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Kellie, a chara,

**AQO 891/17-22 – UPDATE ON SIB EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL SUPERMARKET PILOT PROGRAMME**

Following your recent question relating to the SIB Evaluation of the Social Supermarket Pilot Programme a copy of the final report card is attached and has been placed in the Assembly Library.

If you have any further queries these should be directed to James Elliott, Community Empowerment Division at [James.Elliott@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:James.Elliott@communities-ni.gov.uk) or direct telephone 07929 764691.

Is mise le meas,

CARÁL NÍ CHUILÍN

**Carál Ní Chuilín MLA  
Minister for Communities**

# PILOT SOCIAL SUPERMARKETS (SSM) SUMMARY PRESENTATION (OCTOBER 17- MARCH 20)

Explanatory Note: This report card draws on an evaluation report of the SSM programme. It presents performance and impact information against three domains of the Outcomes Based Accountability Framework (OBA) in place to monitor the programme. The data/ information presented is drawn from Monthly Monitoring Reports and member entry and exit interviews is as provided by the SSMs themselves to DFC i.e. no independent audit/ verification of the information was conducted by SIB (as it is not a requirement of the brief for the evaluation). All five SSM pilots started set-up activity in the last quarter of 2017 (i.e. October to December 2017) and opened for business in the first quarter of 2018. Therefore, across the five sites the SSMs were operational / open for business c 27 months the end of March 2020. The headline findings show positive trends in a number of the indicators captured by exit interviews. However, they need to be interpreted with the caveat that the number of exit interviews available in March 2020 was 431, smaller than the number of entry interviews at 1,119. Therefore, it should be noted that some of the evidence in terms of feedback and 'distance travelled' by SSM members is not yet available and therefore the findings could change as more data and information becomes available from a greater number of exit interviews. This is applicable to the findings presented in the second two domains of the OBA Framework in this presentation.

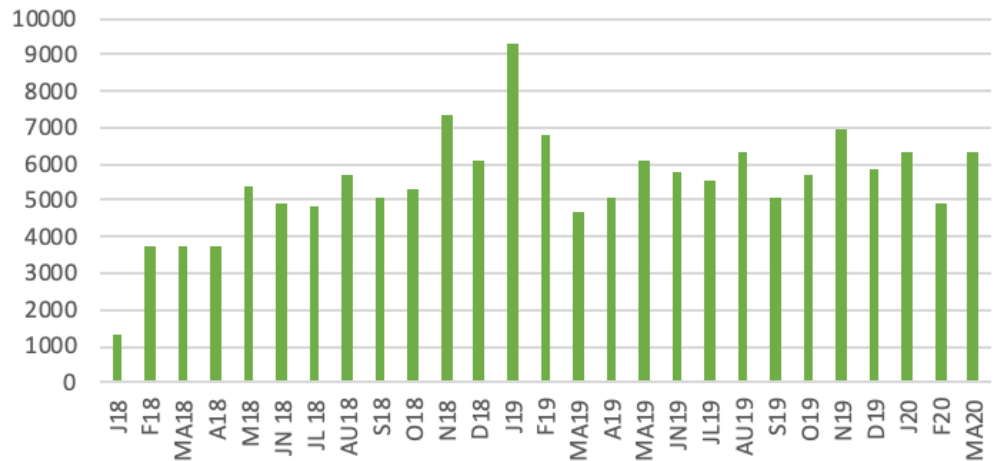
## HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

- 5 pilot SSMs established and operational for 26-27 months by March 2020.
- 1,119 members signed up to the SSM pilots, with benefits reaching 2,797 (based on a mean household size of 2.5).

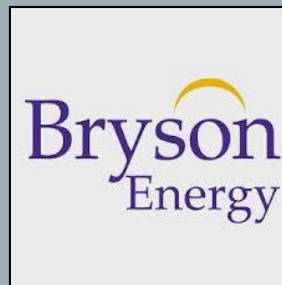


## HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

Quantity of food surplus /waste diverted and redistributed in the five SSM (Kg) by month



- Over 148 tonnes of food surplus that would otherwise have gone to waste has been diverted into the SSM pilot projects and redistributed onto members (via their membership fee)
- DfC support to FareShare has helped to bring a critical mass of stock to the pilot SSMs (c108.3 tonnes to March 2020). The supply provided by FareShare to the SSMs has consistently exceeded their annual contractual target (which was 10-15 tonnes per annum).
- The fuel poverty support is enabled via DfC support to Bryson Energy and has engaged 527 members across the 5 SSMs to March 2020, with access to the Free Oil Incentive (per Wise Oil Buys), Energy grants and Switching Advice and access to the Oil Buying Club scheme.



## HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

### WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS

- Debt Counselling
- Family Budgeting
- Benefits Advice
- Healthy Eating
- Training/ Employability
- Supported Housing
- Fuel Poverty
- Parenting/ Family Supports
- Volunteering

- ❖ All members access 'wrap-around' supports as a condition of their membership – which include attendances at 'one to many' programme sessions and 'one-to-one' mentoring sessions.
- ❖ Members avail of multiple supports, reflecting the holistic nature of the SSM concept, with the most prevalent categories of uptake most prevalent areas of demand reflected in the population of exit interviews being healthy eating, benefits advice, family budgeting, fuel poverty, training/ employability skills and debt counselling.
- ❖ Currently there are between c30-40 external delivery partners implementing 'wrap-around' supports with SSM members – operating alongside SSM staff (not including Bryson Energy and Make the Call who all SSMs partner with via DfC support).

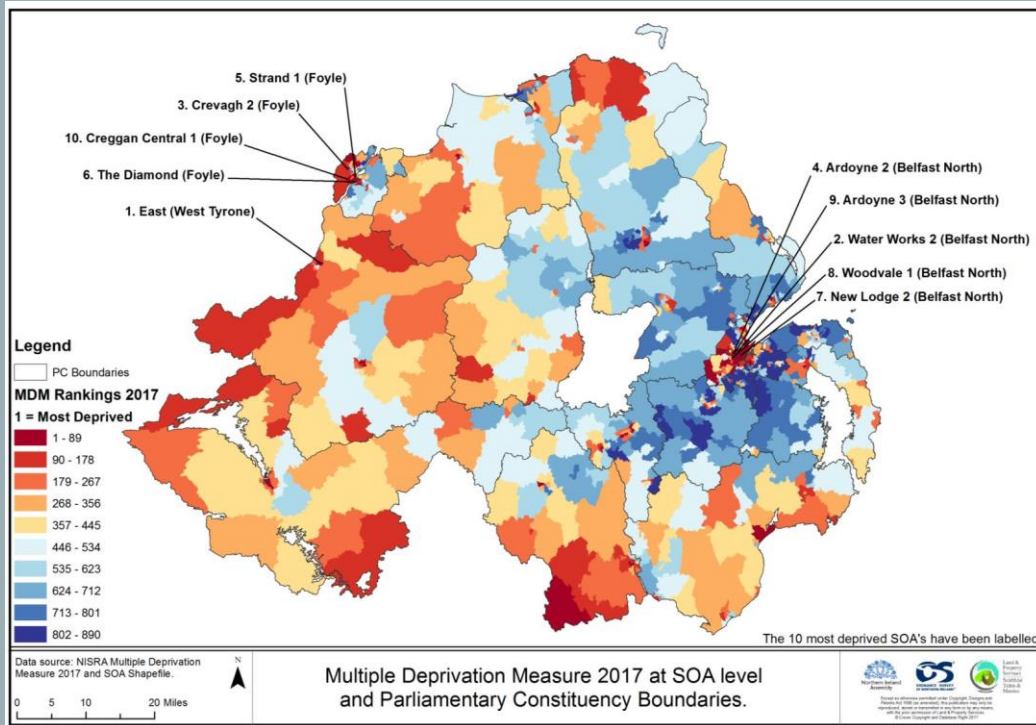
*The SSM model recognises that access to food is only one factor in providing a pathway out of poverty and the uptake of wraparound supports in tandem is key to effecting this*

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?



- ❖ The time from lead-in planning to being operational / 'business as usual' was 2-3 months across all 5 SSMs. All were operational/ open for business by January 2018 and have been open for business for 26-27 months at March 2020.
- ❖ The profiling information on SSM members and their households in the main provides good evidence that those who are most in need and at risk of poverty/ food poverty are being supported, consistent with membership criteria for access.
- ❖ This is based on a rounded view of the range of circumstances that can prevail (e.g. unemployment/ economic inactivity, low levels of household disposable income; debt obligations; food insecurity and low levels of self-efficacy) as derived from baseline/ entry profiling of SSM members. Key examples of this evidence are included overleaf.

# HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?



Source: Overall Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 by SOA / Page 7 Research and Information Service Research Paper/ Multiple Deprivation in Northern Ireland June 2018  
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2017-2022/2018/0118.pdf>

- ❖ 97% of SSM members and/or individuals in their household are in receipt of at least one social welfare benefit.
- ❖ The majority of SSM members amongst the population of entry interviews are drawn from households of lone parents (n=431) followed by individuals living alone / one-person households (n=340).
- ❖ The entry interviews captured the employment status of all SSM members and all individuals in their household that were of working age. The majority were unemployed (62%) at the time of their entry interview with a further 17% economically inactive. This suggests that the SSMs are reaching those that are most likely to be impacted upon by welfare reform/ benefit changes as they roll out across NI.
- ❖ Mapping of member postcodes against spatial deprivation indicates that a significant proportion of members live in locations that are amongst the most deprived in Northern Ireland. Specifically 36% of members reside in locations that rank in the top quartile (top 25%) of super output areas (SOAs) with respect to the Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM). This varies across the 5 SSMs, with this figure as high as 68% in one SSM.

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?



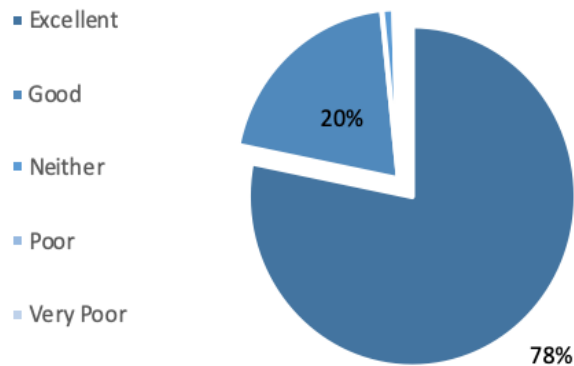
The Strabane SSM secured access to land that has been transformed into a Community Walled Garden, that is an outdoor resource where people of all ages come together to develop and maintain an inspiring green space – in effect a 'peoples garden' with growing areas, allotments and reflection space.

- ❖ The SSMs are delivering improved access to healthy food produce (fresh and ambient) - almost all (96%) of SSM members captured via the exit interviews rated the range and quality of stock at the SSMs as either excellent (59%) or good (37%).
- ❖ Beyond supply from Fareshare, all five SSMs have established / augmented existing partnerships with food suppliers to support the programme.
- ❖ Four out of the five SSMs have access to allotments which enhances the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables to the SSMs whilst providing opportunities for volunteering at the same time.
- ❖ Reflecting on all of the above the SSM concept is consistent with circular economy principles, that is supporting a system that keeps products and materials in use for as long as possible to minimise waste and optimise use of available resources.
- ❖ All five SSMs have been inspected by Food Safety Officers from the respective local authority and all have received a top rating of 5 i.e. very good hygiene and food safety standards. All of the pilot SSMs have an ongoing programme of training for staff and volunteers in this regard.



## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?

Figure 5b: How would you rate the affordability of the joining/ongoing membership fees charged by the social supermarket?



Source: Exit Interviews n=43 |

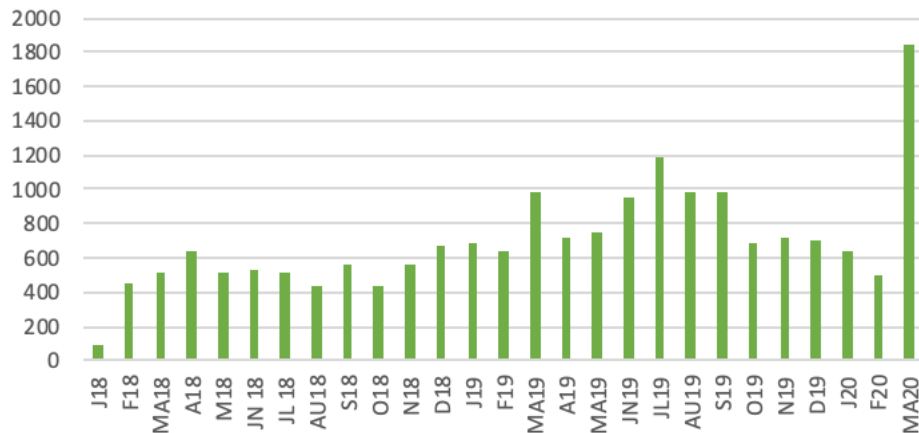
- ❖ The affordability of the membership fee is rated highly – 78% excellent, 20% good – in the context of the quality of food produce and range of wrap-around supports accessed.
- ❖ 77% of members strongly agreed and 21 % agreed (during the course of exit interviews) that social supermarkets provide a form of food aid that is respectful of people's dignity and freedom.
- ❖ The retention of members has been reasonably good. In recent progress and evaluation reports completed by SIB the 'running rate' of members not completing their membership (up to exit interview) has varied between 15% and 32%.

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?

❖ There has been considerable leverage of other financial/ non-financial resources alongside DfC investment which combined with emerging evidence with respect to performance and impact suggests VFM of the public investment.

- The DfC investment is fairly modest (i.e. c£70k in Year 1 to cover initial set up and staff/ running costs and c£60k per annum thereafter to cover staff/ running costs).
- Across all five pilot SSMs there has been 18,886 volunteer hours leveraged to March 2020. This equates to c£165k in value terms using National Living Wages (\*) rates as a proxy for the unit value of time.
- All 5 SSMs quickly established / augmented existing community partnerships and wider support networks to leverage their involvement as delivery partners within the SSM. Currently there are between c30-40 external delivery partners implementing 'wrap-around' supports with SSM members – operating alongside SSM staff.
- There is private sector / employer involvement in relation to pathways to employment. There is real synergy between work to reach individuals most removed from the labour market, who are traditionally excluded and isolated and caught in a historic cycle of worklessness/poverty and the SSM activity.

Volunteer Hours Leveraged Per Month Across the SSMs



(\*) £8.72 for those aged 25+ post April 1 2020.

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?



Note – Make the Call aims to support people, many of whom are vulnerable through age, disability / illness, or adverse circumstances, to access benefits and other Government supports and services that they are entitled but not claiming.

- ❖ Effective synergy and collaboration has been achieved with other areas of policy in DFC supporting families to break the cycle of poverty in their lives and with other Departments/ agencies active in the same.
- ❖ For instance the SSM pilots have been working with the DFC initiative Make the Call. To March 2020 357 needs assessments were completed by the Outreach Workers with SSM members. Of these 357 needs assessments 59 led to the successful identification of benefit entitlements not availed of that were able to make a material financial impact to the individuals in question. Of the 59 additional entitlements, 13 are currently going through assessment and the remaining 46 resulted in £215,147.64 of annualised additional benefit. There are approximately 28 outstanding cases to be evaluated from December 2019 to March 2020 which may add to the data above.
- ❖ However, there is a recognition that the value of a Make the Call intervention is not just in a benefits context in that the service works with trusted partners to enhance provision of supports and services. This is evidenced by the fact that within the population above there were also 68 households for whom potential supports and services were identified by Make the Call. For example, the Blue Badge Scheme, Bryson Energy Advice, help with healthcare costs or NOW Group JAM Cards.

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT ?



Energy efficiency for everyone

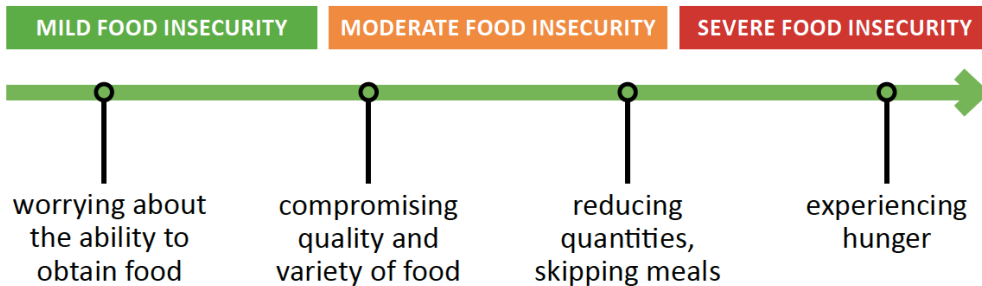


- ❖ The interventions provided by Bryson Energy have been recently evaluated incorporating survey work with SSM members availing of the support and interviews with SSM managers. The report (\*) highlights positive impacts achieved, not just in terms of immediately moving SSM members out of fuel poverty, but in terms of equipping members with the skills and capacity to manage their fuel bills longer term. In turn the saving on fuel bills has encouraged members to look at other ways to save money – for example switching energy supplier and having their homes insulated.
- ❖ It is also very clear from the evaluation report that the partnership with Bryson Energy brought great credibility and value to the SSM projects enhancing their ability to build up trust in people who are living in poverty.

(\* Evaluation of the Social Supermarket Energy Support Services – Including Wise Oil Buys and Oil Buying Clubs Barbara Gray, August 2019)

# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?

## WHAT IS FOOD INSECURITY?



Source: Too Poor to Eat Food insecurity in the UK By Anna Taylor and Rachel Loopstra,

foodfoundation.org.uk | May 2016

## ❖ Improved quality of life for service users/ members through a reduction in food insecurity

Indicators of Food Poverty/ Insecurity Assessed in Entry and Exit Interviews	Entry and Exit Interview Findings
a) I/ my household has insufficient or insecure access to food due to resource constraints.	The entry interviews indicated that 89% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 25%.
b) I/ members of my household could often skip a meal / go without food.	The entry interviews indicated that 69% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 18%.
c) I/ my household in the context of available resources focus on purchasing foods that will not go to waste and that are most filling	The entry interviews indicated that 90% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 50%.
d) I/my household generally consume cheaper foods, that can be nutrient-poor but calorie-rich	The entry interviews indicated that 87% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 25%.
e) In the context of (c) and (d) above there is a risk of weight gain and obesity for me/ members of my household	The entry interviews indicated that 52% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 22%.
f) I / my household has inadequate intakes of certain nutrients and fruits and vegetables	The entry interviews indicated that 78% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 22%.
g) The stress of not having sufficient amounts or types of food for me/ my household is harming my/our socio-emotional well-being (e.g. including impacting on child development and mental health).	The entry interviews indicated that 88% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 24%.

## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?

*“I am encouraging my children to eat healthier and try new foods”*

*“Cookery demonstrations really helped me a lot. With food from the shop I could make healthy meals”*

*“I definitely did not understand healthy eating before but now I do and hope that even after leaving that I continue good practices, some things haven’t changed yet but I have come on loads and am really proud of myself”*

*“Also, through being part of the Food Club the staff managed to get me an allotment where I can now grow my own stuff which will help both me and my daughter in the future”*

*“Felt comfortable-Enjoyed cookery class, gained knowledge in cooking proper portions, made me aware of dates that food expires. Felt very welcomed, great support service from all the staff”*

*“I have found all of the help really useful, I can’t move into work at the moment because of the age of my kids but I feel more prepared for when I am able, I have better knowledge of healthy cooking and eating and when we get more money we will definitely try harder to cook better meals”*

*“ A healthy eating plan has changed my eating habits for the best”*

*“The staff gave me a cookbook and nutrition guide and now that my benefits are sorted I am able to eat more healthily, but by using the budgeting plan that I set out with the staff I can be making sure I balance my diet better. I still have to watch my budget but it is a start”*

*“I know how to cook and eat healthily.... it’s just not always possible because of money but I really enjoyed the courses and it has given me new ideas”*

- ❖ Improved awareness of and attitudes towards healthy eating amongst members (through adoption of healthy eating practices)

Indicators of Healthy Eating Practice and Awareness Assessed in Entry and Exit Interviews	Entry and Exit Interview Findings
a) I/ members of my household regularly eat five portions of fruit or vegetables each day	The entry interviews indicated that only 18% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is 60%.
b) I/ members of my household regularly eat processed meat, biscuits, sweets and chocolate.	The entry interviews indicated that 47% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is slightly lower at 41%.
c) I/ members of my household would regularly eat a takeaway meal	The entry interviews indicated that 21% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is only 8%
d) I/ my household would have a good understanding of healthy eating practices (e.g. not skipping breakfast; 5 a day guidelines, avoiding high fat and high sugar snacks and controlling salt intake)	The entry interviews indicated that 81% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is 74%.
e) I/ members of my household would like to improve adoption of healthy eating practices	The entry interviews indicated that 81% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is 74%.
f) I/ my household have access to recipes and knowledge on healthy eating practices	The entry interviews indicated that 72% strongly agreed/ agreed with this statement – the corresponding percentage amongst the population of member exit interviews is slightly higher at 86%.

# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?

*“I am so grateful for the service I received, it has helped me through a really tough patch and I am now in a much more level and grounded position. I also feel better prepared for dealing with similar situations in the future and would not let them escalate to the point of not coping again. I am really hopeful for the future and look forward to being in touch with the team and attending events”*

*“When I was made aware of this project I was in a low place, both emotionally and physically but the support, services and benefits available to me and my family have changed that. It has allowed me to feel like I can cope better, I am learning every day, some are still challenging but I know the support is there if I need to speak to someone in confidence. I am in a better position now due to this project and the confidence it has instilled in me”*

*“Brilliant help with coping strategies”.*

*“The support from this project has led to me being a stronger person who feels they are now in control of their future and that of my family”*

*“I felt overwhelmed – the food club gave me a chance to get back on my feet again. I feel well connected to the community”*

*“This has changed my life, I am more positive and believe in myself I am more hopeful for mine and the children’s future”*

*“Myself and my family had great support and used all wraparound services relevant to our family, it helped in so many ways and ensured we had advice on hand when needed. I have now found full time employment as I grew in my confidence through interview skills I forgot the skills I had.... I was in such a low place”*

*“I feel like life is getting better and that I am more equipped but some stuff will take more time and I don’t know until I face it if I have actually improved in practice”*

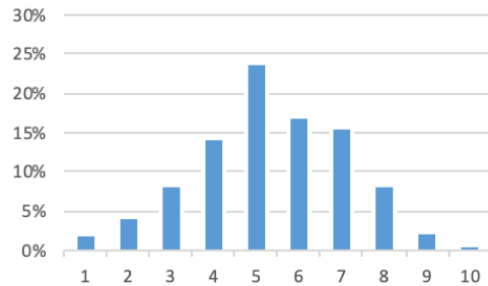
## ❖ Improved self-efficacy and locus of control

Examples of Indicators Assessed in Entry and Exit Interviews	Entry and Exit Interview Findings	Commentary
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	Amongst the population of entry interviews 52% strongly agreed/ agreed with this. The corresponding percentage amongst the population of exit interviews is 84%	The entry interviews indicated that many members were struggling to a degree with the challenges of daily life. There is evidence of resilience amongst SSM members to cope with the challenges of daily life amongst the population of exit interviews. The entry interviews indicate that many members did not feel that were in control of their lives indicating the potential for SSM interventions to empower them in this regard. There is evidence amongst the population of exit interviews of the strong empowering influence from the holistic nature of the SSM supports and the manner in which they are delivered.
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	Amongst the population of entry interviews 36% strongly agreed/ agreed with this. The corresponding percentage amongst the population of exit interviews is 84%	
I am in control of my life.	Amongst the population of entry interviews 35% strongly agreed/ agreed with this. The corresponding percentage amongst the population of exit interviews is 84%	
If I take the right steps, I can avoid problems.	Amongst the population of entry interviews 60% strongly agreed/ agreed with this. The corresponding percentage amongst the population of exit interviews is 85%	

Note: These indicators are examples that draw on established questions/ common metrics already established and accepted via The Executive Office (TEO)/ OBA methodology in context of the Delivering Social Change programme

# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?

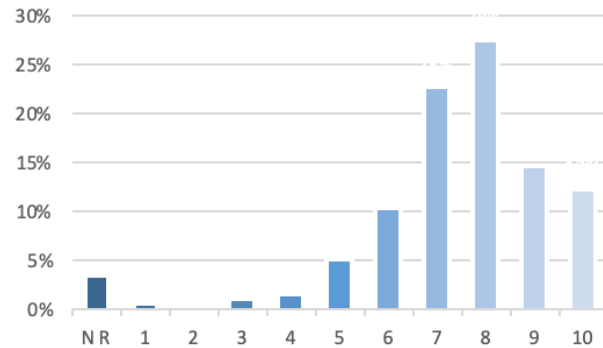
On a scale of 0 – 10 where 0 is not satisfied at all & 10 is completely satisfied, how satisfied are with life nowadays?



ENTRY

EXIT

On a scale of 0 – 10 where 0 is not satisfied at all and 10 is completely satisfied, how satisfied are with your life nowadays?



## ❖ Improved life satisfaction

- At entry stage 61% of SSM members captured via the entry interviews indicated that they were in the lowest five rankings in terms of life satisfaction.
- This evidences the potential that there is for the SSM interventions/ 'wrap-around' support to make some contribution towards empowering them to improve their circumstances/ break out of the cycle of poverty, and in doing so contribute to improved well-being and life satisfaction.
- The corresponding percentage amongst the population of exit interviews is only 9%. (i.e. only 9% were in the lowest five rankings in terms of life satisfaction, with 55% in the top three rankings).



# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?

## Improved Management of Family Finances/ Debt

*"The support I received in improving my budgeting, benefit advice for my household was fantastic. This had a huge impact on my family's daily life"*

*"Energy costs - could see how easy it was to switch-shown how to go on line & check-know where to look"*

*"Money management was very very helpful and is working towards getting debt free"*

*"Prior to being made aware of the Food Club it was a serious struggle for me to meet the payment of my monthly bills and just everyday living costs especially during the winter months as it has always been a case of heat or eat , but now thanks to the Food Club on a weekly basis which has certainly eased the pressure and stress on my grocery bills and put me in a better position to save money to go towards other bills"*

*"We are now out of debt, both back working and managing far better"*

*"Head is more screwed on with money. I wouldn't just go out and blow money on certain things"*

## Employment/ Pathways to Employment

*"Great support and direction from the wraparound services. Got employment with the powerful support from staff members from the food club"*

*"I did voluntary work in the supermarket, good experience"*

*"The staff helped me with my interview nerves and my CV and prepared me for work. I have now got a full-time job which I really enjoy. The volunteering at the SSM got me back into a good place for work in my head. I can also organise myself better so that I can manage what I have"*

*"Training - I am now employed first time in 11 years"*

*"We were both unemployed that's why we joined this SSM programme I am now employed full-time and my wife is volunteering to learn new skills and gain confidence. We have taken up the cooking on a budget programme and the basic sewing classes..... it has been a happy journey it has changed us completely for the best"*

## ❖ Impact (s) of wrap-around support services/ advice.

- The SSMs have been successful in helping members to (a) identify barriers to overcoming their present situation and (b) identify actions and solutions to overcome these.
- 94% of members captured via the exit interviews indicated that the support from the SSM had helped them to do (a) above. 91% of members captured via the exit interviews indicated that the support from the SSM had helped them to do (b) above.
- Impacts are wide-ranging for those involved, reflecting the different entry circumstances and needs of the members and their families.
- Whilst not explicitly an employability intervention it is evident that for some individuals the support has given them the confidence to embark on a path to employment/ secure employment, in some cases via volunteering as an interim step.

# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?

## General

*“The support was a whole package and so all issues were addressed”*

*“It has made a massive and significant difference to my life .....the Food Club is a very helpful, dignified and welcoming place to me and I'm sure to many other people in similar circumstances. I am very grateful for the existence of this essential outlet”.*

*“We had no idea where to go or what to do having lost our home and jobs within weeks of each other, the shame of using the foodbank was unbearable but the SSM staff just put us at ease, set up a plan and literally within a week, things had started to change, someone showing real kindness and help was just amazing”*

*“Every part of this course has been brilliant, I feel much more positive and look forward to staying a part of the organisation even though I no longer need the food”*

*“I have gone from a dismal place to looking at life in a more positive way, I welcomed the support offered and have moved to a better place in my life, while life is not perfect in any way it has been improved”*

*“I feel more positive about my future, I know I need to work at doing the right things to make a change. I still can't afford to do social activities and money is tight, but I think it will get better, if I try and use the tools I have been given”*

*“I now understand more about what my family was actually eating like, I probably would change some of my initial answers. The support for the months I was out of work was great and it boosted my confidence coming. I am now better at planning and budgeting so if my job ever ended again I think I would handle it better”*

- ❖ Impact (s) of wrap-around support services/ advice (continued)
  - In the exit interviews some members do not single out one theme/ area of support that has particularly impacted upon them, rather for them it has been the combination of everything embodied in the SSM.
  - In essence these SSM members acknowledge that it is the holistic nature of the wrap-around support in tandem with access to affordable quality food, that has helped them/ their family to transition through a difficult period in their lives.
  - Importantly 77% of members amongst the population of exit interviews strongly agreed and 21% agreed that social supermarkets provide a form of food aid that is respectful of people's dignity and freedom.

## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?



- ❖ The evidence with respect to the performance and impact of the SSMs indicates that the model in combining access to affordable food produce and wrap-around supports is helping to positively change the life circumstances of members (and their families).
- ❖ At minimum it has given members the confidence to embark on path to transition out of food poverty/ improve their circumstances, as reflected by the 'distance travelled' by many members in terms of resilience and self-efficacy.
- ❖ Whilst many others have progressed further to actually improve their circumstances (e.g. secure employment, improve family finances/ reduce debt).

# IS ANYONE BETTER OFF ?



## Community-Level Benefits

- ❖ As well as benefits at the individual/ member/ household level benefits are evident at community level as well.
- ❖ All five SSMs have successfully used the DfC support to refurbish/ re-animate space that was previously either under-utilised or vacant.
- ❖ All five have achieved high-quality facilities with modest levels of capital investment. The emphasis across all 5 SSMs has been on appropriate refurbishment including using low cost and/or recycled materials/ equipment and using local labour and skills where feasible.
- ❖ 64% of members strongly agreed and 21% agreed (during the course of exit interviews) that the facilities in terms of the community space at the social supermarket are of a high quality.
- ❖ 54% of members strongly agreed and 38% agreed (during the course of exit interviews) that the development of the social supermarket had helped to reanimate their local community.