

13 June 2018

Understanding food poverty

1 Purpose of report

1.1 The report provides:

- i. An overview of food poverty (or household food insecurity) risk and its potential impact on children and young people.
- ii. An overview of food bank provision across North Yorkshire.
- iii. Examples of what opportunities there are for further interventions.

2 Definition of food poverty

2.1 Food poverty, or household food insecurity, encompasses both the affordability of food, as well as its availability within local communities. It is vital that household food insecurity is seen as being driven by both the affordability and availability of a healthy diet. Food poverty has multiple negative impacts on individuals' health and wellbeing. It is important to ensure that people can access a healthy diet in a socially acceptable way and have sufficient certainty about how they will secure a healthy diet for themselves and their households.

2.2 The Department of Health defines food poverty as *'The inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.'*

2.3 A report by Bristol City Council identified some key themes emerging from definitions and discussions around food poverty or food security as shown in the table below.

Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there sufficient food? • Can we depend on supplies? • Where does our food come from?
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can everyone in our population obtain food? • Do they have skills and facilities to make best use of available food?
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can low-income individuals and families afford to buy healthy food?
Nutrition and quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do people consume the right type of food, in the right quantities, for their physical needs?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we rely on continued access to food? • Will everyone always be able to afford food?

3 Who is at risk from food poverty in North Yorkshire?

3.1 Recent research¹ has sought to identify those parts of the country most at risk of household food insecurity. The risk model has combined data on two factors:

- Types of household at greatest risk of food insecurity
- Range of data on benefits claimants

3.2 A map for North Yorkshire is included at **Appendix 1** which shows that the areas of highest risk are on the coast and in a number of market towns across the county.

4 Food poverty impact

4.1 Food poverty, or household food insecurity, can be triggered by a crisis in finance or personal circumstances, but may also be a long-term experience of not being able to access a healthy diet or afford to eat well.

4.2 A lack of food can impact on a child's ability to concentrate in school, but can also impact on their long term health in adult life. This begins with nutrition in pregnancy. Evidence suggests that many parents skip meals to make sure their children have enough to eat. Financial insecurity can affect children's wellbeing with children worrying about their family's financial situation.

4.3 The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger have reported² that "The evidence we have received on the impact of hunger on children during the school holidays is deeply troubling. It reveals how those children who exist on an impoverished diet, while taking part in little or no activity, return to school malnourished, sluggish and dreary." The report goes on to say "Moreover it suggests that this group of children start the new term several weeks, if not months, intellectually behind their more fortunate peers".

5 Food bank provision

5.1 The map in **Appendix 1** also shows foodbank provision across North Yorkshire. It is estimated that Trussell Trust foodbank centres account for roughly two-thirds of all emergency food aid provision facilities in the UK and the remainder are independent. The map includes all Trussell Trust facilities and those whose details were provided by the Independent Food Aid Network (note there may be other independent food banks that the Independent Food Aid Network is not aware of).

5.2 The map would indicate that those areas most at risk of household food insecurity are generally served by food banks.

5.3 The Trussell Trust will be attending the meeting to provide an overview of their work and opportunities for links with other services.

¹ Identifying populations and areas at greatest risk of household food insecurity in England (2018)

² Hungry Holidays – A report on hunger amongst children during school holidays, April 2017

6 Other support available in North Yorkshire

- 6.1 The County Council manages the Local Assistance Fund (£713K per annum) which supports vulnerable adults to move into or remain in the community, and families under great pressure to stay together. Awards are made in-kind, for example, emergency food, utility credit, white goods, furniture and clothes.
- 6.2 Food is the most commonly awarded item from the Fund (applicants are eligible for up to two food awards in a rolling 12 month period) and since the Fund's inception in April 2013 more than 15,000 food parcels/vouchers have been awarded.
- 6.3 There are also a wide range of other public sector and voluntary organisations who offer support to families in crisis.

7 Opportunities to support families

- 7.1 A joint National Education Union (NEU) and Child Poverty Action Group survey received responses from 908 NEU members in March 2018 and reported that:
- 87% of respondents think that poverty or living on a low income affects the learning of their pupils/students significantly.
 - 81% of respondents said they often or sometimes came across pupils who hadn't eaten a healthy breakfast.
 - 66% said they often or sometimes meet pupils without sufficient food to eat during the school day.
- 7.2 The survey reported that almost a half of respondents stated that their school directly provides one or more of a range of anti-poverty services (18% run a low cost food club and 13% run a free food bank).
- 7.3 The Department for Education recently announced funding for organisations to research ways of supporting disadvantaged families, through healthy meals and enriching activities, during the school holidays. The first bidding round has closed, but there will be future bidding rounds for participation in the 2019 Easter and summer pilots.
- 7.4 It is felt that the Board may be interested in Community Shop, which is an initiative from Company Shop, the UK's largest redistributor of surplus food. Community Shop is not about crisis support, which is often provided by food banks, but about helping people on the cusp of food poverty.
- 7.5 Community Shop stock a large variety of surplus food and drink products from major retailers and top brands, but importantly the price of goods is about a third that of retail.
- 7.6 The customers are members, who meet their eligibility criteria:

1. live in a specific postcode area, chosen in line with the government indices of deprivation
2. live in a household that receives some form of Government income support
3. are motivated to make positive change in their lives, and are willing to sign up to a tailored development programme

7.7 They currently have shops in London, Rotherham, Barnsley and Grimsby and have the capability to offer 20 stores, supporting up to 10,000 members. Stores are located in hotspots of deprivation.

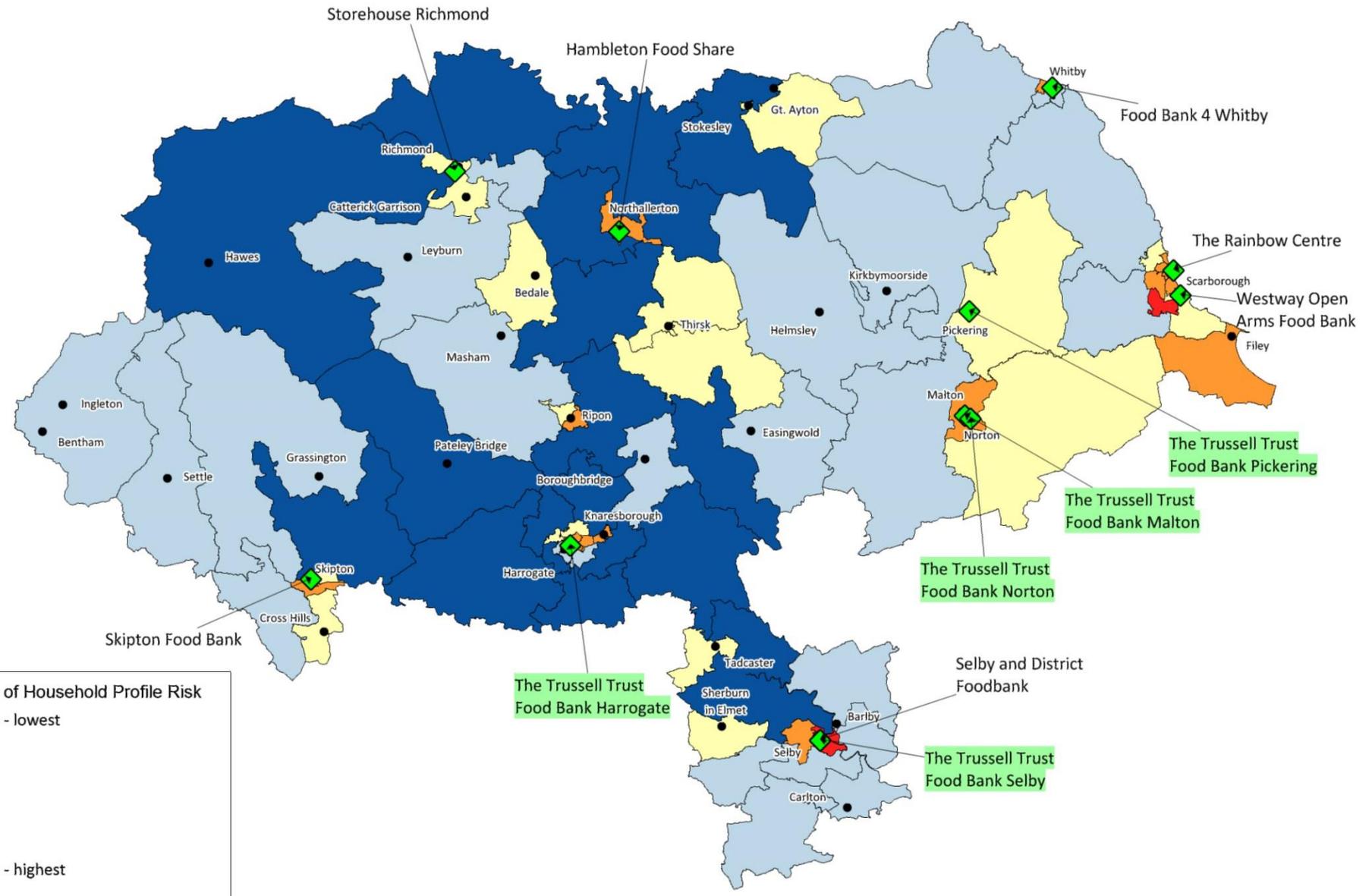
8 Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i. Note the content of the report and provide any comment.
- ii. Consider if there is a need to do a more detailed report into food poverty – this could be put forward to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment editorial group.
- iii. Consider the potential for links between the Trussell Trust and other services, and other opportunities for intervention.

Appendix 1 – Map showing risk of household food insecurity and food bank locations

Areas at Greatest Risk of Household Food Insecurity by MSOA



Quintiles of Household Profile Risk

- 1 - lowest
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - highest

Data source: Identifying populations and areas at greatest risk of household food insecurity in England, Applied Geography 91 (2018) 21-31 (Smith, Thompson, Harland, Parker & Shelton).