

| About You | |
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| 1. | Your Name Catherine Duns |
| 2. | Your Employer / Organisation Midlothian Council |
| 3. | Your Position Senior Communities Lifelong Learning and Employability Worker |
| 4. | Your E-Mail at Work catherine.duns@midlothian.gov.uk |
| 5. | Your Address at Work - |
| 6. | Your Telephone Number at Work - |
| 7. | Your Role in the Project Catherine had various responsibilities within the project. She acted as a key contact for all parties involved, monitored the project and evaluated how it was being administered, discussed and dealt with common issues, and signposted within the project. |
| An Introduction to the Project | |
| 8. | Which partner organisations are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)? British Red Cross, Midlothian Cost of Living Taskforce, Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE) Service, ParsleyBox |
| 9. | Does the project have specific aims and/or objectives? <i>If so, please add to the box below.</i> The objective of Midlothian's Reheatable Foods Service was to reduce the cost of living for those experiencing food poverty. ParsleyBox meals were delivered by British Red Cross volunteers to low-income households and individuals who were unable to cook, including for financial or medical reasons. It targeted those experiencing a short-term crisis and individuals could be supported with 7 meals a week for up to 12 weeks. Meals were delivered on Saturdays between 11:00–15:00. |
| 10. | Does the project have a title? <i>If so, please add to the box below.</i> Midlothian Reheatable Foods Service |
| 11. | When did it start? 20 th of March 2023. The relaunch occurred on the 23 rd of October 2023. |
| 12. | Has it finished? Is it on-going? Does it have an end date? <i>Please add dates to the box below.</i> |

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| | The project finished as of the 19 th of June 2023. It was relaunched on the 23 rd of October 2023, but is now finished. |
| 13. | Which groups of people, if any, are targeted by the service provided? |
| | Any individual or family referred by the British Red Cross who could not afford to cook or struggled to do so for several reasons. |
| 14. | How many people have been served by the project? |
| | 30 people received 7 meals a week. 675 reheatable meals were delivered as of June 2023. During the relaunch, 1,600 meals were delivered to 27 Midlothian residents. |
| 15. | Where is it delivered? |
| | Midlothian |
| The Initial Idea | |
| 16. | Who had the initial idea? |
| | Midlothian Council, Midlothian Cost of Living Taskforce, British Red Cross |
| 17. | How did the idea for the project come about? |
| | The Midlothian Reheatable Foods Service came about as a response to the cost-of-living crisis. It was primarily developed to address the needs of Midlothian residents on low-income experiencing a crisis, for instance those fleeing domestic violence, in temporary accommodation, or coming out of hospital. The Service was developed as a direct approach to reducing food poverty by delivering ready-made meals straight to the person or family in need. In doing so, it bypassed physical barriers present in other forms of similar aid (i.e., travels costs to foodbanks). |
| 18. | Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans? <i>If so, please add details to the box below.</i> |
| | Midlothian Council primarily listened to the needs of communities and individuals in crisis to inform their plans. This project was developed as a response to what the Council heard from those with lived experience of poverty. Evidence from an independent study published in 2023 by the Cost of Living Taskforce supports the continued existence of the project (i.e., 21,000 Midlothian residents cannot afford to eat balanced meals). |
| 19. | Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project? |
| | Midlothian Council, Midlothian Cost of Living Taskforce, CLLE Service, British Red Cross |
| 20. | Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project? |
| | Yes, Midlothian Council responded to the needs and testimonials of those with lived experience of poverty. This inspired the initial idea. |
| 21. | What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project? |
| | Local Authority COVID Economic Recovery (LACER) funding was used to support the development of the initial idea. |

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| 22. | What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project? | |
| | Facilities | N/A |
| | Equipment | N/A |
| | Local Knowledge | Local organisations highlighted how isolated populations could be served. Women's Aid suggested that meal deliveries would be beneficial for those fleeing domestic violence. Other local organisations pointed out how individuals in temporary accommodation might benefit from the Reheatable Foods Service. Referrals to local cooking groups also occurred. |
| | Food and Drink | Ready-made meals that can be stored in a cupboard and reheated in a pot or microwave (5 meals per week delivered to those in need with vegetarian and gluten free options available). |
| 23. | What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project? | |
| | The primary difficulty was managing demand with what could feasibly be delivered. Making those in need aware whilst also balancing what the service had the capacity to do was the main hurdle. Midlothian Council and the British Red Cross opted for a referral process rather than advertising the project to the public in order to address this challenge. It is something Midlothian Council were conscious of as they relaunched the project in October 2023. | |
| 24. | What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project? | |
| | Lived experience testimonials from locals and the support of the Midlothian Cost of Living Taskforce were very beneficial when developing the initial idea. This direct approach to food poverty was ideal for several populations, including carers, isolated elderly people, or lone parents. | |
| 25. | Did you conduct a feasibility study? (if yes, please describe what you did and what you concluded) | |
| | No. | |
| 26. | What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project? | |
| | The initial idea emerged with the cost-of-living crisis, and the project started in March 2023. It took slightly longer to develop due to the procurement process. Midlothian's Reheatable Foods Service was one of many practical support measures taken to mitigate the effects of the crisis. | |
| 27. | Who made the decision to introduce the project? | |
| | Midlothian Council, British Red Cross | |
| Pilot Project | | |
| 28. | Did you run a pilot project? | |
| | No. | |
| The On-going Development of the Project | | |
| 29. | Has the project changed through time? | |

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| | No, however it will increase in scale in October 2023. |
| Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users | |
| 30. | Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database) |
| | Yes. British Red Cross referred its own service users to the Reheatable Foods Service if they were on low-income, Midlothian-based, and in need of short-term support. A small number of individuals were referred by other professionals or services they were already in contact with, such as Women's Aid. The project was not advertised to the public to manage demand. |
| 31. | How are potential clients made aware of the project? |
| | Potential service users are made aware of the project through professionals in the field or the British Red Cross. They then undergo a formal referral process. |
| 32. | How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact? |
| | Communication is fairly formal and occurs via referrals by professionals or the British Red Cross. Midlothian Council do not proactively contact previous service users. |
| Collaborating With People with Lived Experience of Poverty | |
| 33. | Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i> |
| | Volunteers deliver the reheatable meals, some of whom likely have lived experience. |
| 34. | Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project, <u>supervision</u> within the project, or project <u>governance</u>? <i>If so, please describe below.</i> |
| | No. |
| 35. | Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i> |
| | Aside from feedback and testimonial evidence, no. |
| Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working | |
| 36. | Who has overall responsibility for the project? |
| | Midlothian Council, Midlothian Cost of Living Taskforce, CLLE Service, British Red Cross |
| 37. | Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i> |
| | No. As a charity, the British Red Cross has several other initiatives. The Council has various other responsibilities regarding the welfare of Midlothian residents. The Taskforce was set up as a specific response to the cost-of-living crisis, and the Reheatable Foods Service was just one aspect of their work to tackle poverty in Midlothian. |
| 38. | Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group or Organising Committee? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i> |
| | Midlothian's Cost of Living Taskforce has a committee with elected members who oversaw the Reheatable Foods Service. The Council receives monitoring information |

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| | from the British Red Cross and reports this to the Taskforce. Information provided included number of support instances, gaps in the service (either geographically or priority groups), funding, and coverage analysis. | |
| Staffing | | |
| 39. | Are there any paid staff? Please describe their role and their contribution. | |
| | Yes, the British Red Cross and the Council have paid staff who organise, manage, and supervise the service. | |
| 40. | Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? Please describe their role and their contribution. | |
| | Yes, volunteers deliver the reheatable meals. | |
| Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements | | |
| 41. | Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? If so, please give details. | |
| | Yes. The Reheatable Foods Service is part of Midlothian's wider anti-poverty strategy to reduce the effects of the cost-of-living crisis for Midlothian residents. It is also included in the Cost-of-Living Taskforce's budget. | |
| 42. | Is the project part of any other strategy? If so, please give details. | |
| | No. | |
| 43. | Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. If so, please give details. | |
| | No. | |
| Funding | | |
| 44. | Who funds the project? Please give details. | |
| | The Midlothian Cost of Living Taskforce allocated LACER funds to the Reheatable Foods Service. | |
| 45. | How is the project funded? | |
| | The project is funded with LACER funding. | |
| 46. | What is the budget for the project / how much does it cost to deliver? | |
| | The budget is £52,000, however these funds have yet to be maximised. The project only cost £13,000 to deliver as the number of referrals was lower than expected. | |
| 47. | Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered? If so, please give details | |
| | Yes, although Midlothian Council had enough funding left to go ahead with the October 2023 relaunch. | |
| Resources | | |
| 48. | What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project? | |
| | Facilities | N/A |
| | Equipment | N/A |

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| | Local Knowledge | Referrals to local cooking groups that those who struggle to cook may not have been aware of. Local knowledge of isolated populations will continue to inform the project going forward. |
| | Food and Drink | Reheatable, ready-made meals. |
| 49. | For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it? | |
| | Facilities | N/A |
| | Equipment | N/A |
| | Local Knowledge | British Red Cross, Midlothian Council, and various other organisations such as Women's Aid. |
| | Food and Drink | ParsleyBox. |
| 50. | Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? Please describe below. | |
| | No. | |
| 51. | Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? If so, please describe. | |
| | Yes, additional training on data protection and impact assessments was provided by Midlothian Council. | |
| Formal Monitoring and Evaluation | | |
| 52. | What information, if any, do you collect about your project? | |
| | Number of users | Yes, this was kept track of. |
| | Profile of users | Yes, target groups were recorded (i.e., elderly people and lone parents). |
| | Experience of users | Yes, for monitoring purposes. |
| | Anything else | Geographical area, reason for referral, and number of weeks each individual was served was recorded. |
| 53. | How often is data collected? Who collects the data? | |
| | Data collection and monitoring was on-going and collected by the British Red Cross and Midlothian Council. | |
| 54. | Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? Please describe the type of baseline data that you have. | |
| | Midlothian Council experienced very little demand for services like the Reheatable Food Service before the cost-of-living crisis and pandemic. As a council, however, data is collected and reported annually to inform practical support measures such as the Service. Examples include the Profile of Midlothian 2022 and Single Midlothian Plan 2023–27. | |
| 55. | Do you produce an annual report? Please provide details of what this includes. | |
| | No. | |
| 56. | In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide? | |

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| | Midlothian Council and the British Red Cross expanded the Reheatable Foods Service in October 2023 to increase coverage of isolated populations. The British Red Cross have additional capacity to deliver meals to approximately 65 people a week. |
| 57. | Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? If yes, please provide details. |
| | No. |
| 58. | Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future? If yes, please provide details. |
| | Not at present. |
| Impact | |
| 59. | What difference has the project made? |
| | Midlothian's Reheatable Foods Service made a positive impact on the mental well-being of Midlothian residents on low-income. In removing the strain of buying, collecting, and/or cooking food, the Service relieved this daily stress for those in need. Eating well-balanced, nutritious meals also improves general well-being, particularly if previously living on a restrictive diet. It was also helpful in alleviating food poverty for isolated groups who struggle to or cannot cook for several reasons. During the relaunch, volunteers enjoyed delivering the meals and residents enjoyed interacting with volunteers. Meal delivery was also ideal for those with problems with mobility and/or memory. |
| 60. | How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)? |
| | Feedback demonstrated this difference. Groups who reported the positive changes that were stated above included those on low-income with a child to support, isolated elderly people, low-income individuals with minimal cooking facilities, lone parents with a mental illness, carers, and those living with disability, mobility issues, or illness. |
| 61. | To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved? |
| | The Reheatable Foods Project reduced the cost of living for those experiencing food poverty. The project aimed to mitigate the effects of the cost-of-living crisis for low-income individuals and families by providing meal deliveries for up to 12 weeks. The project had a knock-on effect in that it alleviated food-related stress and anxiety for recipients as well as improved health and well-being. |
| 62. | How, if at all, has the demand for the service provided by XXX changed since it started? |
| | Changing demand was difficult to gauge as the original pilot was relatively short. However, there were other practical support measures in place over the summer (i.e. foodbank vouchers or cash payments for those entitled to free school meals). Midlothian Council monitored changing demand in the autumn and winter as the pilot re-launched in October 2023, increasing meal delivery to 1,600 meals for 27 residents. |
| 63. | If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? Please describe and explain below. |

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| | Yes, as 1,600 meals were delivered to 27 residents during the October 2023 relaunch. The British Red Cross also have a solid volunteer base and the capacity to increase coverage in the autumn and winter months. | |
| 64. | Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? If so, whether positive or negative, please describe. | |
| | Yes. The project had a positive impact on recipients' well-being and overall health. | |
| 65. | In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty? If so, please describe in what ways. | |
| | Yes. The project helped those in great need, particularly those on low-income who were also in crisis. It alleviated food-related stress and reduced the cost of living for 30 vulnerable individuals. In doing so, it effectively tackled food poverty in the short-term for recipients and continued to do so in October 2023. | |
| Learning from Experience | | |
| 66. | What is working well? | |
| | Overall, the project went very well. The project's commitment to delivering 7 meals a week per individual for up to 12 weeks meant that those in crisis were well-supported throughout their time as recipients. This had a causal effect in that the service increased well-being and decreased food-related anxiety. | |
| 67. | What, if anything, is working less well? | |
| | One potential drawback of the project was that not many people were aware of it because there was not enough time to get referrals in and processed. Conversely, the project was able to meet the demand it had without being overwhelmed because of this. | |
| 68. | What are the key learning points that you would like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently? | |
| | One key learning point is to learn how to balance the demand for your service with what you can feasibly deliver. It is also important to be aware that it is difficult to advertise a project and also cope with the demand that public advertisement will inevitably bring. | |
| 69. | What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future? | |
| | The Reheatable Foods Service expanded in scale in October 2023. The Service increased the number of meals delivered from 675 meals to 1,600 meals. | |
| 70. | How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting? | |
| | This project could be replicated in another setting with the right support and volunteer base. This project relies on its volunteers to deliver the project and the British Red Cross to oversee this delivery. With processes such as these in place, the project could easily be replicated. | |
| Social Media | | |
| 71. | Please enter social media contact details and weblinks to supporting documents or resources below: | |
| | Web Pages | N/A |
| | Facebook | N/A |
| | Instagram | N/A |



Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory
Proforma for Researchers to Complete – Stages 1 and 2



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| | Twitter | N/A |
| | Tik-Tok | N/A |
| GDPR Consent (Add yes or no in the box) | | |
| I give my permission to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs. | | Yes |
| I give permission for our organisation to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs. | | Yes |
| I give permission for me to be contacted by directory users. | | Yes |
| I am willing to be contacted if more details are required | | Yes |