

## **Food Access – Linked Support**

For many people pre-COVID-19 who were living in poverty & food insecurities, COVID-19 shutdowns & restrictions has created new layers of hardships as has the rise in job losses, redundancies, sickness, lack of employment opportunities, bringing short, medium & long term harm to people health & well-being. The casualties will come in the form of, Hunger, Poverty, financial hardships, addiction, suicide, mental health issues, & abuse.

Poverty as we know it has reached a all time high ,when the use of food banks reaches a record high we are beyond the language of warning signs , to stem the rise in poverty the tide needs to turn we need to redesign the systems by taking bold actions and work in collaboration to find sustainable solutions, to work and pull together interventions across local government and make them work together to build resilient Communities.

Community resilience is not sustainable if it only serves – only us & only now – it needs to work for other communities, future generations, and the systems we all depend on.

Efforts before COVID-19 to build Community resilience have focused on growing the capacity to “bounce back” from disruption and preparing for disruption there is no “bounce back” option with COVID-19 it requires Communities to work through it and giving Community organizations the opportunity to promote change in partnership with local government, and by adapting to change Communities we need to understand the complex crisis unfolding and what it means to already similarly complex Communities, we need to address Climate change .

## **WHAT ARE WE LOOKING TO DO?**

Create a Healthy Development Pathway, to seek to strengthen the role of knowledge in the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDG) with an aim to ensure a healthy development pathway by adopting the three categories of resilience:

Psychological – Emotional – Physical

By working in Partnership with both urban(Strabane Community Project) & rural (Dreg, Sperrin) strategy managers & DC&SDC to deliver the “Access to Food /Linked support project” by going beyond the basic needs approach with the aim to introduce the rural areas to Strabane Community Projects model of Social Supermarket which has been operating successfully since October 2017 and has been extended until March 2021 over a 4 month pilot which will enable rural areas to receive not only access to food but

access to well-being plans incorporating skills, training education, debt , budgeting etc. , to build resilience through SDG's. .

### **An Overview of Grass Roots Food Market (Social Supermarket)**

Strabane Community Project embarked on a new project established in 2017 , a Social supermarket and Community Café known as "Grass Roots Café & Food Market with the overall aim to provide people living in poverty with an alternative by providing access to low cost food whilst providing a range of wrap around services in , budgeting, debt, training, skills education, horticulture education workshops, cooking, sewing, holistic therapies', counseling services, providing the tools, methods, guidance & mentoring to "Making Life Better"

Providing members access to low cost food at Grass Roots Food Market , an initial assessment of needs is carried out by project workers in order to establish the current needs of individuals and families in order to provide a tailored support plan based on final assessment, Grass Roots operates as a membership model . Once membership is established access to low cost shopping and wrap-around services will be available to each member. Membership is an essential requirement to access shopping and avail of wrap-around services, members cannot avail of shopping only.

### **NEW LAYER: Rural Area**

By introducing a new layer to Strabane Community Project's Social Super market project through the "Access to Food/Linked Support" – the Fair Share food will provide free food only in terms of emergency response over a short term period where as assessment of need will be carried out to during the free food period to establish individual/family needs in order for them to progress onto the Social Supermarket project if this is a suitable option which will be identified through the assessment period.

## **HOW WILL WE DO IT?**

### **Project Proposal**

Strabane Community Project will provide a Free Phone Help Line providing a single channel contact to provide easy & free access for people living in Strabane Town & DEA's Sperrin & Dreg who are seeking support/advice, by providing centralized system housing all support/advise services under the free help line. Individuals will also be able to be referred through the Regional line, however this will give choice to the individual.

A total of 6 phone lines will be operating 5 days per week, trained help line operators will assess initial needs of callers on first contact and pass to project workers once need has been identified in order for project workers to refer to relevant support/advise services once a support plan has been established.

Strabane Community Project have underwent a digital transition in which a digital approach will be used to gather service user data, efficiently and securely manage the transition/sharing of data and identify key areas and needs of service users through reporting and dashboard use. All services/advice support referrals will be linked to this data system in order for referrals to be logged and tracked in terms of individuals /families' progress, this system will be a vital tool in terms of evaluation, trends, spikes in postcodes, tracking well-being.

Support services such as Counseling, holistic therapies, Nutritional therapist, Horticulture training, will be bought in by Strabane Community Project in order to have ready available support to form part of individual/family support plans.

Below is a list of partners that will provide support/advice in which the call operators will make referrals from the help line data system to the relevant services.

Partners:

- ▶ Strabane Health Improvement Project (SHIP) – Mental Health Counseling services
- ▶ Skills NW – Training, skills, Employment support, Soft Skills etc.
- ▶ Strabane Community Unemployed Group – Education
- ▶ Consumer Council NI (new partnership) – Debt Advice, Scam Prevention, Smart Shopper, Consumers rights etc.
- ▶ Housing Rights (new partnership) – Repossessions, Eviction, Mortgage arrears, Tenants rights Etc.
  
- ▶ Bryson Energy – Energy efficiency methods
- ▶ Fuel stamp saving scheme (DCSDC PHA)
- ▶ Horticulture Training – Community garden – grow your own workshops

- ▶ Nutritional Therapist – Restore Nutrition – Diets
- ▶ Make the Call – Department for Communities
- ▶ North West Regional College – Cooking
- ▶ Holistic Therapies – Reflexology, yoga, Thai Chi, Reiki, Meditation
- ▶ NW Volunteer Centre – Volunteer placements, access NI
- ▶ Budgeting – Money management
- ▶ All-State – training workshops
- ▶ Grass Roots Social Supermarket will act as a digital hub providing access to 6 computers.
- ▶ Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank – setting up bank accounts.

All services will be accessible through the phone line; support mechanism will be added throughout the weeks as we identify further needs of members.

#### **Helpline purpose & Remit for Food Access Project:**

**This helpline will be a local helpline and will receive referrals locally or individuals may also be referred through the regional line. The local Advice services are currently working on the Financial Inclusion Project and meetings are ongoing which will link the local Advice Services with the Access to Food Programme.**

- By working in partnerships, we are ensuring the best use of resources to provide vital services of support and avoid duplication.
- Providing a confidential, free & accessible channel to connect to well-being services
- To continue to build & establish partnerships & links with safe & approved services that goes beyond the remit of partnerships services.
- Appoint Help Line facilitator (Team Leader) for 10 hrs. Per week to ensure Policies are clear and concise i.e. safeguarding, Data protection, Risk Assessment, Confidentially Policy for a total of 15 recruited volunteers to operate the help line.
- The team leader will organize the training in Safeguarding, Data protection, Confidentially etc. The team will have a clear understanding of all services.
- All call operators will be trained to carry out initial assessment to be passed on to assessment officer to establish support plan.
- A total of 6 lines will be operating daily from 10am-4pm (increase in hours & operators can be made if demand is required)

- The Help Line team leader will organize weekly phone line Rota's
- A robust data information system has been specifically built to collate caller's information with an effective logging system that helps capture, record and analysis service information, identify trends, spikes in postcodes and will track the progress of each individual well-being (it is vital we measure each individuals well-being until we measure well-being our communities will not thrive) each referral from agents etc. will receive a ticket format generated by the system with the agreed actions for referrals , the same ticket system is also used to support service partners who will receive a ticket to request the service .
- Distributing information leaflets into urban and rural areas, delivered by elected reps' team of volunteers.
- Providing a quick easy to access reference list of support services for the Help - Line Team.
- Providing 2 channels for referrals: 1: Self Referrals – Help Line –2: Referral agents & Partners provided with a specific email address
- Appoint a Rural facilitator 16 hrs. per week to access email referrals from partners, & referral agents i.e. health visitors, social workers, PSNI, Sure Start, schools and have contact with agents through zoom meetings, phone calls etc. The facilitator will update all referrals info onto data system.
- Appoint a rural facilitator 10 hrs. Per week to carry out entry assessments and establish support plans to also work closely with facilitator appointed to access email etc.

**The 4 NRA's have worked closely to establish criteria that will be rolled out over the DDCSDC for the Access to Food/Linked services Project**

**Key Assessment eligibility criteria:**

- A) Individuals/families living in poverty. This will be determined by either Recent financial hardships as a direct impact of the COVID-19 such as

- Change to employment & reduction in income (Job terminated/furlough/reduced hrs. etc. Including self-employed work.
- Child caring responsibilities impact ability to work.
- Bereavement impact ability to work
- Ill health/disability impact ability to work

## **OR**

Individually/family meet low income threshold and are receiving at least one of these specific benefits.

- Universal Credits (Including pending application)
- Child tax credits
- Employment & Support Allowance
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Working Tax Credits
- No resource to public funds.

B) Individuals/families at risk of food insecurity/poverty

C) Location

- The individual/family must live in the respective DEA

## **Delivery of Food**

Grass Roots will be responsible for placing food parcel orders, specific days; times will be established for delivery into the rural areas through Partner Easi Link who will be reasonable for the delivery of food parcels. Strabane town will have the same process established and food parcels will be delivered by volunteers.

## **Food Items:**

Fare share food items will make up a percentage of the food parcels which consist of ambient foods, fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs fresh baked breads will be added to parcels to ensure a healthy consumption of foods are been received in order to provide nutritional health foods to build immune systems and sustain health by intake of essential vitamins, protein etc.

**Dietary Requirements:**

It is essential to cater for special dietary requirements in terms of allergies, intolerance, vegetarian, Vegan and religious and culture diets.

The Nutritional therapist will create food lists to provide people with special dietary requirements the availability to select items; this will also be available to all beneficiaries who can select items from the list staying within the allocated recommended weight per food parcel for individuals/families.

The Nutritional therapist will deliver zoom workshops, one-to-one sessions and advise people on change of diets etc.

**Lead Partner**

Strabane will be the lead partner in the Project and will take responsibility of the allocated funding a appointed facilitator for 10 hrs. per week will be responsible to ensure all expenditure, vouching etc. are carried out in line with the financial procedures policy .

**Communication Strategy**

**Currently working with the 3 NRA, s to establish a strategy that defines the purpose of the project.**

