

LEICESTER FOOD BANK PLUS

YEAR 1 ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020



Contents

Foreword (by Liz Kendall MP)	Page 2
Introduction	Page 4
Project resources	Page 4
Project evaluation	Page 10
Year 1 service activity statistics	Page 11
Year 1 client outcome survey responses	Page 13
Key findings	Page 16
Summary and conclusions	Page 21
Annex 1: Case studies	Page 26
Annex 2: National Feeding Britain perspective	Page 30



Foreword

This report represents a significant milestone in Feeding Leicester's fight against poverty and destitution in the city.

By providing such a forensic, comprehensive, and thoughtful account of the first year of our Food Bank Plus project, the report demonstrates just how much potential there is for this model of advice provision to maximise people's incomes and reduce the long-term need for food banks.

That this project has been able to continue supporting people through the coronavirus pandemic is a credit to the team at Reaching People who deliver it on a day-to-day basis.

But what the report also shows is that Food Bank Plus goes further than crisis resolution. Poverty restricts people's independence and freedom, as well as their ability to afford basic essentials, in so many ways. What we learn from this report is just how effective Food Bank Plus has been in tackling poverty in a holistic way, by resolving issues relating to housing, schooling, and transport, as well as benefits and debt.

As a Trustee of Feeding Britain, this goes to the heart of our mission: yes, we need to prevent and relieve hunger now; but we also need to remove those barriers to a decent standard of living which prevent people living free of the risk of poverty and destitution.

Not only will this report inform the nationwide rollout of Food Bank Plus, under Feeding Britain's Pathways Out of Poverty programme, it also gives the Government a map and compass for addressing the underlying drivers of poverty and destitution.



We need urgent action from the Government to reduce significantly the appalling levels of need for food banks. The report's emphasis on the assessment process for disability benefits and deductions from Universal Credit, for example, gives a clear indication of the reforms we need from the Government to prevent people being hungry.

I'm proud of the work that Feeding Leicester has put in over the past year to set up and deliver such an effective project, which is putting so much money back into people's pockets. Given the economic forecasts for the year ahead, the need for Food Bank Plus looks set to continue growing. We are determined to offer a lifeline to all those on the verge of being hungry who need support.

But I will also champion the report's conclusions in Parliament and, in doing so, try to get ministers to play their part in reducing the sheer scale of need that we're having to meet.



Liz Kendall MP

Trustee of Feeding Britain and Chair of Feeding Leicester partnership



Introduction

In partnership with Feeding Britain and as a member of the Feeding Leicester Partnership, Reaching People are delivering this Big Lottery funded 'Pathways Out of Poverty' project. Called 'Leicester Food Bank Plus', this project is one of four pilot projects across England and is providing information and advice to clients of four local community food projects. The project commenced in April 2019 and is funded for a two-year period until 31st March 2021. (Please see Annex 2 for more details from a national perspective.)

Many of the reasons why vulnerable families find themselves having to seek food aid are to do with the broader issues of poverty and systemic barriers: benefit delays and processing errors, debt, insecure housing or jobs, and difficulty in accessing online services. Despite this, most people seeking help at emergency food projects do not have access to the advice they need to overcome these issues, and face barriers which make it difficult for them to access advice elsewhere. The project aims to ensure that people accessing these emergency food services have on-site access to quality information, advice and case advocacy to support them to tackle the issues that made them vulnerable to hunger.

Project resources

a) Project coordinator and professional advice worker

Leicester Food Bank Plus is provided through one paid post which combines the roles of Project Co-ordinator and Professional Advice Worker. The budgeted staffing hours at the commencement of the project were 30 hours per week for this role; this was increased to 37 hours per week from 1 January 2020 due to the project workload. Due to the nature of this combined role,



and the complex cases that are supported by the project, a broad skill-set is required. This includes: professional information, advice and guidance knowledge and experience in tier 1 and 2 generalist information and advice provision; project management skills; data analysis and report writing skills; volunteer management experience; partnership-working skills; customer service and interpersonal skills; a solution-focused and practical approach.

This staffing resource has also been supplemented by a small number of hours delivered for project lead support, financial management support, and some administrative support, all provided by other Reaching People staff on an as-required basis. In addition, the Child Poverty Action Group are contracted through the national project to provide the advice worker with specialist welfare benefit training, resources, and email/telephone support where required.

b) Advice service design and community food project partners

Activity for the first month of project delivery focused on identifying and liaising with potential Community Food Project partners, whilst also planning, developing and implementing the service delivery structure, policies and procedures.

The initial Community Food Projects were confirmed as B-Inspired's Braunstone Foodshare, E2 Food Hub, the Emerald Centre, and Mosaic Food Bank. Information/advice sessions commenced on 29th April 2019. In line with the project deliverables, the advice session schedule incorporates one half-day advice session per week at each of the community food projects.

In August, the E2 Food Hub was replaced as a project partner with Christ the King Church Foodbank due to low levels of client engagement at E2, despite significant service awareness raising work by both E2 and the advice service. The Christ the King



Church sessions have had good levels of client demand and attendance; partnership-working with E2 continues with E2 proactively referring clients to the advice service on an as-required basis. All other community food project partners have remained unchanged. Project partners have a key role in promoting the offer of advice to foodbank clients.

c) Project volunteers and student placements

Project scope and deliverables

A key deliverable for the project was to train community advice volunteers, who were to be recruited by the community food projects themselves but supervised by the professional advice worker during advice sessions. The volunteers were to have previously had direct experience of food poverty and using emergency food services. The volunteer role had been scoped to include: helping people access information and resolve problems themselves, including supporting digital access, offering referral and signposting to professionals where needed. The volunteers were to be located within community food projects, where they would be able to build informal relationships with clients and provide support in a non-threatening environment.

Challenges and solutions

Volunteer recruitment has proved challenging from the start of project delivery. Each community food project is dependent upon volunteers for their own service delivery; recruiting beyond this for specific advice service volunteers proved difficult. As project implementation progressed, other challenges were identified in terms of the impact the volunteers are able to have and



the numbers of volunteers that can be accommodated and meaningfully utilised in the project. Some of the main reasons for this were:

- The limited private space available at each of the community food projects means that there is nowhere that a volunteer can meet with a client separate to the hourly appointments already being held by the professional advice worker.
- The scope, complexity, and multiplicity of client issues in general being presented in these venues is such that the support of a professional advice worker is, almost without exception, required in order to ensure a comprehensive and robust assessment of the client's situation and appropriate planning/prioritisation of ongoing work accordingly.
- The relatively limited amount of in-depth training that it is possible for the advice worker to provide on the specific information and advice issues whilst also delivering four advice sessions at four localities, undertaking client casework responsibilities between advice sessions, and project co-ordination responsibilities.
- Very significant differences in the individual volunteer's skills, knowledge, previous experience. This includes literacy skills which are essential to train a volunteer to undertake form filling work, for example, in an effective way.
- Greatly differing individual volunteer confidence levels in interaction with clients. Effective information and advice service provision requires team members in a client-facing role to be able to convey a level of confidence in these interactions (even when simply introducing the service) as this supports the creation of a trusting relationship for the client with the service that in turn enables them to engage appropriately.



These challenges were reported to Feeding Britain, other pilot projects, and ERS (the national external project evaluators). In January 2020 it was acknowledged that for those pilot projects not being delivered from within the Citizens Advice network the original volunteer recruitment deliverables were not appropriate given the front-line service delivery challenges experienced and evidenced in Leicester and Bradford in particular. It was agreed that volunteers for the actual foodbanks, not just specific advice service volunteers, should be included in the data collection, with the stats being divided into two types of volunteer support: (a) volunteers actually providing information to clients (b) volunteers supporting clients to access the service. The project scope was also altered such that the training of the foodbank volunteers themselves should form the focus moving forward. Provision of volunteer training resources by CPAG was agreed in that they would prepare resources for welfare benefit workshop-style training sessions for the individual projects to deliver to the foodbank volunteers during the second project year.

Actual advice service volunteer and student placement details

During year 1, six volunteers were recruited to the advice service. By the end of year 1, only two of these volunteers remain engaged with the service (although their direct involvement of service activity was paused temporarily at the end of March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions). The reasons for stopping volunteering for the other four volunteers were: ill health (one volunteer); family issues (two volunteers); the lack of opportunity for independent work (one volunteer).

To explore further opportunities to share the learning of the project, Leicester Food Bank Plus established effective links with the De Montfort University Health and Wellbeing in the Community degree course which resulted in the creation of two third-year student project placements at the two food bank locations where no volunteers are currently present – Mosaic Food Bank



and Christ the King Church Food Bank. These 10-week placements took place from January to March 2020. The students were very engaged throughout, and the feedback received from both the students and their tutor was extremely positive with the experience being judged as highly relevant and beneficial to their Health and Wellbeing in the Community degree studies.

"I believe I have become more confident in engaging with clients . . . This opportunity has made me see first-hand the effects that social factors such as economic status can have a detrimental impact on a person's health and wellbeing. The whole experience has been eye-opening."

DMU have requested that the service provides these placements again for their next cohort which would begin in October 2020. It was agreed that we would be happy to consider this in principle and discuss the feasibility of this nearer the time.

A third-year student from DMU's Youth and Community degree course also undertook a placement with Reaching People, and worked with the Leicester Food Bank Plus project by attending some advice service sessions and undertaking research on local volunteering opportunities and challenges that resulted in the compilation of a report that provides some very interesting findings for the project and other local voluntary sector organisations.

Volunteer training

All volunteers and students were provided with full induction on joining the service. They then attended advice appointments, shadowing the advice worker, gaining learning on case-specific issues arising during the appointments followed up by discussion after the session.



The first group volunteer training session took place in October 2019, covering an overview of the benefit system with a focus on Universal Credit. There were 6 attendees in total, including all current project volunteers and volunteers from Christ the King church and Mosaic which had no advice service volunteers. The training was well-received and the feedback forms completed by each attendee at the end of the session were positive.

A Feeding Britain project day in November was attended by both Leicester project volunteers and one of the DMU students on placement with the project; some of the day was allocated to welfare benefit training provided by CPAG.

Project evaluation

ERS were appointed by Feeding Britain as the external project evaluator. In August 2019, the project outcome measures and data collection requirements were finalised by ERS. The Leicester Food Bank Plus minimum client/case data set was refined in line with this, and a client outcome survey was designed and implemented. The client outcome survey is completed with the client at the end of their support with the project. This has presented some challenges, in particular:

- many clients cannot be reliably contacted by telephone due to issues such as having no phone, having no credit on their phone, and not wishing to answer their phone to an unrecognised number, for example due to debt recovery action.
- where clients have been supported to apply for welfare benefits or to challenge benefit decisions, the outcome is often not known by the client for a number of months causing a significant delay in being able to complete the outcome survey.



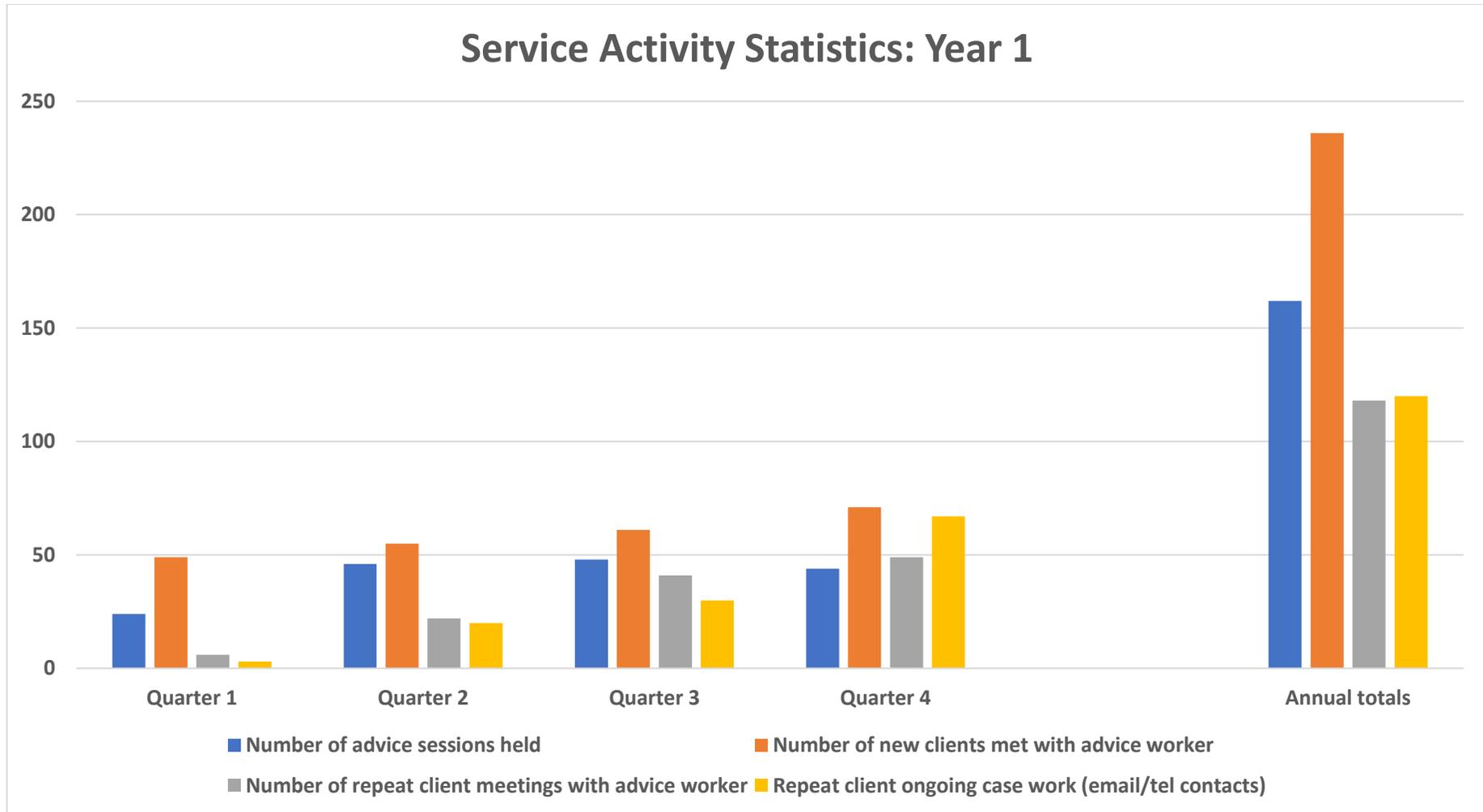
In January 2020, Leicester Food Bank Plus submitted a project data compilation to support ERS and Feeding Britain with the compilation and submission of an interim project report to the project funders, the Big Lottery Community Fund.

Year 1 Service Activity Statistics

	No. of advice sessions held	Number of new clients met with advice worker	Number of repeat client meetings with advice worker	Repeat client ongoing case work (email/tel. contacts)
Year 1				
Quarter 1	24	49	6	3
Quarter 2	46	55	22	20
Quarter 3	48	61	41	30
Quarter 4	44	71	49	67
Annual totals	162	236	118	120

Total number of client appointments with advice worker: 354





Year 1 Client Outcome Survey Responses

	No. of clients where contact was attempted for survey completion	No. of clients where contact was achieved	No. of clients reporting issue is resolved/on way to being resolved within 6 months	% attribution to project	No. of clients reporting increase in annual income	% attribution to project	Total increase in annual income	No. of clients reporting decrease in need for emergency food	No. of clients reporting increase in wellbeing	% attribution to project
Year 1										
Total (in client numbers)	62	43	42	100%: 30; 80%: 1; 70%: 1; 50%: 9; 40%: 1	24	100%:20; 80%: 1; 50%: 3;	£78, 727	25	20	100%:12; 70%: 1; 50%: 6; 40%: 1
Total (as a percentage of all survey respondents)			98%		56%			58%	47%	

Average amount of increase in annual income for those who reported this outcome: £3,280

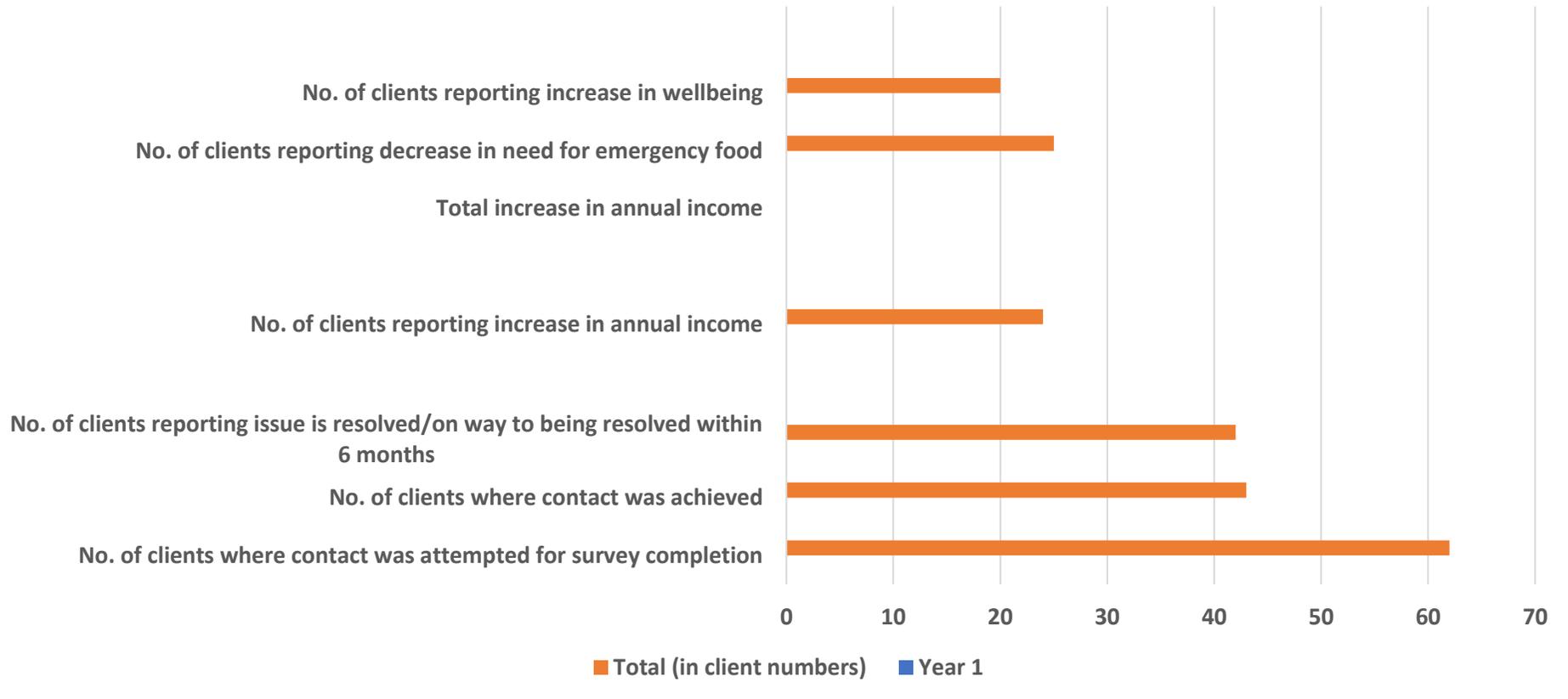


Examples of further outcomes achieved (i.e. those that did not increase annual income)

- Successful maintenance or re-instatement of existing benefit income (e.g. successful sanction challenges, DLA to PIP transfers; ESA reviews, PIP reviews)
- Successful housing register applications
- Social housing provision - both new social provision and re-housing due to environmental health issues
- Successful school applications
- Blue Badge awards
- Grant awards for household equipment/furnishing
- Disabled facilities grant awards
- Equipment/adaptations Occupational Therapy referrals and assessment.



Client outcome survey responses



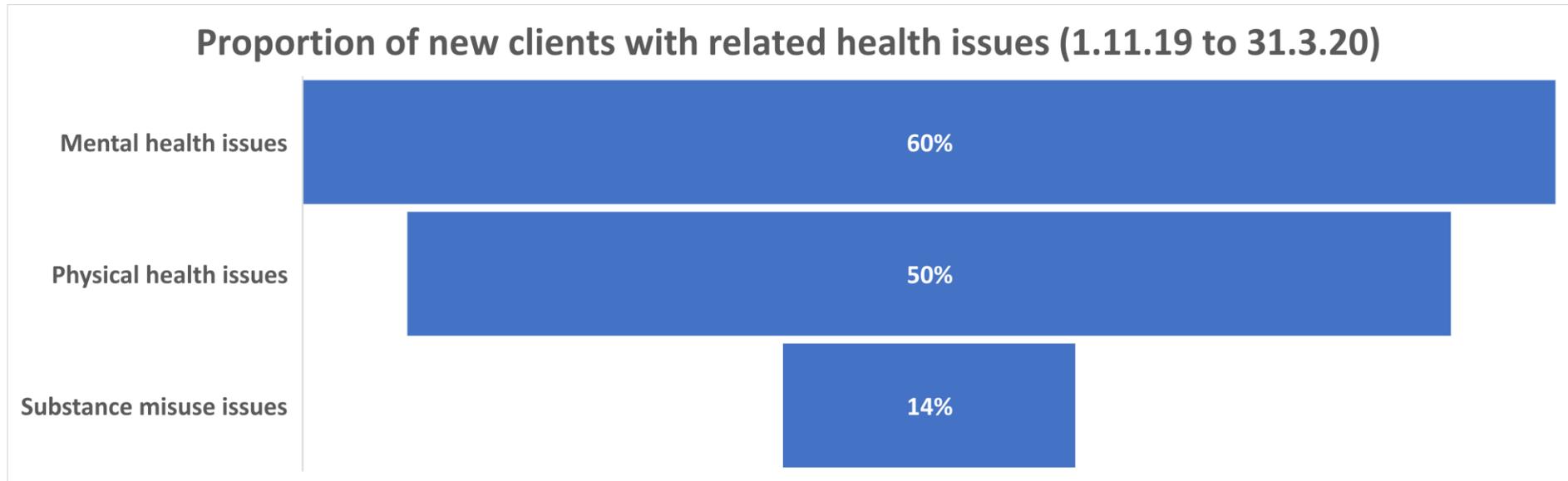
Key findings

Health

From early in the advice service delivery, it became evident that a significant proportion of clients accessing support had health issues that had either contributed to their food poverty, been a barrier to resolving the issues necessary to resolve their food poverty, or (in most cases) both. From November 2019 to March 2020, anonymised data was collected to identify the proportion of new clients presenting in such a situation. The statistics are as follows:

Type of health condition contributing to food poverty	Percentage of all new clients (1 Nov. 2019 to 31 March 2020)
Mental health issue	60%
Long-term physical health condition/disability	50%
Substance misuse	14%





Essential form-filling, digital and literacy support

Benefit applications and claim maintenance require the claimant to have IT skills, access to the Internet and appropriate computer equipment, as well as the literacy confidence/skills and the physical ability to hold a pen or type to complete some very lengthy forms. Literacy levels in this client group and in Leicester generally are well below the national average. For example, health literacy data (accessed at <http://healthliteracy.geodata.uk/>) shows that in Leicester, the prevalence of poor health literacy of the population aged 16-64 is 59.79%. The mean prevalence nationally is 40.66%. The project’s findings to date provide further evidence that, for many vulnerable clients experiencing poverty, low literacy and digital skills present a major barrier to accessing



and sustaining welfare benefit income to which they are entitled. For a significant proportion of our clients, it is not a meaningful or transformative intervention to simply provide information and advice on benefit entitlement and associated processes. It is essential to assess not only the client's circumstances and issues, but also their individual skills and abilities to undertake the necessary next steps, providing support with these steps as appropriate. For many clients this results in holding repeat appointments with them to support them to accurately complete hard copy benefit forms, online applications and benefit-decision challenge documentation. For some clients, it also involves ongoing support to access online benefit accounts and read other letters or associated documentation as the situation progresses. It is the absence of such support in the past that has contributed to long-standing financial hardship, and complex, entrenched, 'revolving-door' issues. Case study 1 (in Annex 1 of this report) provides an example of this type of support provision that enabled the client to access a very significant increase in annual income after multiple unsuccessful attempts to do so without such support.

Essential advocacy support

As with the need for form filling support detailed above, the project has also identified the need (and current service gap) for low-level advocacy to enable clients to resolve their issues successfully. Due in particular to significant levels of mental health issues (of which anxiety and depression are the most prevalent), low confidence levels, learning disabilities, and mistrust of 'official' services, it has proved essential to support many clients to have their voice heard and their needs clearly articulated while navigating the processes and procedures that they can find daunting and overwhelming. This support has been provided by different means dependent upon the client's own unique situation and skills; for example by: supporting clients to make



telephone calls and speaking on their behalf as necessary; supporting them to follow formal complaint procedures including associated letter writing; accompanying clients to DWP meetings.

Relationship-based support approach

Adopting a relationship-based approach to client support has proved essential to supporting clients, particularly those for whom financial hardship and vulnerability have been long standing. Complex and multiple issues (such as anxiety, depression, learning disabilities, long-standing physical ill health and disability, low confidence and mistrust of services) can make engaging with support difficult for clients and something that they instinctively seek to avoid. Providing the information and advice service in venues within their local communities that they are already going to for support is the first way in which the project works to overcome these barriers. However, for many clients this in itself would not be enough to encourage them to engage in a meaningful way. Other actions (such as the advice worker becoming a familiar face in the setting, and greeting/interacting with clients on a social basis initially, word of mouth recommendation from other service users and food bank volunteers, and initial support with 'simple questions' that prospective clients gains the confidence to ask in the first instance) have all been necessary to encourage meaningful client engagement with issues they often haven't shared with others for a long time. The process for the client of discussing such entrenched and previously unspoken issues can be very stressful and distressing, and each appointment/interaction with the advice worker is an opportunity to build trust, acknowledge and value the client's perspective, and build hope and confidence that the issues can be successfully resolved. The continuity in the client–advisor relationship



that this project model facilitates has proved very beneficial to sustaining client engagement over the prolonged period that is often needed to resolve issues that do not have a 'quick fix'.

Welfare benefit income levels

A key aim of the project is to increase client income and reduce/remove the need for emergency food support. Project findings to date are that the majority of clients accessing the service are already in receipt of all of the means-tested benefits to which they are entitled. The largest amounts of income increase have been achieved through successful disability benefit applications which the client has either been unsuccessful in applying for previously or has not been aware of. There have been many cases where the client has been accessing their full benefit entitlement but deductions are being taken from these payments for previous advance payments, loans, debts etc. Whilst the vast majority of these deductions have been made in line with the rules and guidance on deductions, they have resulted in the benefit payments the client is receiving simply not being sufficient to manage on. This can be further impacted by the benefit cap and the 'bedroom tax'. While budgeting advice and support is of undoubted benefit in some cases, in others it can be very challenging to identify ways in which the budget management can be improved – there is simply insufficient income being received to meet basic needs.

Disability benefit assessments

The majority of benefit decisions that the project has supported clients to challenge to date are for Personal Independence Payment. These challenges take up to a year to reach tribunal and so only one appeal has been ruled on as yet – this appeal was won without going to tribunal because of the strength of evidence against the validity of the DWP's face-to-face assessment



report. It is of concern that numerous clients have shared PIP decisions that report findings from their PIP claim face-to-face assessment that the client is adamant did not happen during the assessment, and which do not demonstrate that written evidence provided by the client's own healthcare professionals has been taken into account. This can cause clients great frustration and distress, often exacerbating their health issues further.

Summary and conclusions

Future activity – Year 2

With Covid-19 restrictions coming into place at the end of year 1, the beginning of year 2 will see plans for altered service delivery being implemented. These will see support being provided remotely (by email, telephone, post etc.), with flyers being continually distributed by our community food project partners in the food parcels they will be delivering. This service delivery will remain under continual review and modification dependent upon government guidance. While temporary in nature, with a significant number of our clients experiencing health issues that have led to them needing to be 'shielded' for a minimum 12-week period, they may be in place for some time.

Client work is expected to continue to be a mixture of new cases and ongoing case work. Changes in the type of issues faced by clients and their individual situations is expected to reflect the additional impact of Covid-19 on employment, financial, health, and wellbeing issues.



As year 2 progresses and more client benefit claims/challenges reach final decisions, a significant focus will continue on completing client outcome surveys to analyse project success against key deliverables.

There will also be a focus on project legacy, in particular by attempting to provide the individual community food projects with training and resources that will enable them to support clients effectively when the service provided by this project comes to an end.

What is working well?

Year 1 of this 2-year project has already evidenced significant success in increasing the engagement, confidence, empowerment and income of vulnerable, hard-to-reach clients experiencing long-term, severe financial hardship and food poverty. In summary, this is being achieved by:

- delivering high quality, professional information, advice, ongoing case work and case advocacy based on a detailed, holistic assessment and issue prioritisation. The levels of tier 1 and 2 generalist information and advice plus case work and advocacy ensures the required breadth of support for resolving cross-cutting issues (welfare benefits, housing, employment, health and wellbeing), with supported referral and engagement pathways to tier 3 specialist advice as appropriate (for specialist debt, housing and immigration advice)
- meeting people where they are – both in terms of being within their local community at a food project where they have gone to seek help, and also in terms of their unique situation and issues. The outcomes have been achieved through the essential adoption of a person-centred approach that provides appropriate levels of support to each individual,



tailored to their skills and abilities. In the majority of cases, due to their complex and entrenched nature, this support is not provided as a one-off intervention but throughout their journey as they work to resolve the issues that have led to poverty

- the continuity of relationship-based support provided by working with the same advice worker with whom the client can build an accessible, open, trusting and valued professional relationship that enables them to commit to engaging with ongoing work to resolve complex and long-standing issues
- providing support in the above ways has proved essential to building the hope, skills, and confidence required by the client to resolve their current issues and also increase their levels of empowerment and resilience that will enable them to tackle future issues at an early stage
- **most importantly, the great support provided to the project by our community food project partners which has enabled clients to access this service and, in many cases, given them the confidence to do so.**

What more needs to be done?

Whilst year 2 will see Leicester Food Bank Plus continue to work to maximise the opportunity that this project is providing to support clients to resolve the issues that have led to food poverty, the project's scope of working with four community food projects means that there are many clients accessing other emergency food services across Leicester City that are not able to access this type of support. This unmet need leads to the following recommendations with regard to this project:

- to access further funding. Dependent on the level, of funding this would aim to:



- support the provision of another professional advice worker to enable the project to work with other local community food projects and provide support to a greater number of clients
- extend the provision of the service beyond the current project end date of 31 March 2021
- enable a further extension of the level of support provided to those clients with the greatest barriers to moving forward with their lives (for example, mental health issues and learning disabilities) – moving beyond the fire-fighting approach and resolution of specific issues that enable financial survival to the development of strategies for longer-term, resilient self-management.
- explore ways of engaging with those in food poverty who have not yet been able to reach out to a community food project and are currently 'hidden' from all services.

The findings from the project to date also raise questions for all of us concerned with tackling poverty in a practical and solution-focused way. Hopefully, this report has already highlighted some of these dependent on the reader's own context. Below are those that stand out as being fundamental to tackling poverty from Leicester Food Bank Plus's perspective:

- Early intervention and prevention are essential to the creation of resilient communities and individuals. This requires the lowering of thresholds for service access so that people are able to access support in a timely way, and prior to them declining into long-term poverty and destitution, and worsening physical/mental health.

How can these thresholds be tackled to prevent the exclusion of those who truly need support?



- Case work and advocacy are often required to support people to tackle complex issues combined with other barriers they face (low literacy and confidence levels; mental/physical health; learning disabilities). Currently such support can only be accessed within a very tight and specialist eligibility criteria and service provision (Care Act Advocacy, Mental Health Act Advocacy etc.).

How can services at a generalist level be designed to provide this essential case work and advocacy support?

- Poverty in itself can often be a barrier to accessing support services. When combined with other challenges presented by issues such as mental and physical ill health and disability, the barriers become increasingly insurmountable.

How can the different services that are required to tackle poverty be designed and provided in ways that overcome the current service access barriers of geographical location, cost, ill health, and disability?

- The generally low levels of literacy and IT skills/confidence/access in Leicester present a very significant barrier to individuals tackling and resolving issues in their lives, particularly for those experiencing poverty.

How can local service design, access and provision continue to be improved in a way that acknowledges this and provides practical and appropriate levels of support?

- Poor health and wellbeing are very closely linked to poverty. One in two adults with debts has a mental health problem (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2017). Anxiety and depression, for instance, commonly lead to low levels of motivation, engagement, and energy as well as high levels of avoidance; this results in ongoing deterioration and increasing complexity of issues.



How can public health, health and social care, and community services work together to develop much-needed joined-up solutions?

- **What will happen when this pilot project comes to an end in less than a year's time (March 2021)?**

Annex 1: Case studies

Case study 1

The advice worker supported a client with complex and long-standing mental health issues to make a new application for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The client had previously made three unsuccessful applications for PIP, the most recent being two years previously, and was in severe financial hardship. The client was unsure of how to complete the PIP form but had been unable to access support with her previous claims due to issues of mistrust, low confidence and extreme anxiety that prevented her from travelling outside her immediate neighbourhood. By building trust with the client through interaction during attendance at several foodbank sessions over a couple of months, the advice worker was able to successfully engage with the client and discuss how they could support her to make a new PIP application. The client was supported with making the initial phone call, completing the form, and gathering relevant medical evidence to support the claim. The client was extremely anxious about attending the usual face-to-face assessment following previous negative experiences and support was to also be provided for this. However, due to the strength of the application and the supporting medical evidence, no face-to-face assessment was required and PIP was awarded. This decision also then resulted in the client being eligible for a disability premium on their Employment and Support Allowance. The total increase of annual income achieved was in excess of £9000. The client no longer needs to access emergency food provision. She is also now looking to move nearer to her family so that



they can provide her with more regular and much-needed support. This relocation is possible due to the increased income provided by the successful PIP claim; the project is now supporting the client, as required, to navigate the relocation process.

Case study 2

The advice worker supported a client with a learning disability and long-standing mental health issues to successfully access a discretionary housing payment to avoid rent arrears due to the 'bedroom tax'. When his son moved out of his property the client's housing benefit payments were reduced, due to the now spare bedroom, leaving a short-fall in rent payments for the client to top-up; however, the client was unable to afford the rent top-up due to already experiencing significant financial hardship having been refused Personal Independence Payment on transfer from Disability Living Allowance (a decision that the advice worker is now also supporting the client to challenge). The advice worker supported the client to apply via the local authority online portal and upload essential documents as evidence, as well as understand and act on further communication received by the local authority in relation to the claim. The client was awarded a discretionary housing payment that covers the shortfall in housing benefit for a six-month period, during which time the advice worker is supporting the client with the housing exchange process that he is keen to pursue to enable him to move to a one-bedroom property and avoid further hardship in the future due to the financial impact of having a spare bedroom.

Case study 3

Mrs P attended an advice session appointment that had been booked for her by a project volunteer. The client was already accessing a social group provided by the community food venue and had been speaking to the volunteer about whether she should be getting pension credit, and about how her mobility was deteriorating and daily tasks such as bathing were becoming harder. At 83 years of age, Mrs P lives alone and, as represented in the first appointment, remains very protective of her independence. A pension credit entitlement



calculation was undertaken which demonstrated that Mrs P was just above the threshold for entitlement to this. The discussion moved on to how Mrs P was managing more generally at home and how her physical health conditions were affecting this; she was clear that she didn't want or need 'carers popping in and out all the time' but did want to know how she could access some aids to help her round the house, such as rails to hold on to. She had already purchased a 3-wheeled walker herself which she had become confident and happy using inside and outside the home. The advice worker suggested a local authority Occupational Therapy Assessment to evaluate her home environment and access specialist input on how this could be made safer and easier for her. The client was happy to proceed with this and the advice worker subsequently supported her to submit an online application for this. The discussion that took place during the completion of this application confirmed that Mrs P may be entitled to Attendance Allowance. The advice worker discussed this with Mrs P who hadn't previously heard of the benefit but was keen to apply. The advice worker called the DWP to request a form be posted out to Mrs P and supported her to complete the form when it arrived. The resulting outcomes in this case were: a full OT home assessment which identified, recommended and provided multiple aids and adaptations that now support Mrs P's ability to remain living in her property independently and with increased safety; an award of Attendance Allowance at the highest rate achieving an increase in annual income of £4558 which Mrs P is now using to pay for extra support in her home (such as shopping and cleaning) that she could not previously afford.

Case study 4

Miss R was referred to Leicester Food Bank Plus by a community worker from one of the community food projects. The community worker had recently been made aware that all Miss R's UC payments had been stopped 3 months ago due to her being sanctioned for failing to meet her claimant criteria. An entry had been put on Miss R's UC journal at the time that this had come to light but no response had been received prior to her first appointment with the advice service. The information that Miss R could provide to the advice worker was quite limited and she agreed to the community worker sharing information on her situation and how they had been supporting her in the past.



It was revealed that as well as mental health issues, Miss R had a mild to moderate learning disability that she did not usually acknowledge in conversation with others, leading to her creating the impression that she could read and write without difficulty and could use computers with very minimal support. The community worker explained that they had supported her to agree an appropriate UC claimant commitment at the commencement of her claim 15 months ago, but that this had now been revised without anyone other than the client being made aware. The advice worker went on to review the current claimant commitment, which was not appropriate to the client's IT skills and literacy levels. They then supported the client to challenge the UC sanction decision by requesting a mandatory reconsideration, and also by requesting an urgent review of the claimant commitment due to its failure to fairly reflect the abilities of the client and the challenges they faced. This resulted in the claimant commitment being revised such that the client is now able to adhere to it, and a successful mandatory reconsideration decision that the sanction should be lifted and all previously sanctioned UC payments be back-paid in full to Miss R.



Annex 2: National Feeding Britain perspective

Feeding Britain is a charity established in 2015 by Frank Field MP and a group of cross-party MPs and peers with the mission of eliminating hunger in the UK. The charity was created to put into practice the recommendations of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger's 2014 Feeding Britain inquiry.

Feeding Britain have established local Feeding Britain pilots in 12 areas of the UK, which are networks of local community organisations, charities and others working to prevent and alleviate hunger in their communities. They collaborate to implement a range of practical projects in line with an overall Feeding Britain framework, from improving the delivery of emergency food aid to strengthening communities' food security.

A strengths-based organisation, Feeding Britain responds to the needs of local communities identified by their pilots and supports the pilots with a framework of activities, project development, capacity, data collection and evaluation, fundraising, communications and networking and learning across the national network. They also work with local partners to gather evidence and data from activities across the country, which they use to campaign for national policy reform to address the root causes of hunger.

In addition to the Leicester Food Bank Plus pilot project, three more of the 12 local Feeding Britain pilots are taking part in this 2-year 'Pathways out of Poverty' pilot project: Bradford, Bristol, and Derbyshire. The four local projects are co-ordinated by a national Feeding Britain project co-ordinator, with opportunities provided for the projects to share their progress, findings and learning together.

