

Notes Feeding Bradford and Keighley Network meeting 8th July 2024

Present: Juli Thompson (Inn Churches), Dan Palmer (Bradford Council (Keighley area office)), Ishaq Shafiq (Bradford Council (East area office)) Graham Walker (Metropolitan Food bank) Jane Lees (Community Works); Catherine Faluyi (Feedo Needo) Wakas Ahmed (Welfare Rights Officer Equality Together) Andrew Forsey (Feeding Britain) Imogen Stewart (Keighley Salvation Army)

Welcome

Introductions

What is the Trussell Trust doing regarding advice work and Equality Together?

We know that giving out food is just a sticking plaster – yes needed when people have nothing in the cupboard. We need to help people deal with the underlying issues.

Wakas we at Equality together have been working with the Trussell Trust for just over 2 years. Bradford council has been pushing to move more advice online and by phone, but this is hard for vulnerable clients. People find it difficult to get appointments as they are oversubscribed, and people often give up. The 3 Trussell Trust foodbanks have contracted us to provide advice for 3 years – they are now looking to extend it.

Decision made by Trussell Trust to take the advice to the people rather than the other way round. Been very successful. Built on the experiences of the initial Feeding Britain and Feeding Bradford 2-year pilot. We have a team of advisors. As TT is funding, we are not tied to just people who live in Bradford useful in the foodbanks which work on the borders of the district.

We do benefits checks, signposting, specialist advice, help filling out forms, help with appeals and mandatory reconsiderations, often not simple solutions people often have several issues which compound their problems. The system is hard to deal with, and has built in delays, but for some this is coupled with addictions, domestic abuse, housing issues, debit issues, immigration issues, mental health problems and more – it can get very complicated very quickly. People on average have more complex cases than our other advice sessions elsewhere. Some are people who are reluctant to engage with advice services, professionals and ‘authorities’ so often we are the first point of call. We take the initial presenting issue, but then need to explore all the issues around it. We signpost to where we need to – it helps that we are face to face so that we can build that relationship. Ideally, we can deal with the issues before they become a crisis. We are also struggling as the DWP are no longer doing food vouchers – we do do internal foodbank referrals too, as people turn up without a voucher and have tried to get one but cannot get through to the Dr or CAB.

Figures – it is hard to know the real financial gains – should we use expected gains (we would need to use a huge amount of time doing follow up to find out what happened to each individual – so we don’t always know if someone did get say the enhanced rate of everything or the basic rate or the real known results. We do both, and know the truth is somewhere in between. The estimated figures for the last 12 months are £1.2million for just over 700 people. Our actual proven figures are £300,000 over the year. Sometimes it is not a financial issue for example people getting sanctioned due to mental health issues – we have been able to get people on the

limited capabilities to work system where they have a lighter expectation of work or work search. This might be getting medical evidence or filling in forms.

PIP can take a very long time to sort out as many have to go to appeal and take up to two years to be resolved. And the majority of our appeals have been successful they will get a nice lump sum and also extra benefits so increasing their income and hopefully ending their need to be reliant on the foodbanks.

Some people who have had their issues solved are able and want to give back and have become volunteers for the foodbanks.

The most vulnerable clients we see are those from the foodbanks – Very useful to be able to get them the support both what we do and that we have built the trust with those people and when we refer, it tends to work better as it feels to them like we (a trusted person) is recommending them to another trusted organisation.

Clients will talk to us about things they haven't talked to anyone else about – sometimes though it is wonderful they have said we have to say – thanks for telling me but you need to speak to your doctor or whoever about this – a social prescriber can also help them bridge the gap and make a successful contact with their GP. The Hubs have also been very useful to get that diversity of help. Part of the key is to not just refer and that is job done but to support the transition to another trusted organisation.

Really see benefits of face-to-face advice – yes telephone advice does work for some but for those who are more vulnerable, then face to face advice works all the way.

Andrew Forcey – Co-location approach really works – that chimes with our experience too, in pantries, foodbanks and community settings – I am wondering where the gaps are in such provision in Bradford. In Newcastle where I live the advice providers have come and met some of that need, but also local authority staff have come out and filled some of the gaps too. I wonder if that is an option for Bradford.

Wakas- Some foodbanks have a very good set up – Josie at Bradford Central has been excellent in getting lots of services together in the same room – the council, DWP, fuel top up, homeless partnership etc all together at the same time in the same room. It works very well. This is to some extent replicated in one of the Bradford North foodbanks. They can answer queries there and then. We probably need more on housing. We need more organisations working together.

Cathy – what are other projects experiences – I know some of the smaller food projects do not have nearly the same level of support available. How does it work for others here?

Jane – we have an advice worker in twice a week – some of the people who come to us, with household support fund maybe are not as needy as some of the people who get foodbank vouchers for the Trussell Trust foodbanks. There is a sense that they 'give out food at Community works. Like to see more going into early intervention and prevention. Suppose to give not more than three parcels a month to people – we continue to give four parcels a month to asylum seekers and refugees as we see them as in a different more difficult situation with more barriers. We are told not to ask any questions but that puts us in a very difficult situation – how do you decide who to give it to? If HSF continues, I would like to see if targeted far more to advice provision and help people to get what they are entitled to. Feel too many people who just get it as they can. Feel food savers is far better, some do not want to move across when we suggest

they do. I think most of those who do not move across actually aren't those in most need they are those who just have it because they can and don't want to contribute so stop coming.

Lobbying to ensure household support fund or whatever its replacement ends up being called is used following these views, which I know many of us hold in this group.

Dan – I fully agree and feel like I have been shouting about this in the council for years now. I think this year the rules did allow more advice etc nationally, but the last-minute nature of the funding meant that there was little change in how it was spent in reality. Power with your voices from network – could be worth getting a short questionnaire to the network.

Andrew – yes that seems a good idea.

Wondering if there is mileage doing what has been done elsewhere in terms of some councils funding a few weeks use of a pantry while people transition from use of a free food parcel, so that people get money off their shop for a transition period, may be in full to start with then partly, this does seem to work.

We worked with feeding Leicester as well as feeding Bradford and Keighley a few years ago with a co-location of services in food projects – on the back of that trial – Leicester Council found some funding to continue that work from their public health budget and Feeding Britain was able to find some other money to enable that work to continue.

Cathy that is largely where the motivation stated for the advice work, we have been hearing about with the Trussell Trust as Josie had one of our advice workers sessions and was so, please with the results she was determined not to lose it. In Bradford currently with the council so strapped for cash it is hard to see how new money can be found but the use of existing money better makes total sense

Cathy – Juli what are your thoughts re the funding of pantry shops?

Juli Depends how you use the subsidising – We did a trial with both the HOP team and Hope housing with those who were in hostels and other short-term accommodation. We found it did not work for us, it was different as people did not have the same attitude as they were not parting with their own money – we had incidents of people selling the food. Whereas subsidising the pantries – people seem to value that they are making a contribution to their food – using subsidising so they get very good value feels like a better way forward.

We have developed an app so that people get a reward which is a subsidised extra.

Ishaq – is there opportunities to join the food savers, - **Juli** – you are next in line. Is there a culturally appropriate offer – we have so many different needs and it can be challenging. Sometimes it can be not about setting up new projects but cross referring.

How we bring organisations together to share resources and not compete

Jane if someone has not got the £4 there is an opportunity to find out why – are they not understanding or are they missing some benefits. People do not always appreciate free things – we run free courses and people do not always show the same level of commitment to them than the courses which people pay for at the colleges. I am not saying we should start charging but there is something there about the importance of contributing. Food is not free, and we need to not give people the impression that they can have free food. We know that some groups are helping the same people each week.

HSF should only go to the places which commit to doing the additional support. – and maybe it should not go to other groups

Cathy I would like to hear from Catherine from Feedo Needo and Imogen from Salvation Army what you are doing around wrap around services. I know at Salvation Army you do a fair bit.

Catherine. I am not sure how our group would respond to being asked to pay a certain amount of money to get their food. Our clients are mostly elderly or Asian women with children who have little money spare. We are trying to help people and make it convenient for them.

Cathy Are you able to support people to get more help for example if they may not be getting all the benefits they are entitled too? **Catherine** – we do help people get on courses baking, beauty – helping people earn more money, also English classes – with First Action charity, other things are in the pipeline. **Ishaq** - remember to ensure that people who might need it are in touch with West Bowling Advice center as well.

Dan – how is food savers funded – as it seems hard to get funding - it seems hard to get funding - it we do get household support fund – Keighley do get this funded food. Keighley is in constant need for that flow of food. Juli Keighley do get food for the shop.

Juli – Catherine if it is not as big a step as you might think getting people to put some contributions towards their food. We know now that there are lots more people using pantries than before – it is now more people accessing pantries compared to foodbanks -and most feel it is a very positive move. Cathy offers to visit and put her in touch with pantries if she would like to explore that option.

Andrew – yes, we have topped over 50 % using pantries. In response to the issue of subsidizing pantries – it is more for those people who do not have any or so very little that they would struggle to pay the few pounds for the pantry and to tide them over, in that initial stage.

Cathy so in effect the pantry is acting like a food bank, if I get that right whereas currently here mostly people may have started with the foodbank and then transition to the pantries.

Imogen, we have not heard from you. (technical problems) - came back later – her observations. Stuff that is going well in Keighley; – we do a community meal where we attract the same people week after week. It seems stagnate that we do not get people who move on or are able to support the real need. I am concerned that we have just built a dependency culture with this group. With our foodbank – we sell our foodbank as basic food parcel for 3 days, basic and emergency. Our foodbank based on referrals and lots of support. We encourage people to move on to the good food shop they can get more than just the basic stuff there and have choice.

We have done some very successful cook and eat sessions and they have been very good and we have enabled people to take that basic food parcel and learn the skills they need to make that last for 5 to 7 days – a transformation that has really helped people and learned to make savings. And that has helped them to move forward. Enables people to feel they have lifted themselves out of their situation.

Juli wondering if there was any feedback on the vouchers for the butchers and fruit and vegetables – **Imogen** – yes, we gave them out at our cook and eat sessions – people were very happy as they had learned the skills and then also could afford to go and buy the meat. I spoke to one of the butchers involved and he was very encouraging – he encourages his staff to

support people with recipes ideas – he reported that people came back without the vouchers and got their support in terms of menu help.

Juli that is very encouraging and echoes what we have seen here in Bradford – there is more money available for Keighley if this should be wanted. An anecdote with our young people's classes is that they were given vouchers, and one young person came back with a Crab!

Imogen People will go for freebee and word gets out, but word also gets out when we help people save and that really lifts people out of poverty and is what I think most of us are about.

The foodbank and the cook and eat have been very positive with the addition of the good food shop. I just do not see the transformation with our community meal.

Cathy Are there resources we feel people need, there are worried about money leaflets available. Do let me know if you would like some of those.

Political

At the foodbanks meeting participants were keen that we invited new MP's for a meeting in September – I wrote to all candidates asking for their commitment to end the need for foodbanks and flagging up this meeting on (27 Sept) **Now changed to 4th October-** Open this up to others to get involved in a planning meeting for this **** Update now working with the Trussell Trust as a joint action**

Graham did you get many replies.

Cathy yes quite a lot but more from the non-sitting MPs and the more minority candidates.

Graham – wondering if MPs will come – do we need to go to them with a common approach but at each of their surgeries. – get someone to attend each one.

Andrew – reminder that in the Labour manifesto that Liz Pendel who is now the secretary of state for work and pensions; she called me on the day the Manifesto came out up to say that there is a statement in the manifesto about ending the mass dependency on food parcels and that this was a moral scar on our society. Could this be used to secure a debate or at least ask questions you have made this commitment – what is your plan to deliver on it. To hold them to account.

Cathy that sounds a good tack for the letter then – as four out of the 5 MPs in our district are now labour.

Juli – we have had fourteen enquires in Shipley and we are going ahead to establish a FoodSavers in Shipley.

Cathy – we have another meeting coming up shortly on Wednesday for our meal providers serving the homeless and those with street-based lives. I must admit this is a group I often feel ambivalent about for some of the same reasons that Imogen has outlined in Keighley as there can be a lot of feeding people but not able to do a lot to help people to move on.

Keighley open door – great work we have done together. Is there appetite to do this elsewhere – **Dan** getting to know people has really helped also bring in different groups which work in different ways.

I will be talking to Ishaq about getting something going in his patch.

We have also just finished promoting and running our Healthy start champions training. We know that many people who are eligible do not apply, and what to get this figure up, we have twenty new champions.

It is a short easy action on our part but it does help.

I am also making a short film called more than just food – about these issues.

Any updates from the floor.

Andrew – great that Cathy can showcase your healthy start champions training at an upcoming Feeding Britain Webinar

Cathy – thank you though I do not like to take too much credit as we basically replicated many of the ideas from Feeding Liverpool. But it is good to share things that work well with the network as there is no need to reinvent something that works! We can adapt ideas in our own ways for our own settings. The Feeding Britain network is great for this, and it is good to be able to share our ideas with others.