The Challenge of Breaking the Dependency on Foodbanks

The S2 food Poverty Network was set up in late 2013 as a response to a growing need for access to food.

The voluntary, community and faith sectors came together to discuss the issue and agreed that there was an immediate need to provide emergency food parcels to growing number of people facing financial sanctions and being left without money for up to six weeks, and with people with unmanageable debt and delays in benefits.

Whilst collectively we wished to address the immediate and very real need, we were also very uncomfortable with developing a food bank in the 21st Century, in a country that was essentially wealthy.

In 2013, we had an ambition to wind up the Food bank in 2020, an ambition articulated at the first AGM. We also registered as the S2 food Poverty Network because we wanted to look beyond the immediate crisis and address the underlying causes of poverty, which led to people not having enough food to live on.

Our big ambition is to eradicate the S2 Food bank as it is currently set up and replace it with access to a good quality and affordable food supply.

Our Values

- Working with people, at their starting point
- Non-judgemental
- Friendly and welcoming
- Involving people as part of a community
- Offering support to develop and grow
- Bridging a gap
- Recognise some people may always need support and may return when things are not going well for them.

How it works.

The Foodbank operates a referral system. If a client is in need of food, they should in the first instance, consult a professional, such as a doctor, social worker, housing officer, CAB advisor, health visitor etc and they will be able to refer them on.

However, in an emergency, they can ring the Foodbank mobile or visit the Foodbank and they will be able to get a 48-hour emergency food parcel, along with help arranging a formal referral.

A referral entitles a client to up to four weekly food parcels. After the fourth parcel is distributed, (and each subsequent fourth week) the client will need to make an appointment with our CAB worker, who will assess their need, what
help they may require, and either deal with the issue themselves, or signpost them to an organisation who can help. They may then receive a further four-week referral.

**Strategies to break the dependency with Foodbanks.**
As the Foodbank is for emergency food provision only, we want to put in place initiatives that encourage clients to move from a dependency model, to one where, with support, they are becoming once again, financially independent.

Universal Credit is due to be rolled out in November in Sheffield, so we are gearing up for the impact of this.

There are two initiatives currently in operation:

**Sheffield Credit Union**
A partnership with Sheffield Credit Union has been created, helping clients to make the best use of their finances.

The credit union offers a SCUBA – Sheffield Credit Union Budget Account - where members can have their bills paid. The S2 Food Poverty Network has been trained to be able to sign up members to the credit union and budget account locally.

**The S2 Food Club**
The S2 Food Club was launched in April and is based at York House, a community hub on good transport links on the Manor estate. It operates once a week and members pay £2.50 per week for the membership and can collect food items (worth £20 - £30) through a partnership with the Real Junk Food Project and FareShare. They are also offer continued support from CAB and other local agencies.

Since April, there are now 25 people regularly using the project and it is proving to be successful, with moving long-standing Foodbank clients to the Food Club. The members are also able to access the second-hand clothing store based in the building at a special rate.

The S2 Food Poverty Network has nearly doubled in size each year since 2014. In 2017, the S2 Food Poverty Network distributed over 55 tons of food and helped over 6,000 clients.

The signs are hopeful that 2018 will see a slight reduction in the amount of food being distributed through the Foodbank from the 55-ton, 2017 figure.

Simon Loveitt is the S2 Food Poverty Network Treasurer.

Simon has been a Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) since 1989, having worked in Manchester, Middlesbrough and Bradford, and has worked in Sheffield since 2014.