**Healthier and Resilient Food Systems - Case Study**

The YH Healthier and Resilient Food Systems Network is creating a repository of case studies from different local authorities and organisations to showcase how they have approached development of a local sustainable food system, or any single aspect of one, including tackling food insecurity. In creating and promoting the repository, we want to give local authorities and wider stakeholders the opportunity to learn from each other by sharing good practice and lessons learned in relation to developing a sustainable food system.

Please use the case study template below and return to [Nicola.smith@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.smith@dhsc.gov.uk)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Your Details** | |
| **Organisation** | Sheffield City Council |
| **Name** | Jessica Wilson |
| **Job Title** | Health Improvement Principal |
| **Contact details**  **(if happy to be contacted by other organisations)** | Jessica.wilson2@sheffield.gov.uk |
| **Case Study**  All case studies should be written with a view to share learning that would benefit any organisation looking to carry out something similar. | |
| **Background/Context**  What was the current situation? What is the problem/issue? What is the reason for the change? | |
| Food poverty and the use of food banks has been a long standing issue in Sheffield. The pandemic once again put a spotlight on food poverty and the essential role emergency food relief projects have as part of our local “safety net”. The pandemic led to increasing need for emergency food relief and in the numbers experiencing financial crisis in the city. Ward councillors were seeing this first hand in their communities and therefore Sheffield’s Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) decided to set up a Food Poverty Task and Finish Group. This would look at how Sheffield City Council is responding to Food Poverty and develop recommendations. | |
| **Solution: how does it work? What was involved?**  Please explain what changes you have implemented, core activities and who is involved. | |
| During February and March 2021, the cross-party Food Poverty Working Group, established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, set out to:   * + Consider the extent, impact and experience of food poverty in Sheffield, including how this differs amongst groups and communities across the city.   + Consider the support and services that are in place across the city to tackle food poverty; as well as best practice from other areas.   + Review the Council’s response to food poverty, including strategic approach, use of resources and funding, working with partners.   The aim was to make recommendations that would improve the Council’s response to Food Poverty, leading to improved outcomes for Sheffield people.  The first phase of this work focussed on the role of the Council in relation to food poverty and food projects, and identified areas for the working group to consider in future phases.    They met with officers from Sheffield City Council who work on food and poverty issues; talked to a range of food banks and food projects operating in the City, and organisations who provide support and advice to people in food poverty. Members of the group attended meetings held by Together for Sheffield, which bring together food projects across the city on a weekly basis, and we heard from academics from the University of Sheffield who research food poverty and food insecurity.  The working group also launched a ‘Call for Evidence’ asking people to tell us about their experience of food poverty and received 45 responses via an online form, as well as some responses by phone and email. These were from a range of perspectives – people who have experienced food poverty, people who work with food projects and advice/support organisations, and our frontline staff who work with people in food poverty. The information gathered through this process, alongside case studies from Sheffield Citizen’s Advice and food projects helped put people’s lived experience at the heart of the work. | |
| **What has been the impact of this work?**  Please summarise any outcomes/outputs or the intended objective of this work. | |
| The following recommendations were made  Sheffield City Council should implement the Tackling Poverty Framework by prioritising development of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. Tackling Food Poverty should be one element of this. It should be a citywide effort, across public services, the VCF, communities and business, and take a long term, structural approach to find lasting solutions.  As part of the action plan, Sheffield City Council should identify ways to foster a culture that challenges stigma, and ensures that Sheffield people are aware of, and able to access the benefits that they are entitled to.  Sheffield City Council’s processes should reflect this culture – and ensure that there aren’t any unnecessary barriers to people accessing support. We should consider how our processes that affect people in hardship - eg, council tax support, rent, poverty related grants, could be improved.  Sheffield City Council should consider how it can work with food partners to accelerate the mapping of food support across the city  Sheffield City Council should work with food partners to ensure that when people access emergency food aid, they are also able to access wider forms of advice and support to help move beyond crisis.  Sheffield City Council should consider how it can work with food partners to encourage joint working across the sector, to ensure that we have a range of viable initiatives in Sheffield beyond emergency food provision, that enable people to move through the rungs of the ‘Food Ladder’ - such as social eating projects and community pantries.  Sheffield City Council should consider how it can work with partners to develop mechanisms to help people find and access the right form of food support for them.  Sheffield City Council should identify where internal political and organisational leadership on poverty, food poverty and food insecurity sits in order to drive progress on this cross-cutting agenda The full report can be viewed [here](https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=44100). The recommendations were discussed at the council’s Executive Management Team and were followed by a Motion to Full Council Regarding "'Right to food' - Working together to tackle food poverty in the city, and to develop a Local Food Access Plan." The motion can be viewed [here](https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=23904)Now that these resolutions have been formally agreed at full council it provides a clear sense of direction to officers working on poverty and food agendas and to other stakeholders working on supporting those in poverty and offering food assistance in the city | |
| **What has helped this work to be successful?**  Please highlight any success factors relevant to an organisation looking to implement something similar. | |
| A high level of elected member engagement and interest was the catalyst for this work. Scrutiny committee members held an initial meeting with council officers to understand the key issues and determine the scope of the initial enquiry. This enabled officers to help shape the enquiry so that it could help address some of the challenges they were facing, for example identifying where internal leadership on poverty would sit - the cross cutting nature of poverty meant that it hadn’t always been clear.  Cross party working also made this work successful. The scrutiny working group had representation from all major political parties in Sheffield who collaborated in the production of the final report and it’s recommendations. | |
| **Were there any challenges? If yes, how were these mitigated?**  Please highlight any challenges and ways to overcome, minimise these or avoid from the outset. | |
| Tackling poverty (incl food) is really complex and inevitably cuts across all services / whole system.  In developing a Council wide tackling poverty action plan, we plan to connect together work and give greater visibility of food, fuel, digital poverty together as they don’t exist in isolation for families and have the same root causes.  The timescales of the inquiry were defined by the electoral cycle and meant that the scope and process for the initial phase had to be kept fairly tight. In some ways this may have also been beneficial as it led to very clear objectives being set. Sheffield is now moving to a new democratic model and therefore it is not clear where the further phases of this work that were proposed will be carried out.  Whilst the recommendations made were well thought through the report did not go as far as considering resourcing for their delivery (in terms in staff time and funding) and this will be a challenge for their implementation | |
| **Any other advice or information?**  Is there anything else you would like to share that others might learn from? | |
|  | |