

Minutes of Food Poverty Network Steering Group Meeting No. #02

Date	9th May 2023
Venue	Hybrid Meeting – FSA Belfast Office and Microsoft Teams
Time	11AM-12:30PM

In Attendance

Aileen McGloin (Chair)	Safefood
Anne Parle	Safefood
Holly Hennessy	Safefood
Laura McGauley (Secretariat) (Virtual)	Food Standards Agency NI
Sharon Gilmore	Food Standards Agency NI
Fionnuala Close	Food Standards Agency NI
Emily Boyd	Food Standards Agency NI
Leah O'Neill	Food Standards Agency NI
James Elliott	Department for Communities
Naoimh Poucher	Consumer Council
Philippa McKeown	Consumer Council
Rachel Franklin	Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke
Ernest Purvis	Children in Northern Ireland
Ciaran Donaghy (Virtual)	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Claire McAleer (Virtual)	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Louise Hosking (Virtual)	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Christine Dale (Virtual)	Department of Health

Apologies

Kerry Melville	Nourish NI
Jonny Currie	The Trussell Trust
Brian Luke	DAERA
Darren Moan	Department of Health
Jackie Miller	DAERA

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

AM welcomed everyone to the meeting and all members introduced themselves.

2. Minutes from last meeting and matters arising

All actions from the last meeting were reviewed and there were no outstanding actions or matters arising.

3. Update from Dept. of Health

CD advised that work is continuing on the new obesity strategy. A consultation document has been shared with the project board for comments. There is no current timescale at present, but project board approval is required before sending to the Permanent Secretary for permission to publish.

FC queried whether food poverty would be part of the strategy, **CD** advised that she needs double check this but it is likely.

4. Update from Dept. for Communities (DfC)

JE advised that they are awaiting budget confirmation in the next couple of weeks. The current quarter's budget is allowing work on social supermarkets to continue until the end of June.

They are hopeful that funding for social supermarkets will be met from the Welfare Reform Budget and have an increased budget on the basis of the cost of living crisis.

DfC are still running the five original pilot projects. Other councils are working on their own models and this appears to be going well in conjunction with advice services.

DfC were able to make a couple of awards to assist with cost of living towards the end of the year, with money being awarded to FareShare for food purchase to bolster stock and to a Bryson scheme which provides supermarket vouchers to people. The Bryson scheme is not publicly advertised and is going out through trusted partners.

It looks as though there will be limited scope to do anything additional in the coming year around cost of living given the budgetary outlook.

AM said it is very challenging to work in such short-term context.

SG asked whether there are any particularly good models that the councils have of social supermarkets.

JE advised that Mid and East Antrim, Antrim & Newtownabbey and Ards and North Down have all launched successful new standalone social supermarket models. Across these there is a mix of physical and virtual presence to expand reach and partnering with established advice services is proving an effective means of delivery.

EP and **JE** discussed what the effect of the budget may be in terms of access to food.

AM acknowledged the contrast between now and discussions last September which seemed more hopeful.

5. NI Action Plan (2023)

EB reviewed the action plan and highlighted progress and updates for certain actions. All changes will be noted in the action plan and shared with members. In relation to the healthy food basket research, **NP** asked about the difference in the results of the last minimally acceptable healthy food basket to the most recent research. **AM** advised this is the first time since 2014 that there has been a significant increase in food costs. The contents of the basket remain consistent.

ACTION 1: LM to share results of minimally acceptable healthy food basket with the group once published.

6. Presentation from Guest Speaker – Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI)

EP was invited to speak about his work. He advised that their policy work focusses on two main themes; child poverty and improving the life of children with disabilities. Within the food poverty element, the organisation's focus is on food insecurity and children's access to food.

EP spoke about the budget decision made by the Department of Education and the impact that their decision to end the school holiday food grant scheme would have. **EP** advised that CiNI are campaigning to try to have these payments reinstated. He shared a [Twitter post](#) which had further information on this.

EP mentioned that two years ago, CiNI secured funding to enable them to set up a Youth Advisory group who manage the funding of holiday programmes that provide food and physical activities across four areas of NI. Young people who have been involved in those programs have been recruited to discuss what's going on with children and young people and their ideas around how things could be made better. Recently, the group recruited some of the young people involved in the programmes to survey their peers and to get their thoughts on the things such as food insecurity. There were 120 responses and **EP** presented these responses at the meeting.

Following on from this survey, the young people are currently collating a report and plan to share their findings with politicians and government departments. **EP** presented some ideas around how they might do this, including the production of a local government manifesto.

Eligibility of the proposed support for young people was discussed by **EP** and **PM**. It was felt that the young people would be in favour of targeted support for their peers. The young people will also have the opportunity to address local council candidates in the coming days at a panel hosted by CiNI.

AM and **EP** discussed the stigma around food poverty and insecurity and whether the young people involved might be willing to discuss this on camera. **EP** stressed how it is important to protect those involved as they develop confidence in this area, but this may be a possibility. **FC** noted the Jamie Oliver's Bite Back campaign might be useful to take learnings from.

JE and **EP** discussed potential engagement with the private sector as well as with politicians e.g. some of the funding that goes into Gets Active to purchase food for the clubs comes from private sectors, especially the companies with a corporate responsibility aspect.

ACTION 2: LM to share **EP**'s presentation slides with the group.

7. AOB

No other business was raised.

8. Date of next meeting (26th September 2023)

AM advised that the next meeting will take place on 26th September 2023, following the event. The theme of the event is still being discussed but discussions have focused on the lived experience, through both a policy and community aspect.

PM, AP and **AM** discussed whether this would be in the form of evidence surrounding the lived in experience, or whether it would be people talking about their own experience. It was suggested that a co-creation exercise could be a presentation with videos of participants included to show the lived experience.

FC and **JE** discussed whether any of the social supermarkets might be able to be able to discuss their experiences. **JE** suggested that Jonny Currie from Trussell Trust and the work around the path finder model might be an idea.