegby and Stanton Hill Library OT Fundraisers Food Club , Hucknall
Bassetlaw	School Food Hubs Supported by Bassetlaw CVS Serlby Park, Sparken Hill, Kingston Park Academies; Lime Tree Nursery; Hallcroft Infants School; Langold, Ramsden, Rampton, Ordsall, Mattersey, Misterton, Tuxford, Carr Hill Primary Schools.
Broxtowe	Hope House Food Club.

Gedling	Newstead Community Centre Food Pantry
Mansfield	District Council supported Community FOOD Clubs (handed over from Family Action which ran it as a F.O.O.D Clubs): APTCOO (Work and Earn Centre), Bellamy FOOD Club, The Crescent Centre FOOD Club, Dallas Street (EMVA Resource Centre) FOOD Club, Oak Tree Hill Health FOOD Club Centre Methodist Church Food Share Arena Church Food Club
Newark & Sherwood	District Council supported Community FOOD Clubs (handed over from Family Action which ran it as a Family Action F.O.O.D Clubs) Beaumont Walk Community Centre FOOD hub, The Community Centre FOOD hub, Lifespring Centre FOOD Club, The Green Centre Food hub Rainworth Social Action Hub – Social Supermarket Collingham & Surrounding Villages Food Pantry Edwinstowe Food Hub
Rushcliffe	Bingham Food Warriors Keyworth Community Projects The Ruddington Pantry Meet, Greet & Eat Cotgrave Community Kitchen

10. These food redistribution schemes are supported by a variety of different external funding streams which are needed for set up costs, to fund staffing and other overheads and sometimes subsidise food costs. The costs of running the schemes varies depending on the scale of operation, the staffing model, rental costs and whether food costs are covered by the income from sales. Recent increases in food and fuel costs have increased the overheads of the schemes. Innovation and learning is shared amongst the community and voluntary sector via the County Council led Food Insecurity Network and local district networks which align with the Health and Wellbeing Board, and County Council ambition for Nottinghamshire to become a Sustainable Food Place.
11. Where food redistribution schemes have been evaluated locally, they achieve a number of positive benefits. The main motivating factor for joining a scheme was the reduced cost of food and associated financial benefits, however combatting food waste was also recognised as being important. The range of foods and recipes encouraged members to try different ingredients and cook and eat healthier foods. Importantly for nutritional outcomes this includes fresh vegetables that some people would not typically buy. Other innovations included enabling eligible members to pay with Healthy Start vouchers which were introduced as part of the Childhood Obesity Trailblazer workstream. After the COVID lockdowns these schemes helped encourage members to get out of the house improving mental well-being and reducing loneliness and isolation.
12. Consultation via questionnaire with 40 F.O.O.D. Club members in October 2022 found that respondents would be willing to collect food from a range of community venues such as community and church halls, schools and libraries. Over 60% of respondents travels by car and 32.5% on foot and over 75% were in 10 mins travelling distance. Half felt that F.O.O.D clubs should be open to anyone, 22% they should be open to families and 17.5% low-income groups only.

Conclusions from the Review

13. Food insecurity has been shown to be a growing issue of public health concern. Initiatives which reduce food insecurity should continue to be an investment priority for the County Council due to their positive impact on health and wellbeing. Funding should be targeted to prioritise groups and areas with greatest need.
14. Food redistribution schemes are one means of tackling food insecurity. In Nottinghamshire these provide valued support to local communities and positively impact on a range of health and wellbeing outcomes as described above.
15. Whilst the HEALTHY FOOD – Early Years Food Environment and Insecurity investment agreed in May 2022 envisaged the continuation of the offer of a food redistribution scheme from within the Council's Children's Centres, the review has highlighted several operational implications from this on these Centres' core business (including a lack of physical space to store food and impacts on staff time).
16. In light of the ongoing development and increased usage of alternative food redistribution schemes within all districts within the County it is recommended that the funding agreed in May 2022 be made available through grant funding to community and voluntary sector groups to continue to best meet local need. It is proposed that the Council's Local Communities Fund be utilised as the mechanism for the delivery of this grant funding.
17. The Communities Team in the Place Department will facilitate this work, supported by public health advice. A set of evidence-based criteria will be developed to prioritise community bids that will deliver maximum benefit for those most disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Funded schemes would deliver positive outcomes including increased access to healthy food, decreased food insecurity and decreased food waste.
18. The review identified some geographical gaps in food redistribution schemes hosted by community and voluntary sector organisations in Ashfield, Broxtowe and Gedling. Funding allocation would be prioritised in order to address any such gaps and meet local need.

Other Options Considered

19. To continue to invest solely in food redistribution schemes within Children's Centres through a contractual approach. This option was rejected as the review has identified that the food redistribution model is best placed within the community and voluntary sector where schemes can innovate and scale up and down in response to local need in a rapid manner. The operating model of food redistribution schemes in terms of being reliant on food sale income would be ineffective to performance manage through a service contracting model and may present a financial risk for the County Council if food sales required additional subsidising.
20. To not fund food distribution schemes going forwards was considered as an option as it could be argued that this need is being met by the community and voluntary sector and local authorities do not need to offer support. The review has identified local authority funding and civic leadership can play an important role in supporting community infrastructure and enable the sector to adapt and innovate provision to local community need particularly during times when other income streams are not guaranteed.

Reasons for Recommendation

21. The review has identified that a range of community and voluntary sector groups and partner organisations offer food redistribution schemes to meet local food insecurity needs. These are helping residents in need, offering social value and are part of a community food system which will be important to Nottinghamshire becoming a Sustainable Food Place going forwards. Use of Public Health Reserves funding will enable the County Council to support this infrastructure and enable the sector to adapt and innovate provision. This aligns with the Council's approach to supporting local communities to develop and deliver their own solutions which are flexible and tailored based on changing local need and provision.
22. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is often more trusted than formal or statutory agencies when people are in need. Further, often modest levels of investment can generate outcomes in reduction or prevention of demand into formal agencies far greater than can be achieved through commissioning of formal services.
23. Experience during the COVID 19 Pandemic and other recent situations has demonstrated that use of the County Council community grants mechanism can be effective in rapidly deploying funding to identified causes in the community and voluntary sector and partner organisations. The Communities Team in the Place Department will facilitate this work, supported by public health advice. The impact of grant funding can also be enhanced and strengthened through an integrated approach with other Community Early Help and Support initiatives delivered in the Communities Service.
24. The Local Communities Fund is the County Council's key vehicle for delivering grant funding to voluntary and community groups and projects that directly support communities, to address specific community needs and help build resilience. The principles, systems, processes, and governance procedures are well developed and have been utilised before to swiftly deliver new grant schemes to address specific community needs. As lead for the Local Communities Fund, the decision for the award of grants would sit with the Cabinet Member for Communities.
25. This funding allocation will align with the Food Insecurity Grant Scheme approved by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health on the 14th November 2022 as part of the investment programmes to support vulnerable residents with cost of living pressures. This proposed food redistribution grant scheme will follow on from and complement the Food Insecurity Grant Scheme utilising the Local Communities Fund framework. Evidence-based criteria will be developed to prioritise community bids that will deliver maximum benefit in line with the findings of this review. The award of grants will be monitored to ensure there is no duplication of grant awards.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

27. Funding will be met from the Public Health Reserves (appendix 1 – detailed investment proposals ID 2) budgeted for HEALTHY FOOD – Early Years Food Environment and Insecurity approved by Cabinet as part of the Key Decision – Investing for Improved Public Health Outcomes in May 2022. £210,000 of the total £260,000 investment, has been budgeted from 2023/24 to 2025/26 for food redistribution schemes.

Consultation

28. The views of residents accessing F.O.O.D Clubs, volunteers, and Children Centre Service staff were obtained as part of the commissioned evaluation of the Nottinghamshire Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Project in 2021 and 2022. Views of residents accessing F.O.O.D Clubs were also obtained via a consultation exercise conducted in September-October 2022. Views of stakeholders including District and Borough Council officers, community were obtained via a consultation exercise conducted in September-October 2022.

Human Resources Implications

29. There are no human resource implications. Investment secured under the HEALTHY FOOD – Early Years Food Environment and Insecurity proposal included funding for a F.O.O.D. clubs post within the Children Centre Service (0.5WTE) to support F.O.O.D. clubs hosted within the Children Centre Service. This post was not established, as subsequent review determined such a post would be insufficient to fully address the staff capacity constraints resulting from operation of these schemes. Therefore, the funding allocated for this post will be included within the proposed Local Community Fund.

Implications for Residents

30. By investing in food redistribution schemes, the County Council will be helping support residents accessing these schemes in terms of food insecurity, connecting with other services and support, and contributing to outcomes including healthy eating, improved mental wellbeing and reducing food waste.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

31. By investing in food redistribution schemes, the County Council can help reduce food waste.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That the Council continues its financial support for food redistribution schemes.
- 2) That up to £210,000 of Public Health Reserves budgeted from funding approved by Cabinet in May 2022 for Public Health Outcome – HEALTHY FOOD – Early Years Food Environment in 2023-26 be allocated specifically to food redistribution schemes operated by community and voluntary sector or partner organisations, with any grant funding awards to those schemes to be made via the Local Communities Fund (LCF), in line with the Council's financial regulations and existing delegations for the LCF.

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Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

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Constitutional Comments (CEH 07/12/22)

43. The report and recommendations can be considered by Cabinet under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (DG 09/11/22)

44. £210,000 funding will be met from the Public Health Reserves. (2023/24 £90,000, 2024/25 £65,000 and 2025/26 £55,000). This will use the County Council community grants mechanism, with The Communities Team in the Place Department facilitating this work, supported by Public Health.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Report of the Director of Public Health. Public Health Investment Programmes to Support Vulnerable Residents with Cost-Of-Living Pressures 14th November 2022.

FOOD Club members consultation questionnaire responses. November 2022.

Nottinghamshire Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Evaluation reports 2021 and 2022.

Delegated Decision taken by the Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health 9th August 2022. [Decision Details: Award of Grant for Food on our Doorstep \(FOOD\) Clubs \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Cabinet Report 26 May 2022 'Key Decision – Investing for Improved Public Health Outcomes' [Democratic Management System > Meetings \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Nottinghamshire County Council. (2022). [Meeting Summary. Full Council 24th Feb 2022. Minutes of Full Council 20th January 2022.](#)

Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board. (2022). [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Ambitions and Priorities.](#)

The Food Foundation. (2022). [Food Insecurity Tracking. Retrieved from The Food Foundation.](#)

Children and Young People's Committee 1 November 2021 'Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Update – Tackling Food Insecurity' [Democratic Management System > Meetings \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/DEMOCRATIC-Management-System->Meetings)

Children and Young People's Committee 18 November 2019 'Childhood Obesity Trailblazer' [Democratic Management System > Meetings \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/DEMOCRATIC-Management-System->Meetings)

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.