

Bury's Approach to anti-poverty

Poverty definition

Poverty in the UK is about a lack of resource to meet basic needs and participate in society; poverty can be addressed through state, market and individual-level solutions; and there are actions that can and should be taken to ensure sufficient social and economic support, and to prevent future poverty. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016)

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Different types of poverty

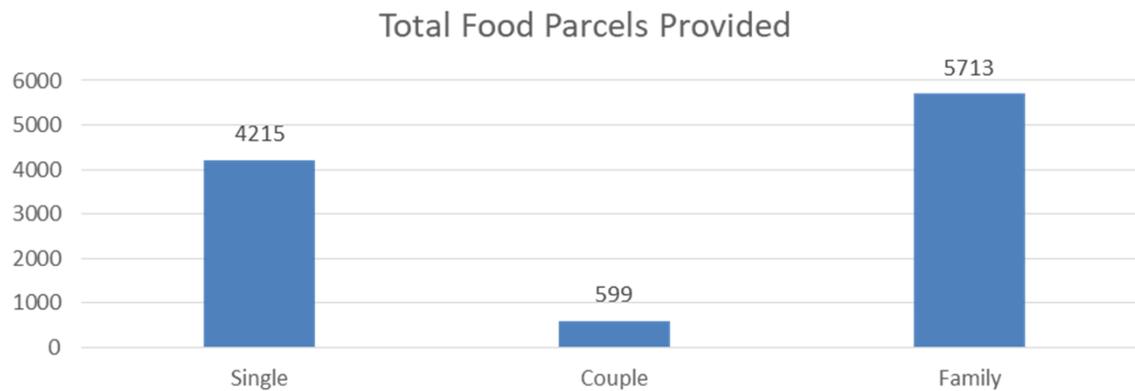
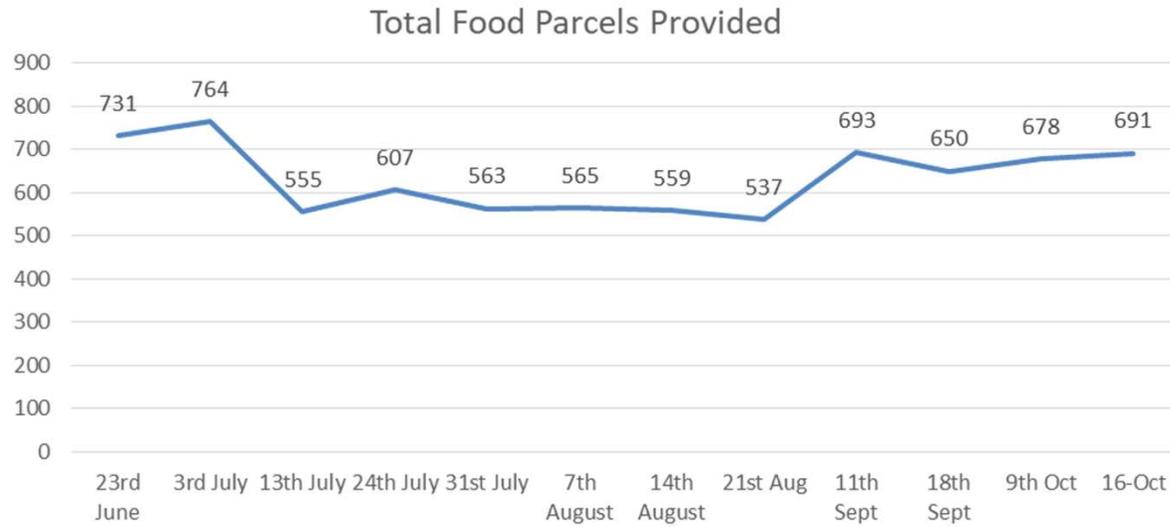
- Food poverty
- In work poverty
- Fuel poverty
- Digital poverty

Background information

Current trends

- The number of individuals in Bury accessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax support increased from **14,792** February to **15,762** in October
- Council Tax Support claimants on Universal Credit in Bury increased from **3,234** in January to **4,997** in October (continuing to rise)
- Bury Council Tax Support spend went from **£11,570,021** in January to **£12,847,707** in October (continuing to rise)
- The number of children entitled to free school meals rose from **5274** children in October 2019 to **6299** in October 2020

Food support provided



The impact on Bury Residents

What have our food banks and community groups found since COVID?

- An increased number accessing food banks / food pantries and other support
- A new and different demographic of people requiring support i.e. the previously comfortable middle class who are suddenly out of work with mortgages and bills
- Increased debt and mental health related problems
- An increase in the numbers asking for help to understand and access what benefits they are entitled to

The impact on Bury Residents

Example provided by Trust House, Whitefield

S is a single dad to three children, he regularly takes temporary jobs to sustain his family and fit around school holidays and childcare. Prior to Covid-19 he was being supported through a welfare to work organisation who were helping him upskill and secure more stable work.

With the closure of schools and the reduction in work, S found himself on Universal Credit with three children at home to feed on a daily basis. He was referred to Trust House in May 2020 and we began to deliver food parcels to him and the family. Over the course of the next few months through conversations with S, we came to realise that he had very little support in terms of home learning and entertaining the children. We supported him with activity packs and home learning information and also enrolled him on the Fit and Fed holiday activity club which he engaged with.

School holidays are always a challenge to families like these, as well as providing activities and vouchers we also teamed up with Morrisons to provide a packed lunch each day of the October half term.

S is now a member of the food pantry and is able to pick his groceries on a weekly basis, which allows us to discuss his wider needs. We have recently been made aware of an outstanding court debt which we are currently working with him to clear.

At Trust House, we believe that the key to tackling poverty is to build relationships with individuals, working with them to find the root causes of issues, signposting and working closely to ensure that new habits are made to help people work themselves out of their current situation.

Bury's response since COVID

- Provided a fit and fed programme over the summer holidays and free school meals during October half term holiday
- Distributed GM holiday hunger vouchers through community networks
- Facilitated the coming together of the food banks across to provide a more strategic response to food and financial support need
- Supported the group to develop further into an independently chaired Bury Community Support Network (BCSN)
- Agreed that the BCSN would
 - be the forum to both provide the insight and intelligence to help shape the local approach to addressing poverty
 - be the vehicle to help ensure external funding opportunities and donations are effectively and strategically distributed across Bury to ensure maximum impact on the reduction of inequalities
 - Help shape the development of the local anti poverty strategy
 - Be the forum to discuss all the key elements associated with poverty including revenues and benefits, debt, employment, housing, food and fuel poverty

Bury's response since COVID

- Food Poverty:
 - £140k DEFRA monies allocated to a borough wide food offer (including FSM vouchers in October half term)
 - £22.5k allocated to food banks
- Welfare Fund:
 - £89k added to provide support for those not eligible for isolation grants or suffering hardship as a result of others that are self isolation (i.e. caring responsibilities for children);
 - £50k added to fund increased demand for crisis payments;
 - £50k added to Council Tax Discretionary Fund (equivalent to £150 per claimant);
 - £50k added to Discretionary Housing payments to reflect increased demand
 - £50k added to Resettlement Fund to support purchase of essential household equipment (white goods, curtains, carpets and temporary storage)
 - £150k to support working poverty – criteria also expanded to include those who are working but still experiencing hardship. Also extended to cover travel costs and one-off costs for those returning to work or needing to work from home;
 - Citizen's Advice Offer extended and capacity increased.
- Payment Methods:
 - Technology introduced to enable electronic issue of vouchers

Current Provision summary

- Support through revenues and benefits in the form of additional welfare support funds
- Extensive offer commissioned through Citizens Advice Bureau
- Close links with DWP and job centre plus
- A robust offer through the voluntary sector in the form of support, advice, guidance and emergency food provision
- Full engagement from all Bury foodbanks
- Support from community hubs in the form of signposting to relevant services

Next steps

- Work with the community to further develop the Bury Community Support Network (BCSN) to be an effective forum to drive all anti-poverty related work
- In collaboration with BCSN refresh and update the existing anti-poverty strategy for Bury, which will have a robust action plan of delivery behind it with success measures
- Continue to use intelligence and feedback to shape delivered and commissioned services which impact the anti-poverty agenda e.g. revenues and benefits, employment, fuel poverty, housing and economic development and regeneration
- Develop and agree a longer term local plan for supporting children with free school meals during school holidays – given central governments decision to fund this