



Tackling food poverty in Shropshire

Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, February 2019

Developing a county-wide food poverty action plan

Food poverty is a growing problem in Shropshire. The Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance was formed in January 2018 by a consortium of organisations who are committed to work together to tackle food poverty in Shropshire. Our membership includes public, faith and voluntary organisations including food banks from across the county. The Alliance is currently being co-ordinated by Shrewsbury Food Hub, with a steering group of organisations including Citizens Advice Shropshire, Shropshire Council and Age UK.

Throughout 2018 [we researched levels of food poverty across the county](#) and mapped current provision to identify gaps and potential solutions. This research was participatory, with a wide range of organisations and stakeholders involved. Fifty-eight people attended workshops which were held around the county and 108 responded to our online consultation. Sixteen people with lived experience of food poverty were interviewed.

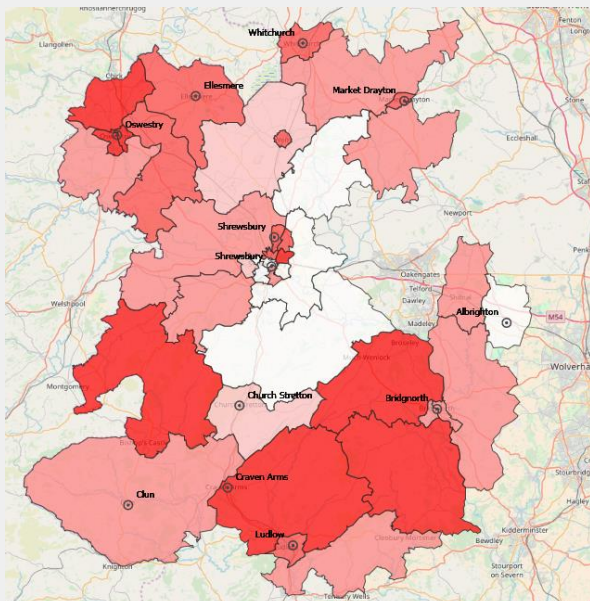
“I can't afford healthy food like fruit and vegetables. It breaks my heart because I want to be a good mother.”

Survey response from female aged 35-44
Market Drayton

Based on this process we have developed a 12-point [Menu for Action](#) for Shropshire. We have called it a menu as this enables organisations to prioritise which actions they would like to adopt. Any response to food poverty needs to build from the resources available in each community and meet local needs, grassroots up.

The Action Plan focuses on three main areas:

1. Increasing support for people in crisis
2. Preventing food poverty by supporting people to maximise their income and supporting projects to improve access to low cost food, growing and skills in health and nutrition
3. Increasing awareness of the issue and embedding it in the policies of statutory bodies and community organisations, so that we can develop an effective strategic response across the county.



Our challenges and learning

Shropshire is a large rural county which poses challenges when it comes to gathering information on current provision and developing solutions to food poverty. Some organisations operate county-wide, whilst others only work in a particular locality. People living in the county town have better access to services than those living in smaller market towns or in rural areas. Developing solutions therefore needs to be done based on the needs of each locality. Solutions also need to be developed from the grassroots up, based on the needs and wishes of local people. It is essential to involve as many organisations as possible in the process of developing a food poverty action plan. In Shropshire we have found that there is a lack of knowledge about what other organisations are already delivering or planning to deliver. Statutory services operate very differently to smaller community-led initiatives. To create an effective plan,

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organisations at all levels need to be involved in discussions from an early stage.

One of the key challenges we face is funding. Funding is an issue for partner organisations, with cuts to council budgets and limited funding available to the community sector creating challenges when considering setting up new projects and activities on food poverty. The financial support we received from Food Power has created a catalyst for action on food poverty. The challenge now is to find sufficient funding for ongoing co-ordination to ensure that we can work with organisations to turn the action plan into solid actions.

Our next steps

Support for the alliance continues. We have secured further financial support from Food Power to evaluate the work of the alliance and funding from our Healthy Lives board for continued co-ordination of the alliance; the CCG and local NHS trusts are also supportive of the alliance and we are also working with the Early Help Partnership Board and Children's Services on actions for young people and families living in food poverty. We are planning on working with local communities to inspire them to start their own actions on the issue and linking them to resources available in the form of access to buildings and support from council and NHS staff, as well as funding opportunities.

In 2019 we will:

- Consult with all organisations who have been involved in the process of developing the action plan to empower them to identify priorities for action and supporting them where necessary to access partners and resources.
- Share information to support people in food poverty via our advice-focused [website](#)
- Promote awareness of food poverty to policy makers and the general public
- Further develop the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance Network to inspire more groups to take action by building grassroots up solutions within each community
- Evaluate our alliance to track our impact on food poverty in Shropshire.

“It is really important to create a really wide alliance of organisations. Working together and sharing information is the first step to taking action on food poverty”

Emily Fay, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

Our key achievements and impact

- Creating an alliance of organisations from the statutory and community sector and developing an action plan which provides a strategic response to food poverty
- Raising awareness of food poverty in Shropshire. We have been featured on the BBC and a member of our alliance presented a paper on rural food poverty to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights during his visit to the UK.
- Acting as a catalyst for change; key Shropshire organisations are considering taking action on food poverty or have started to make changes to the way they operate to improve the lives of people living on low incomes.

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