



Report to National Lottery Community Fund in respect of project 10258601

Advice in Food Banks Year three April 2018-March 2019

What we have done over the year.

We describe the activities undertaken over 2018/19 in terms of service statistics and qualitative information from service users. The case studies at the end of the report are perhaps the best insight into how we addressed the project's aims and how effective we have been helping people in food poverty as the project impacted on individuals.

Whether from the following statistics or clients' stories we hope this report opens up the project and exhibits its successes and ongoing challenges.

Key goals

The principles described in our application's outcomes focus on helping people overcome immediate issues causing food poverty (such as interrupted income or pressing debt) and engaging in such a way they better understand how to self-manage more effectively in the future.

As an advice service, with many outlets and outreaches across the city, we are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable people who lack a good understanding of their rights in society. We are also well aware that many people only come to us when a problem is longstanding, entrenched and has already had a negative impact on their well being.

We started the project because we were concerned the most vulnerable people despite often having advice needs were either not coming to our mainstream services, or only did so when their problems were deep seated and more difficult to address. This was confirmed early into the life of the project as we met and helped many people who only met us because they were visiting the food bank.

We found we were helping many people who had not intended to visit one of our mainstream services, or at least not yet. We have been able to address problems such as:

- Challenging benefit decisions before they are past the allowed deadline
- Debt problems before the bailiffs are called in
- Challenging landlord repossession action
- Homelessness options
- Overdue claims for means tested or disability related benefits

The beneficial impact on a person's wellbeing of putting debts into a manageable plan, increasing household income above poverty levels or increasing security of tenure of their home has been well demonstrated. The sooner we can meet the problems, the greater the benefit.

As we have advised on these issues we undertake to show and explain how they can monitor their circumstances and predict when action needs to be taken. We use the materials available on public websites (largely Citizens Advice's own site) to provide an ongoing resource for those that can access and use digital information. Feedback reports, reported below, indicate this approach has been of benefit to clients. However, we also note that success is limited and many people still go from crisis to crisis.

How many people benefited from the project

The unique client count was **602**. We counted everyone we helped once over the year, whether we saw them once or many times.

We know the most vulnerable people struggle the most when they face not having sufficient money to feed themselves – long term poverty and the fact that the most distressed people are less able to manage their affairs and need help on a cyclical basis. They may face new benefit sanctions, or face increased

financial pressure as unplanned expenditure increases their debt. Often the most we can do is ensure they are encouraged to come back to us for early help.

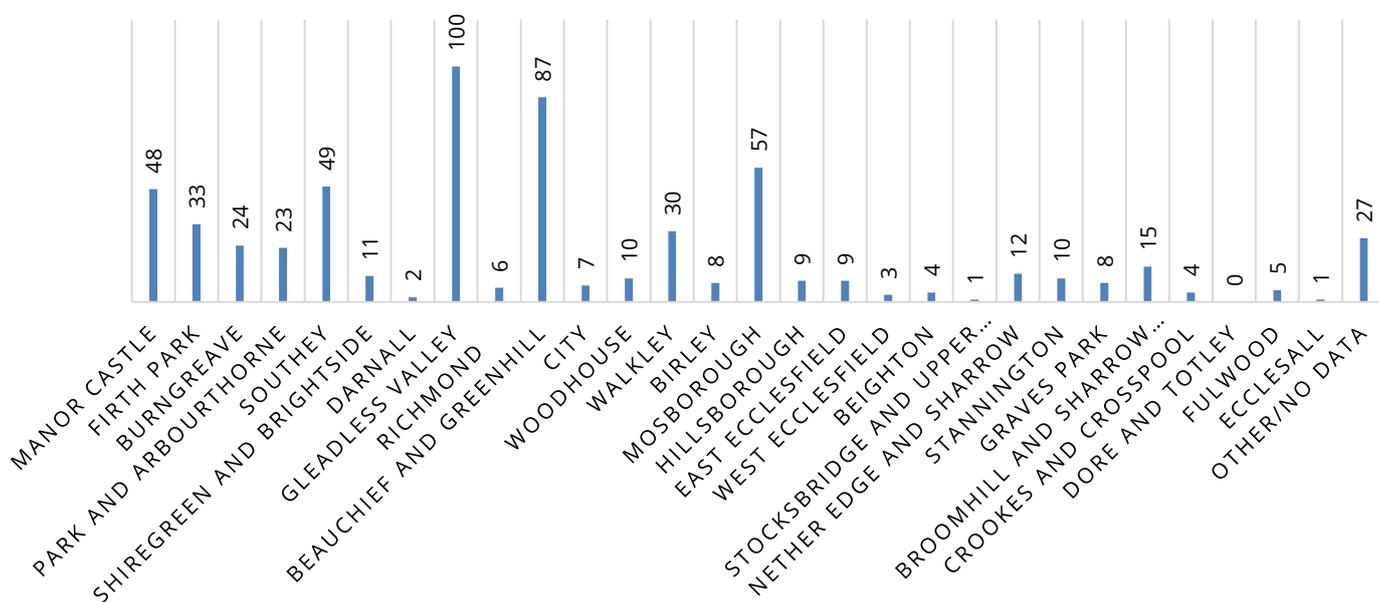
It is also a sad fact that the more vulnerable a person is, the more bureaucracy they are likely to need to deal with. The changes to the benefit system, with the advent of Universal Credit, has created demands on those least able to meet them.

For these reasons we also set out what we think is a truer picture of demand on the project by people who return with new problems in another quarter to the one where they are first counted. This captures the new problems and gives a truer picture of need and gives a count of **994**.

(The “not recorded” figure in the table below captures people seen in our offices, away from the food bank site but still being referred by the food bank)

How many people have we helped per foodbank in Sheffield	Client count
Sheffield - S2 Foodbank	66
Sheffield - Gleadless Valley Foodbank	172
Sheffield - Grace Foodbank	156
Sheffield - S6 Foodbank	82
Sheffield - Jesus Centre Foodbank	82
Sheffield - New Hope Foodbank	31
Sheffield – S20 Foodbank	85
Sheffield– Mount Tabor food Bank	131
Sheffield - St Cuthbert's Foodbank	33
Not recorded	156

Local authority ward of residence and numbers of people helped by the project.



The poorest wards are on the left. Where there is a low client number in a ward with high deprivation we have a neighbourhood advice office within a very short distance (less than 5 minutes walk) (eg Burngreave, Park, Shiregreen and Darnall) and therefore have not provided a specific service within the foodbank in the area but rather have ensured improved referral pathways.

The demographic information in this report is based on the strict unique client figure of 602.

The involvement of service users and food bank volunteers and building on peoples' strengths

One aspect of working with vulnerable people is a lack of sustained engagement with services. Within the food bank project's client base there is a higher number of people with mental health problems (see chart) and substance/alcohol misuse.

We needed to design a way of getting the opinions and feed back regarding our service that could inform future service design. One method used is the service user interview and the production of case studies that are representative of their problems. Another is to collect the satisfaction levels with the service we

provided and whether clients felt better able to manage their own affairs in the future. This is provided in survey form (see feedback charts below)

We have involved food bank volunteers by working alongside them, listening to their appreciation of service users' problems and facilitating discussion on how the project addresses their problems.

We **provided direct training for 56 food bank volunteers** to help them recognise advice issues, how to prioritise them and deal with deadlines. The feedback from the trainee volunteers has been encouraging (trainees are asked to complete an evaluation report).

Alongside formal training we have found it a useful approach when the advice workers engage, one to one, with the volunteers and talking through how each can help the other meet the needs of service users. Because the embedded advice workers work closely with the food bank volunteers there is a high level of mutual regard and the volunteers are very aware of the good that can come from our service.

What our clients have told us about the longer term impact of the service

When a case was closed in this period we asked some set questions of the client in order to see how effective our service was against our own goals (especially in respect of early interventions). We **closed 212 cases** and were able to get feedback on about 70% of them.

Here are the questions we asked and what our clients told us

Are you more able to seek help if you face another period of financial pressure?

no	Not applicable	yes
3	20	126

Has our help improved how you feel and your ability to cope?

no	Not applicable	yes
0	19	128

If the advice worker wasn't present in the food bank would you have sought help?

no	Unknown not applicable	Yes, but not for ages	Yes, probably quite quickly
14	26	95	11

Would you say you were less reliant on the food bank as a result of our work with you?

no	Not applicable	yes
14	29	111

Has our intervention prevented the client's situation significantly deteriorating (For advice workers to answer)?

no	Not applicable/can't tell	yes
6	46	135

Working with diverse groups and client profiles

You can see (from the charts below) that the project does reach a fair cross section of the city's ethnicities. There is also a high incidence of illness and disability. The common denominator connecting food bank clients is poverty and so the food banks draw in people from all communities and neighbourhoods. Some services have focussed on particular groups, For example the Jesus Centre food bank attracts more asylum seekers and refugees as they receive referrals from organisations dedicated to their support. We have an advice worker there who has skills in immigration advice. Our early concern that people of other faiths or none would not approach a service in a Christian church has been shown to be unfounded, at least in the main.

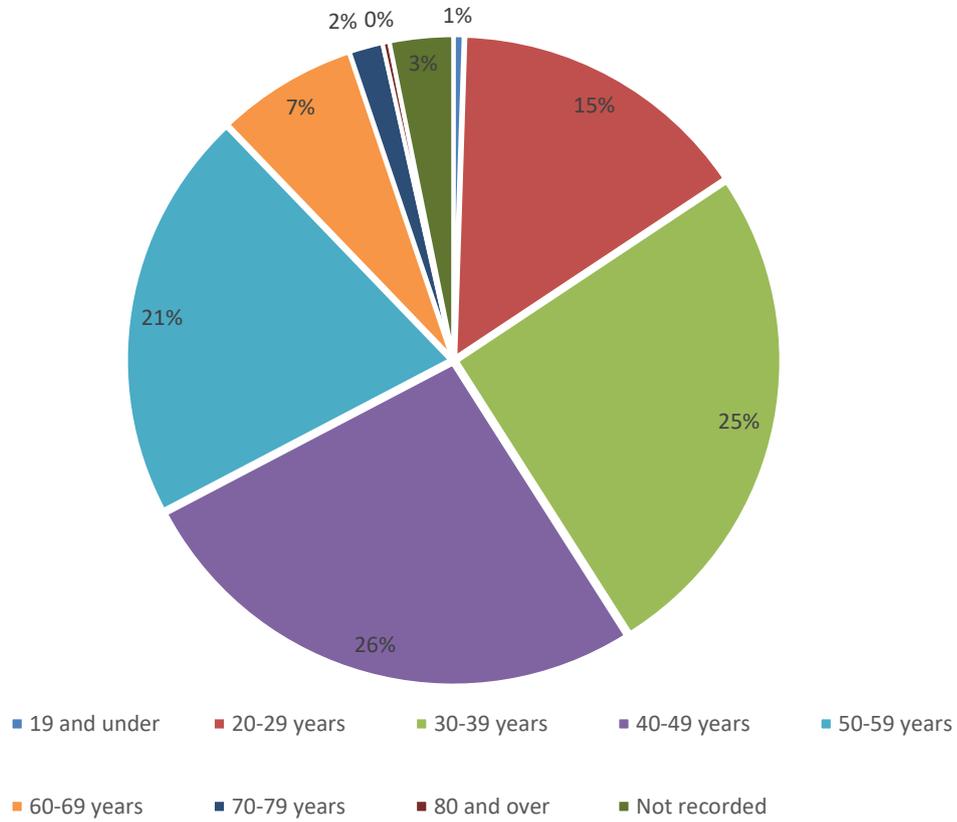
Notwithstanding this success we think more can be done and we are approaching other faith and community organisations to encourage referrals into the service. We are aware that different cultures and communities address their members' food poverty needs differently – the food bank model is not the only approach to this growing problem.

We are also aware that emerging sustainability projects have the same aim of addressing food poverty in a strategic manner, where we work with individuals.

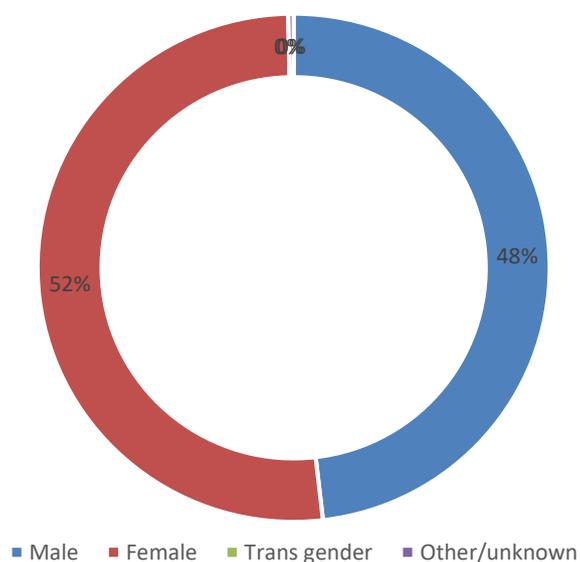
We need to work with different groups that can help us highlight the cause and remedies of food poverty.

Demographic information on our clients

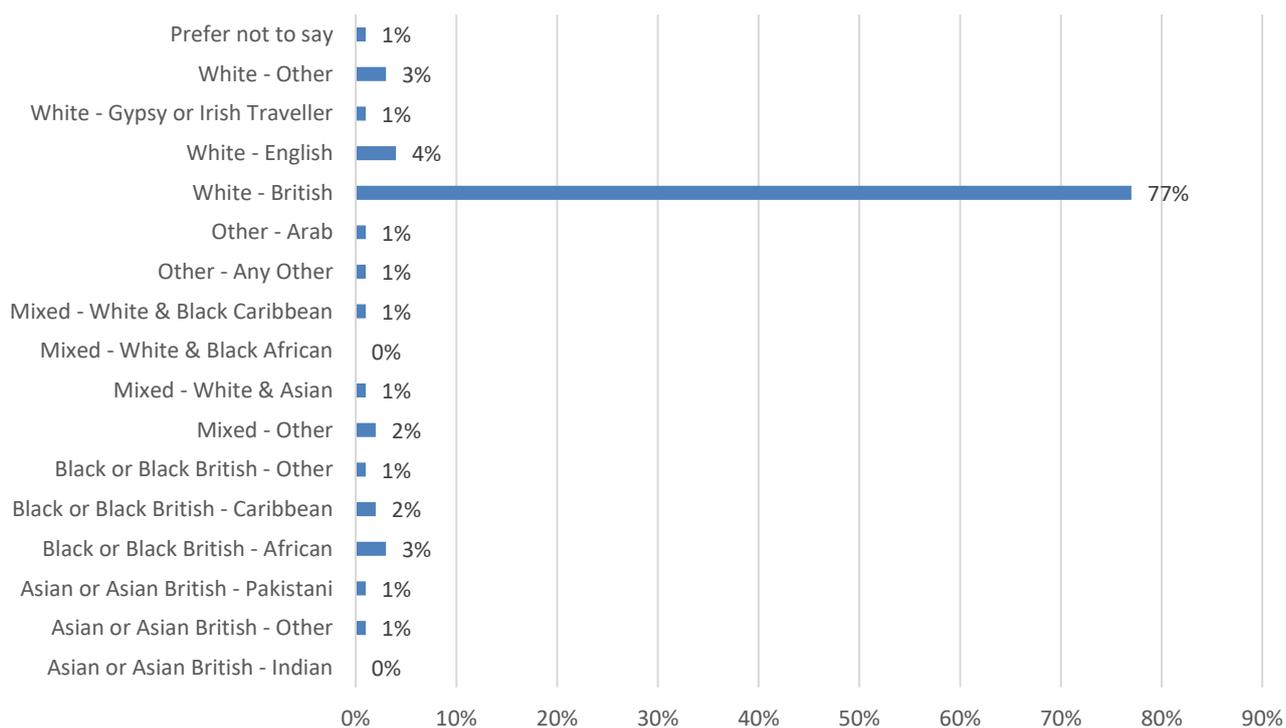
Age - this is similar to the service statistics of our overall service



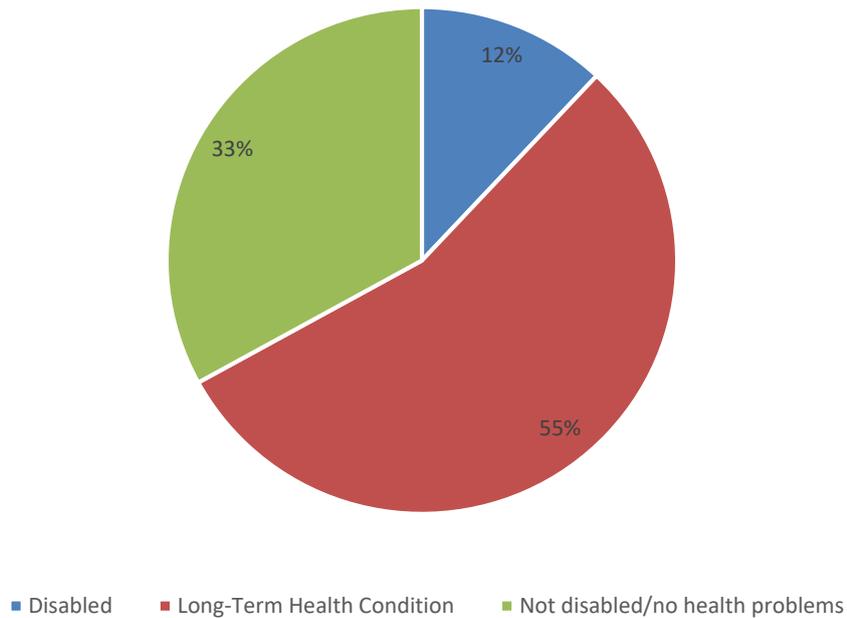
Gender - This is similar to the service statistics of our overall service



Ethnicity - This shows a lower representation by people from BAME communities than our overall service (30%)



Disability/ limiting long term ill health - this demonstrates a much higher representation by people with health or disability problems than our overall service (44%)



Type of Disability	% Clients
Long Term Health Condition	13.1
Mental Health	39
Physical Impairment	10.5
Other Disability or not given	9.3
Multiple Impairments	24.1
Learning Difficulty	2.3
Cognitive Impairment	0.6
Deaf	0.3
Hard of Hearing	0.9
Grand Total	100

Working with other organisations

We work very closely with all the city's principle food banks, where we have an embedded advice worker. This has proved most informative and helped us adapt our services, often on a site by site manner as every food bank operates differently and our advice workers ensure service users are aware of the service and volunteers encourage its use.

We also work with the food bank where we do not have a presence, encouraging them to refer service users to the service. We allocate an advice worker to the referral and an appointment is made in one of our offices.

We work with the Food Bank Network to follow their development strategies and ensure we support and fit within them.

We benefit from a close working relationship with the officers working on Sheffield City Council's food strategy supplanted by their Tackling Poverty strategy. We are also a key member of the Universal Credit Partnership, alongside Sheffield City Council and the local DWP, as we collectively work together to make the best of the introduction of Universal Credit.

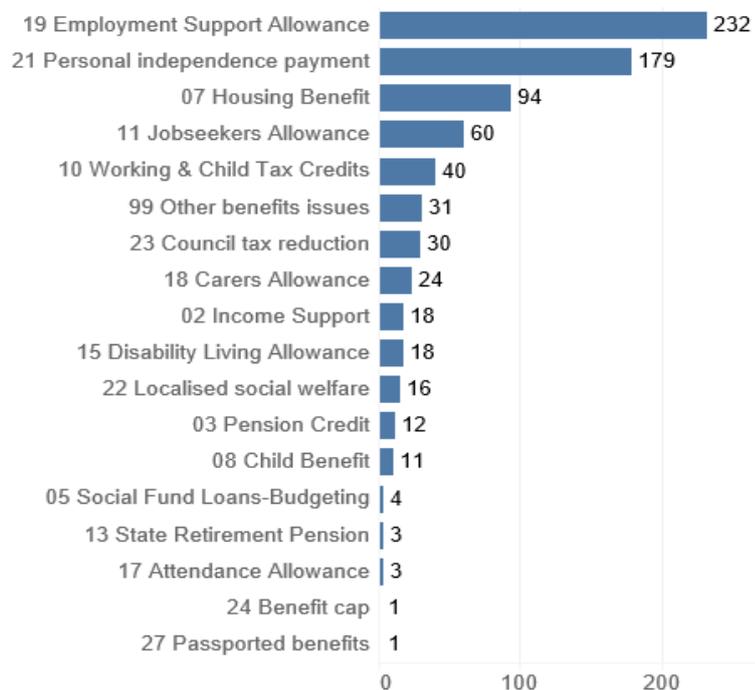
As part of our development in the final year, and as a way of addressing the future needs of food bank users, we will strengthen our links and referral routes with a wider range of support organisations and community groups.

Events, talking about the project on social media and working with MPs

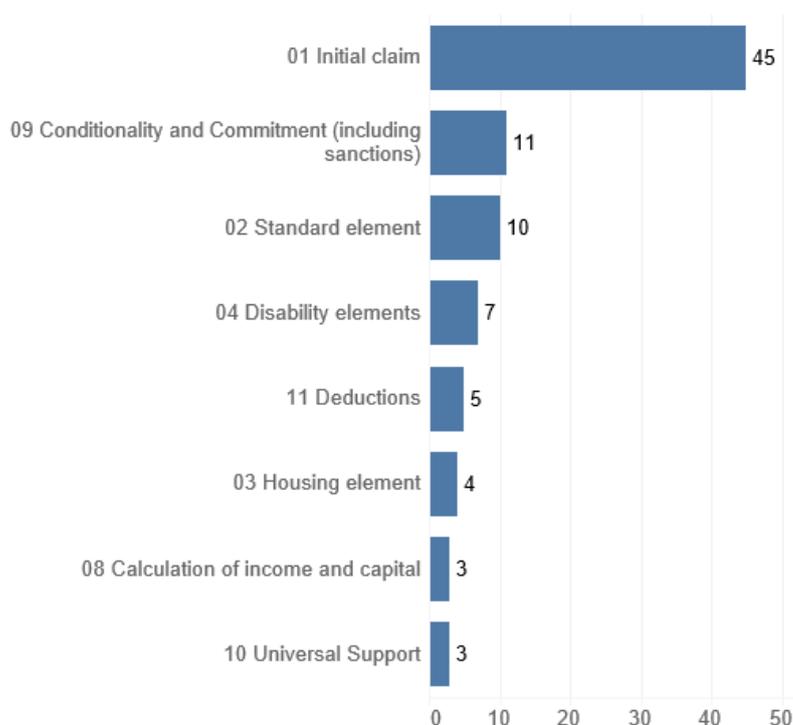
We have presented the project to a variety of community groups and stakeholders, including a Church Action on Poverty Civic Breakfast which gathered the city's Bishops, the Lord Mayor and representatives from food banks.

We have engaged with local MPs to inform them of the project as well local council members and officers. We were fortunate that the project was started as a pilot from funding provided by the city council and for the first two years provided some match funding. This ensures a direct link to those officers and councillors most involved with food poverty and challenging deprivation.

Breakdown of Benefits and Tax Credits



Breakdown of Benefits and Universal Credit



Sheffield became a Full Service area for Universal Credit in December 2018 so the full impact has not been felt. However, early work has shown our fears were realistic, in that the most vulnerable are less able to deal with the more complex claim and maintenance procedures.

Progress, successes and challenges

The most robust measurement of success in a quantitative sense, is the tally of financial benefit we have been able to record from our work with clients.

Type of financial improvement	Financial amount £
Benefit / tax credit gain - a new award or increase	£218,630
Benefit / tax credit gain - Money put back into payment	£17,493
Benefit / tax credit gain- award or increase following appeal	£263,429
Re-imburements, services, loans	£2,519
Financial gain/other	£30,443
Additional Money Total	£532,244

This is likely to undercount the project's achievement as many positive outcomes cannot be captured unless the client lets us know whether our advice enabled an increase in their income.

Obviously, this doesn't tell a human story so on its own is insufficient. In order to round the picture off the following provides a short description of the food bank sites and our services and is followed by some client stories.

Round up of sites

S2 – Our adviser and food bank work closely together to assess the reason for a person's food poverty and project the length of anticipated support (with client consent to share such information). This relationship and the compact nature of the service obviate the need for a detailed internal referral process. It also allows the advice worker to assess the projected length of need for emergency food.

Gleadless Valley – very busy food bank with large volunteer team. The advice worker has, in the past, adopted the role of gate-keeper for emergency food (a characteristic of this food bank is the relatively high number of people who present without a referral voucher). While this worked well in terms of evaluating the cause and likely length of time the person needed food parcels it was a big call on her time. Now, with additional on the spot training food bank volunteers triage the need for emergency food and advice needs.

So, the advice worker has limited the number of people she sees to only those who would benefit from advice. This is in conjunction with local training to encourage the local volunteers to identify when an advice referral should be made. Appointments are made prior to open door for a significant number of clients as we have found a high proportion of non attendance when we make appointments at one of our main offices.

We have also established a localised digi project for people who need help with electronic applications. We anticipated this would be a dry run for Universal Credit but that has been superseded by the Help to Claim service and the food bank digi project mainly helps with council benefit, discretionary housing payments and other application. It is a really helpful adjunct to the main advice project.

Grace – highly collaborative and mutually supportive with volunteers undertaking support with claims etc. We have also deployed a volunteer to this service to help with claims as a parallel service to advice provision. This has been particularly useful as client numbers increased, even before Sheffield became a Universal Credit full service area.

The food bank puts on a range of community and food themed services, such as guidance on cooking. They operate a highly effective and valued “meet and eat” sessions that combine guidance on cooking and providing hot food. These activities are useful to check if a person needs advice and so be directed toward our service.

S6 – this food bank links to three other food bank sites and has a broad range of services (eg fuel voucher scheme with Npower) that our adviser is able to make use of. As with other sites we hold appointments before the open door session and our adviser usually mingles with service users, recognising advice need and taking the service user to the interview space.

Jesus Centre - this site helps a high proportion of asylum seekers and refugees recently given this status. Most referrals come via Assist. Our adviser is experienced in immigration advice and is an Arabic/Kurdish speaker. Good results from intense case work.

New Hope – the food bank delivers and also brings clients to the advice sessions after assessment. This service delivery method has been designed to help people from a wide geographic area who would face an often impossible travel

cost to go the food bank site. Unfortunately this has meant a relatively small numbers of people helped with advice, as informal referral that can happen when people come to a food bank isn't possible. For this reason we ended the direct service on this site but take referrals from their volunteers to follow up alongside the on-site advice services.

S20 (Westfield) – smaller scale and largely limited to a deprived estate. Another example of close working giving adviser access to most vulnerable and poor clients. As with the other sites we have seen increased activity at this site, partly as word has spread and partly as welfare reform impacts negatively on claimants. A strong two way referral process with form filling help provided by the food bank results in highly effective advice and emergency food provision.

Mount Tabor – this site has proved busy, based in a poor area of the city with a relatively stable population. The food bank is keen to work with us and has access to a church charity that is able to help people pay the fee for a Debt Relief Order application. The church is also taking a lead on preparing for Universal Credit which we will jointly work on. Localised training by our adviser has proved particularly effective as there is small but established and experienced volunteer team. The advice service also benefits from a dedicated advice volunteer backing up the service provided by the adviser.

St Cuthbert's – we established a fortnightly service as client numbers tend to be lower at this site. Hot food and open door service with no requirement for referral. Highly vulnerable catchment for a food service in the main body of a church allows for high interaction and encouragement to service users to seek help. Referrals are ongoing while we are there and we have seen some very good results from our work.

Food Bank Advice Project (Gleadless Valley)

Background

We met the client at the weekly food bank session. She had come for food and hadn't thought of trying to resolve an issue that was causing her additional anxiety.

She is single and suffers from mental health problems.

The food bank volunteer referred her to our advice worker as she had no benefit coming in. Her Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) had stopped because she failed to attend an assessment interview. As well as her mental health problems, that often leave her lethargic and demotivated she is dyslexic to the extent of illiteracy. She had not been able to understand the written notice of the medical assessment appointments.

What we did

We requested a mandatory reconsideration of her ESA and supplied medical evidence from her GP. This was successful and we made a sufficiently strong argument to place her in the Support Group, paid a higher level.

We assessed her against the rules for Personal Independence Payments and so helped her complete an application. This was refused but with our help was successful at appeal, at which we supplied justification for entitlement.

Outcome

As the client lived alone she was now eligible for a further premium on top of her ESA. As a result of all our work the client is better off by £144.25 per week and no longer needs to use the food bank.

Food Bank Advice Project (Mount Tabor)

Background

The client was a regular user of this foodbank. She was working part time but had no money for food once she had paid all her priorities such as rent. She was struggling with her council tax and she also had a large overpayment of working tax credit which occurred when her Personal Independence Payments (PIP) stopped. She was struggling with her mental health and felt she had no one to turn to.

What we did

Firstly we helped her complete a Discretionary housing payment for help with the shortfall in the council tax. This was successful and meant she did not have to pay any council tax for the rest of the financial year.

We helped her apply to a charity for financial help and she was awarded £171 per month for a year to help her with the shortfall in her income.

We assessed her against the rules for PIP and helped her to appeal the decision

Outcome

Her PIP appeal was successful and back dated to the time it was stopped. She was awarded a large sum of backdated payments and a further £57 per week. Due of this not only was her overpayment of tax credit written off, she also received a £5000 back payment and she was able to purchase household items which were destroyed in a house fire.

As her income has increased three fold, she now longer has to attend the foodbank for food. She tells us our intervention and her support gave her support and confidence which enabled her to remain in her job.

Food Bank Advice Project (S2)

Background

The client is a lone parent aged 51 and was in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Child Benefit and Tax Credits. He lives in Housing Association property

He came to the foodbank to get a food parcel. The volunteer he saw referred him to the advice worker as he said he had lost his benefit.

He had been taken off his ESA following a medical assessment, having scored insufficient points in the test that is used.

What we did

We requested a mandatory reconsideration of the decision as, by our assessment, he should have scored the requisite 15 points and be entitled to ESA, having discovered several areas that would score the extra points as the client had both physical and mental health issues, something not noted by the medical assessor.

We then advised client to claim Jobseekers Allowance as he needed an alternate income, and also to inform council benefits that he had changed his main benefit, in order to keep housing benefit in payment.

Subsequently the client contacted us and told the decision as not been changed so we applied for the matter to go to appeal. This allowed him to reclaim ESA in the interim.

We helped client with a submission, collected medical evidence from his GP, and explained how the Tribunal works.

Outcome

The client won his appeal, with the bonus as we not only got the client his Employment and Support Allowance back he was placed in the higher benefit level Support Group.

So, the client's weekly allowance as changed from £73.10 to £128.45

The client as also got a back dated payment owing of approx. £ 2800.00 and no longer needs help from the food bank.

Food Bank Advice Project (S20)

Background

Client is single female age 55. She has divorced from her husband and moved into a flat near the food bank.

Client is in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.

She has used her benefit to help her move house and initially came to the food bank for a food parcel. The volunteers referred her to the advice worker

We discussed with client whether she was in receipt of the correct benefits and found that she was having deductions from her benefits of £45 per week as a result of court action over debts.

What we did

We went through client's income and expenditure and discussed her financial pressures. She had debts to the value of nearly £6000. We discussed her options and ways of dealing with her debts. Client decided to opt for a Debt Relief Order.

Client continued being supported by the food bank whilst we were assisting her with her debts.

Outcome

Clients DRO was approved, the client is now able to afford to pay her bills and is no longer reliant on the food bank.

Next steps

In the final year of this current project, we will continue to deliver this effective service and further enhance it by:

For those who cannot, or would not, help themselves we want to encourage more direct referral from a wide range of support organisations. Strengthening links with the city's large number of support organisations will be a priority.

We will also seek ways of increasing representation from people from BAME communities with overtures to community and religious centres.

We need to investigate more deeply the impact of Universal Credit on people in food poverty. We intend to build a picture by collecting statistics from all food banks and conduct detailed interviews with food bank users. Reports from food banks strongly suggest increased demand on their services has followed the introduction of Universal Credit.

We will develop and support community digital access to help people access Universal Credit and ensure excellent connections and client pathways with our help to claim service.

We will work with research at University of Sheffield, Sheffield City Council and the Food Bank Network to ensure our services are compatible with emerging sustainable food supply strategies for poor individuals and neighbourhoods. The need for so many emergency food outlets shames us as a county. We want to work with developments that ensure affordable food is available to all.

Our future agenda also includes noting the beneficial impact on individual's wellbeing. The link between poverty and poorer health is well established by Marmot et al. We want to show how timely advice can reverse some of this negative trend.

Financial report

2018-2019 Analysis of expenditure against budget

	b/fwd	Big lottery 18/19	Match funding 18/19	Total	Actuals	Variance
Revenue:						
Salaries	0	86278	6293	92571	97261	-4690
General running costs	0	2652	1240	3892	3603	289
Training	0	286	0	286	770	-484
Travel	0	550	0	550	777	-227
Volunteer expenses	0	902	0	902	1129	-227
ICT Hubs	6190	1106	0	7296	1685	5611
Consultancy	2000	0	0	2000	2000	0
Overheads:						
Staff	0	4107	21212	25319	25870	-551
Accommodation	0	2115	2485	4600	5722	-1122
Utilities	0	1056	1344	2400	0	2400
Other/Office	0	983	3233	4216	6301	-2085
TOTAL	8190	100035	35807	144032	145117	-1085

The position at 31 March 2019 is that there was a project overspend of £1085 which Citizens Advice Sheffield has funded. The project overspends have come from the net impact of a number of variances including a higher than budgeted for spend on salaries (because of internal staff changes and additional deployment) and lower expenditure on ICT hubs primarily because of efficiencies by using existing staff laptops and improved Wifi in food banks therefore negating need for provision of hot spots.

2019-2020 Budget for Year Four of project

	Big lottery 19/20	Match funding 19/20	TOTAL
Revenue:			
Salaries	86278	6293	92571
General running costs	2652	1240	3892
Training	286	0	286
Travel	550	0	550
Volunteer expenses	902	0	902
ICT Hubs	1106	0	1106
Consultancy	0	0	0
Overheads:	0	0	0
Staff	4107	21212	25319
Accommodation	2115	2485	4600
Utilities	1056	1344	2400
Other/Office	983	3233	4216
TOTAL	100035	35807	135842