

Council – 6th January 2020

Notice of motion – Food banks

A notice of motion has been received from Councillors Ward (lead member), Nawaz, Hussain, Burley and Jeavons. This motion states:

“This Council:

- Notes that 41% of children that live in Walsall are living in poverty and that the number of people having to use food banks has dramatically increased since 2010 with over 3 million food parcels handed out in 18/19.
- Notes and thanks the many volunteers and organisations across the Borough that run and manage food banks to help those in need.
- Expresses great concern at the growing reliance on food banks across the Borough, particularly by families with children.

We call upon the Council to:

- Follow other local authorities and introduce Food Collection Points at the Civic Centre and other Council owned civic buildings.
- Request its partners across the public sector to introduce the same at their buildings.
- Write to all supermarkets in the Borough to ask them to donate any unsold food at the end of the day to local organisations that can help feed those in need.”

Background

National data suggests that 34% of children live in poverty in the UK (Social Metrics Commission, 2019). There are no up-to-date governmental statistics on child poverty that provide a breakdown at local authority level. However, the non-governmental organisation End Child Poverty does provide estimates of child poverty at local level. These estimates suggest that 41% of children in Walsall live in poverty once housing costs are taken into account, equating to around 30,551 children (End Child Poverty, 2019). There is significant variation between wards, with an estimated 18% of children in Streetly living in poverty compared to 62% in Palfrey (End Child Poverty, 2019).

Evidence suggests that use of food banks is linked to financial insecurity or sudden loss of income, such as due to the loss of a job or issues with claiming benefits (The Trussell Trust, 2019).

Research shows that hunger can have an adverse impact on children’s physical and mental health and development (Ke and Ford-Jones, 2015). For instance, children who experience hunger are more likely to experience depression and substance misuse disorders (Ke and Ford-Jones, 2015).

Current position on foodbanks within the borough

Walsall Council has a strong record of supporting those most vulnerable. The Council's work on Housing First and the Night Shelter have been recognised nationally as leading the way on this work.

Cabinet approved a Resilient Communities model on the 18th December 2019, which recognises that within challenging financial budgets, a different approach is required to work supporting vulnerable people. The Council's work with foodbanks is an example of this in practice. Community led organisations offer solutions directly to the community in conjunction with the Council, Citizen's Advice Bureau and other professional organisations. The relationship between Walsall Council and the voluntary sector is longstanding but is moving to a role where the Council is a key enabler, working positively with the sector directly or through One Walsall or the network of Community Associations within the borough. The Council would seek to continue to work positively with its voluntary and community sector partners in delivering support for vulnerable residents.

There is an existing network of nine foodbanks operating in Walsall. Six are partnerships with the Black Country Foodbank and the other three are with the Trussell Trust. The existing foodbank provision offers wide geographical coverage across Walsall. A full list of local foodbanks is attached as Appendix A.

The First Stop Shop does hold a small stock of food parcels supplied by the Trussell Trust for emergencies but would normally work with Ablewell Advice and the Rock Church to meet the need for emergency food for residents living in the centre of Walsall. To create another foodbank distribution or collection point could unbalance those two organisations which is something the Council would seek to avoid. In circumstances where the Council receives donations from residents of Walsall they are directed towards the existing local food banks, food providers or the Black Country YMCA (that operates the Night Shelter and Glebe Centre).

In addition, a number of organisations offer hot food provision to vulnerable people. These groups mainly, but not exclusively, operate from the Night Shelter and are currently collaborating with an advice centre, foodbank and local community interest company on a project that will provide targeted support to vulnerable families in their own home. Discussions are still in their early stages, but the Council is linked in to (although not leading) this work.

Finally. Children's Services (Early Help) runs a 'Keeping in Touch' programme throughout the school summer and October half-term holiday aimed at keeping in touch with some of our most vulnerable children, young people and families via a range of contact and activities. Food bank vouchers are provided to families in need via this offer.

Other initiatives

National initiatives include:

- FareShare, a charity focused on the distribution of excess food, works with a number of national retailers, including Tesco, Sainsbury's, ASDA and Waitrose & Partners, to redistribute their surplus food from stores to local charities.
- Healthy Start vouchers are available for pregnant women and families with children up to the age of four to buy milk and fruit and vegetables.

There are also a wide range of initiatives run by the community and voluntary sector in Walsall, aimed at supporting children and families with food insecurity. These schemes include the 'Make Lunch' scheme run by Transforming Lives for the Good; distribution of food parcels by the Midland Langar Seva society and breakfast clubs run by Home Start and Beechdale Lifelong Learning Centre.

Appendix A

List of Foodbanks supporting Walsall residents

Great Barr Foodbank St Bernards Church, Broome Avenue, Birmingham, B43 5AL (On border of Birmingham - B43 is also a Walsall postcode) (Partnership with Trussell Trust)

The Lamp Foodbank, Brownhills Community Centre, Chester Rd North, Brownhills (Partnership with of Black Country Foodbank)

The Rock foodbank, Lichfield House, 27-31 Lichfield Street, Walsall (Partnership with Black Country foodbank)

All Saints Foodbank, All Saints Church Hall, Walsall Rd, Darlaston (Partnership with Trussell Trust)

Bridging the Gap, 79A Stafford St, Willenhall, Walsall (Partnership with Black Country Foodbank)

The Thomas Project, 196A Walsall Wood Rd, Aldridge, Walsall (Partnership with Black Country Foodbank)

Ablewell Advice, Ablewell Street, Walsall (Partnership with Black Country Foodbank)

Walsall North Foodbank, Pelsall Methodist Church, Chapel Street, Pelsall (Trussell Trust)

Bloxwich & Blakenall – Trussells Trust, Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Rd, Blakenall, Walsall (Trussell Trust)

References

End Child Poverty (2019). Regional Estimates Local Authorities West Midlands. Available from: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2019/>

Ke, J., & Ford-Jones, E. L. (2015). Food insecurity and hunger: A review of the effects on children's health and behaviour. *Paediatrics & child health*, 20(2), 89–91. doi:10.1093/pch/20.2.89

Social Metrics Commission (2019). Measuring poverty 2019. Results tables 2019 release.

The Trussell Trust (2019). The state of hunger. Introduction to a study of poverty and food insecurity in the UK. Available from: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SoH-Interim-Report-Final-2.pdf>