

Household Food Insecurity

Full version

Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Place & Health Improvement

Southwark Public Health Division

July 2019 (refreshed September 2021)

GATEWAY INFORMATION

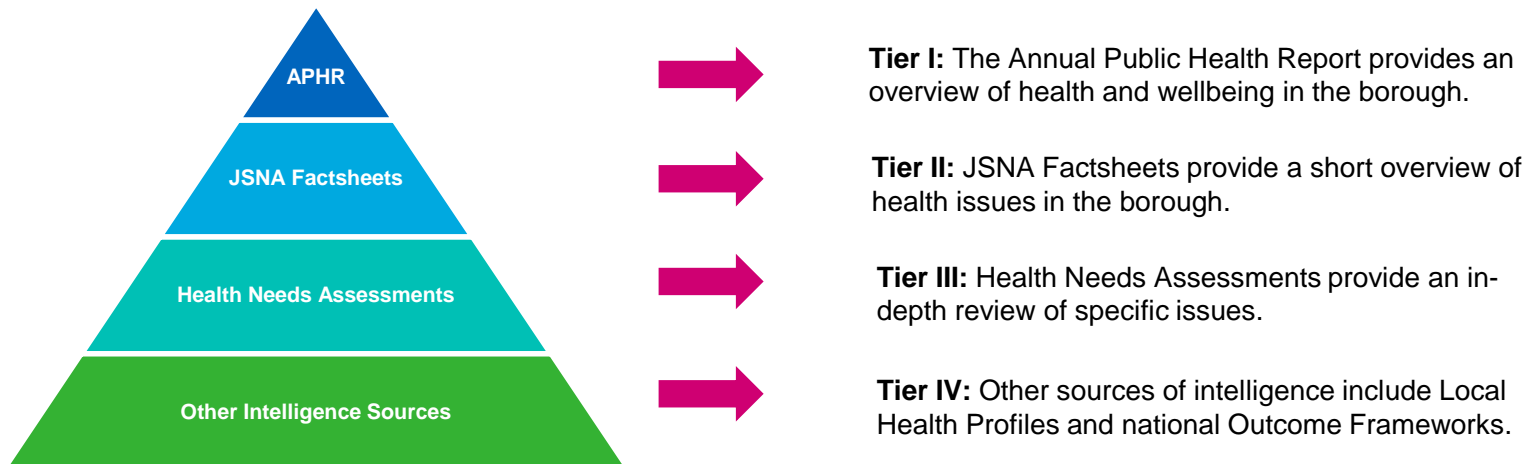
Report title:	Household Food Insecurity
Status:	Public
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Suggested citation:	Tackling Household Food Insecurity. Southwark's JSNA. Southwark Council: London. 2019.
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Date of publication:	August 2019 (refreshed September 2021)

Health Needs Assessments form part of Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process

BACKGROUND

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the ongoing process through which we seek to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of our local population.

- The purpose of the JSNA is to inform and underpin the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans that seek to improve the health of our residents.
- The JSNA is built from a range of resources that contribute to our understanding of need. In Southwark we have structured these resources around 4 tiers:



- This document forms part of those resources.
- All our resources are available via: www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

This needs assessment examines the extent of food insecurity in Southwark and gaps which exist in tackling it

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Food security is essential for physical and mental health. The inability to ensure access to healthy and nutritious food has the potential to impact every stage of the life spectrum, affecting development, wellbeing and life chances.

This assessment will provide an overview of household food insecurity among Southwark's residents through the following objectives.

- Outlining how food insecurity impacts future health and life chances for our residents
- Estimating the possible extent of food insecurity in the borough
- Highlighting the population groups and geographical areas most at risk of food insecurity
- Mapping the current resources available to help those who are at risk of food insecurity
- Identifying gaps in provision, policy and services
- Recommending how to become a borough that increases its provision of affordable, healthy food.

Its findings were used to inform the borough's first Food Security Action Plan, published in 2019.

Terminology:

Although 'food poverty' and 'food insecurity' are sometimes used as interchangeable terms, we have chosen food insecurity. Consultation with food insecurity groups in Southwark found that they perceived the term 'food poverty' to be stigmatising. 'Food poverty' also fails to take into account those who can afford food, but may be unable to access or prepare it - for example, the elderly, the housebound or those with disabilities. The term 'food insecurity' allows for a broader definition.

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Food insecurity is about the inability to afford or access adequate nutrition and is experienced on a scale

DEFINITION: WHAT IS FOOD INSECURITY?

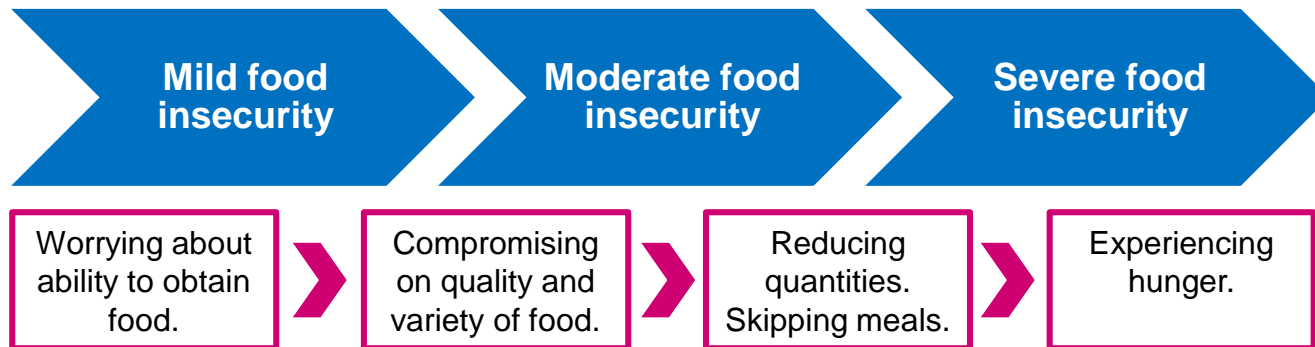
The Food Standards Agency (FSA) defines food insecurity as:

- “Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways [e.g. without resorting to emergency supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies].”

Access to adequate food is internationally recognised as a basic human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

- “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care.”

The United Nation’s Food and Agricultural Organisation created the Food Insecurity Experience Scale to show that food insecurity falls on a continuum:



References

1. Food Standard’s Agency – Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey (2007)
2. UN Declaration Of Human Rights – Article 25 (1948)
3. Food and Agriculture Organisation Of The United Nations - (2015)

Inequalities in diet result in inequalities in health, adding to the disease burden and increasing health costs

THE EFFECTS OF FOOD INSECURITY ON HEALTH

People experiencing food insecurity are likely to have diet-related health problems due to poor nutrition. Stress caused by food insecurity can also adversely affect mental wellbeing.

Poor diet is related to 30% of life years lost to early death and disability.

- One in three cancer deaths and one in two heart disease deaths are caused by poor diet.

Children in food insecure households are more likely to develop asthma, depression and other chronic conditions. Their growth and development are impaired. Learning is poorer, and can affect life chances.

Paradoxically, food insecurity is often associated with overweight and obesity. Explanations include the higher cost of nutritious foods, the stress of living with food insecurity, and physiological adaptations to food restriction. Poor food access increases the risk of low birthweight and stunting in children, which are associated with higher risk of overweight and obesity later in life.

A severely food insecure person is five times more likely to experience anxiety disorders and major depressive episodes than someone who has access to adequate food.

There are financial as well as health costs. It is 2-3 times more expensive to treat someone who is malnourished in the UK, compared to someone who is properly nourished.

References

1. Press – Nutrition and food poverty: a toolkit for those involved in developing or implementing a local nutrition and food poverty strategy. National Heart Forum. London (2004)
2. Food Poverty and Health - Faculty of Public Health (2005)
3. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World – WHO (2018)
4. Jessiman-Perreault & McIntyre - The household food insecurity gradient and potential reductions in adverse population mental health outcomes in Canadian adults - SSM Population Health (2017)
5. PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research – Presented by Professor Valerie Tarasuk at the ENUF Conference, Kings College, London (2018).
6. Elia – The Cost of Malnutrition In England and Potential Cost Savings From Nutritional Interventions. BAPEN/NIHR (2015)

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Food welfare for children is in place, however until now the UK has lacked a broader food security policy.

NATIONAL POLICY

The UK is to have its first National Food Strategy since World War Two. Previously, there had been no overarching policy to tackle food insecurity in the UK. This previously led to UNESCO's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to express concern over *'the lack of adequate measures adopted by the State party [UK] to address the increasing levels of food insecurity, malnutrition, including obesity, and the lack of adequate measures to reduce the reliance on foodbanks'*.

Until now, UK policy has been primarily concerned with food welfare for children.

- Healthy Start is the UK's main food welfare scheme which exists to improve inequalities in diet. It has been running since 2006 and its weekly vouchers entitle low-income families to vouchers for free milk, fruit, vegetables and vitamins. Pregnant women and children under 4 are eligible. Each voucher is worth £4.25 per week. Pregnant women and 1-4 year olds receive 1 voucher per week; infants in their first year of life receive 2 vouchers per week.
- All children in reception and years 1 and 2 in state-funded schools receive a free, hot meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meals policy (2014).
- For older children, all schools, academies and free schools have a duty under the Education Act 1996 (section 512) to provide free school meals to children whose parents receive certain benefits.



References

1. UNESCO's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 6th periodic report on the UK (2016)
2. Image: www.healthystart.nhs.uk

National Food Strategy food security recommendations will benefit more low-income families

NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

The recommendations in the National Food Strategy will have the following positive impacts on food security, if implemented by Government. The measures are predominantly aimed at children and families:

More children will benefit from Healthy Start vouchers, free school meals and free food provision during school holidays

- The age limit for Healthy Start vouchers would be extended from age 4 until 5. The income threshold for eligibility would be raised to £20,000 per household before benefits.
- Free school meal eligibility would be extended to cover all children in households with incomes of £20,000 or below before benefits (the current threshold is £7,400) and all children in households with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). *
- A doubling of the budget for the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme for primary school students.
- Funding for the Government's Holiday Activities and Food programme would continue for at least 3 years, with eligibility extended in line with the new eligibility recommendations for free school meals.

National initiatives to help those on low incomes afford healthier food

- Some of the revenue from the proposed sugar and salt reformulation tax would be used to help get fresh fruit and vegetables to low-income families.
- Providing fruit and vegetables on prescription to help those on low incomes to improve their diet via a 'Community Eatwell' programme.

References

1. National Food Strategy 2021

*NRPF is an immigration status which allows a person to work in the UK but restricts their access to many mainstream benefits drawn from public funds, such as welfare and social housing. Slide 10

London's first Food Strategy since 2006 makes tackling household food insecurity a priority

REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

London's Food Strategy (2018) demonstrates a commitment to improve the capital's food environment and implement strategies to tackle food insecurity. During 2017-2018, ten boroughs (including Southwark in 2018) received Greater London Authority (GLA) funding to develop food insecurity action plans.

- Objective 5.2 of the Mayor's 2018 Health Inequalities Strategy is for 'All Londoners to have access to healthy food'. This will be achieved via the Mayor's Food Strategy. The Health Inequalities Strategy recognises that the diets of those on lower incomes tend to be nutritionally poorer and that those in insecure housing, with mental health problems and low incomes are less likely to be able to afford or access good food.
- The Mayor of London's Food Strategy published at the end of 2018 has 'Good Food At Home and Reducing Food Insecurity' as one of its six target areas. It commits to: provide school holiday meals for low-income families, research long-term solutions to food insecurity, promote the London Living Wage to increase household incomes and measure the prevalence of food insecurity in London. A Food Poverty Profile for each borough has been published annually since 2016, with a pause since the Pandemic. See slide 48 and Appendix 2 for details on Southwark's profile.
- The London Plan 2021 includes a number of policies which prompt local planning authorities to consider the health of Londoners, including access to healthy food. One such policy is concerned with the proliferation of hot food takeaways and states that 'development proposals containing A5 hot food takeaway uses should not be permitted where these are within 400m walking distance of an existing or proposed primary or secondary school'.

References

1. The London Health Inequalities Strategy – GLA 2018
2. London Food Strategy - GLA 2018

3. The London Plan – GLA 2021

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Southwark has a range of policies and strategies which are helpful in tackling local food insecurity

SOUTHWARK POLICY CONTEXT

Southwark has developed a Food Security Action Plan which builds on the vision of the 2018-2022 Council Plan of reducing health inequalities, and our Health In All Policies approach. Additional local strategies and policies which are helpful for tackling food insecurity are listed below. In light of the Pandemic, a number of strategies will need to be reviewed.

Southwark's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (to be refreshed in 2022)

- The strategy sets out a vision to address the wider socio-economic and environmental determinants of health, give children and young people the best start in life, improve wellbeing and resilience, and support older people to live independently.

Access to free food and water

- Free school meals are available for all primary-school children aged 4-11 and free fruit is given to children age 7-11. This differs from national policy which only provides universal free meals for reception, year 1 and year 2.
- The 2018 Council manifesto pledged to extend free, healthy meals to all nursery schools.
- The 2018 manifesto pledged to increase free drinking options with new water fountains for the borough.

Healthy Weight Strategy (2016-2021)

- The Southwark Healthy Weight Strategy sets a framework for taking a whole-systems approach to tackling obesity. This is relevant to food insecurity as levels of obesity are generally higher in areas of deprivation.
- The Healthy Weight Action Plan takes an approach to obesity and good nutrition which considers both the life course and the role of the built environment in Southwark.

Southwark has a range of policies which have a role in tackling food insecurity in the borough

SOUTHWARK POLICY CONTEXT

Economic Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2022)

Boosting financial wellbeing gives households more disposable income for food and other basic necessities.

- Southwark is a London Living Wage borough. All Council staff are paid at least £10.85 per hour. All contractors hired by the Council need to pay their staff this minimum, too.
- The Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022 calls for the following:
 - To prioritise residents furthest from the labour market
 - To support residents to manage welfare reform and benefit caps
 - To promote the London Living Wage to employers across the borough.

The New Southwark Plan (2019-2036)

The New Southwark Plan (NSP), Southwark's spatial planning policy, provides a strong framework to support the delivery of health and wellbeing in Southwark. Once formally adopted, the NSP will introduce a series of Development Management policies aimed at building spaces and places that encourage healthy behaviours. These include:

- An overarching strategic policy recognising the importance of improving health and tackling inequalities
- A takeaway exclusion policy around secondary schools
- Public space design policies that may help to promote food growing activities in residential communal spaces and/or public open green spaces, including parks.
- A policy that stipulates development must encourage healthy eating choices by limiting the availability of unhealthy food and increasing the availability of healthy food.

Southwark has a range of policies which have a role in tackling food insecurity in the borough

SOUTHWARK POLICY CONTEXT

Climate Change Strategy 2021

Southwark has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030. The draft “Tackling Climate Change Together” strategy is based on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It encourages:

- Reducing fuel poverty (a shared goal with food insecurity work)
- Sharing food resources, such as food and utensils at community fridges and making cooking utensils available at tool libraries.
- Protecting community kitchens that got established during the Covid-19 response.
- Providing allotments and growing spaces, including identifying land that can be used for growing.

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Pre-Pandemic, an estimated one in four Southwark residents (75,000 people) may have been food insecure.

ESTIMATING PREVALENCE

In June 2019 results were published from the first London-based survey on food insecurity, which included data for Southwark. The survey, which collected data from 6,601 Londoners, age 16+ showed that 23.5% of the sample (n680) who lived in Southwark were food insecure. This would equate to approximately 75,000 of our residents aged 16+.

The definition of food insecurity used in this survey covers running out of money to buy food, skipping meals or cutting down on quantities eaten due to lack of money and not being able to afford balanced meals.

The survey asked parents additional questions to assess whether their children were food insecure. Findings showed that 25.8% of 0-16 year olds in the borough were food insecure. This equates to over 16,000 Southwark children.

The Southwark food insecurity figures are higher than the London average of 21% for adults and 17.5% for children.

Up until 2019, there had been no local, regional or national measurements of food insecurity. The Government agreed in 2019 to conducting a national survey of food insecurity and results will be published in 2021.

References

1. Food Security In London, City Intelligence – Greater London Authority – June 2019
2. City Intelligence Unit data shared with Southwark Council
3. ONS population figures mid 2018

The Survey of Londoners highlights the large inequalities that existed in food insecurity before the Pandemic

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR SOUTHWARK RESPONDENTS (2019)

Almost a quarter (23%) of Southwark respondents are food insecure, although some groups are much more at risk.

- More black respondents in Southwark were food insecure (46%) than white respondents (9%).
- In Southwark, higher food insecurity was linked to social-renting tenancy and deprivation (44% social renters vs 14% private renters and 8% owner-occupiers).
- In Southwark, being 'often lonely' was linked to increased food insecurity (52%).
- Southwark respondents with dependent children had higher levels of poor food security (44%), compared with respondents without dependents (18%).
- Over half of Southwark unemployed and long-term sick/disabled non-workers had poor food security.
- Southwark workers earning less than £24,300 per year had significantly worse food security than those earning more than £37,900.
- Southwark respondents with burdensome debt had over four-fold food insecurity levels compared with comfortable re-payers.

See Appendix 1 for further analysis.

Reference

1. Greater London Authority 2019. Survey of Londoners

Slide 16

National findings show that 1 in 5 of those clinically extremely vulnerable to Covid-19 have been food insecure

NATIONAL PREVALENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Food Foundation conducted research into the impact of Covid-19 on household food insecurity. 32,475 adults and 2,372 children and young people from nationally representative samples were surveyed. National findings showed that during March 2020-January 2021:

- 9% of households nationally have experienced food insecurity.
- 12% of households with children had experienced food insecurity over the last six months.
- 2.6% of adults have gone a whole day without eating due to the inability to afford or access food.
- The main drivers of food insecurity during 2020-2021 were: not enough money (55%), isolation (31%) and lack of food supply (23%).
- 22% of households have lost income during the Pandemic.
- 2% of adults have lost all their income during the Pandemic.
- Newly vulnerable households have emerged who were financially stable before the Pandemic.
- Less than 2% of the sample have used foodbanks. In a separate survey done by the Food Standards Agency during May-July 2020 , 7-10% of respondents were using foodbanks.
- 21% of those who are clinically extremely vulnerable from Covid-19 were food insecure.

Reference

1. The Food Foundation – A Crisis Within A Crisis – The Impact of Covid-19 on Household Food Insecurity - 2021
2. Food Standards Agency - Covid-19 Consumer Tracker Waves 5 – 8 - 2020.

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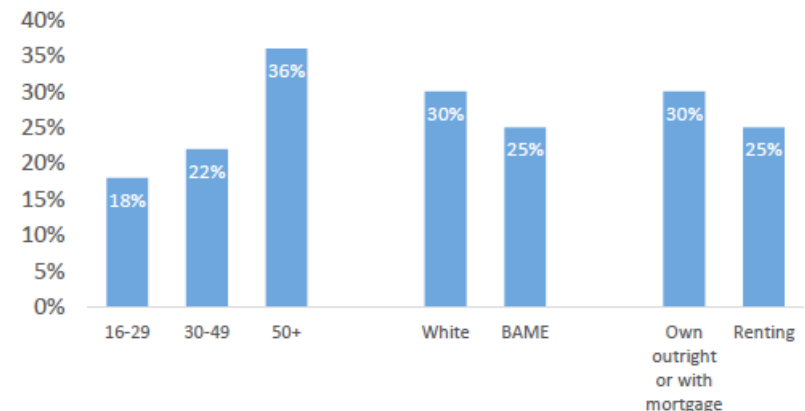
In September 2020, more than 1 in 3 Londoners aged 50+ were unable to access adequate amounts of healthy food

SURVEY OF LONDONERS 2020: THE PANDEMIC

A survey of Londoners conducted in September 2020 (n. 1149), asked questions to highlight levels of food insecurity, based on being able to access adequate amounts of nutritious food:

- 28% of Londoners aged 16+ reported not being able to eat healthy and nutritious food in the last week, compared with 20% in July 2020.
- Londoners aged 50+ were twice as likely to report being unable to eat healthy and nutritious food compared with Londoners aged 16-29.
- White Londoners and owner occupiers are more likely to report being unable to eat healthy and nutritious food in the last week (both 30%) compared with Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic Londoners and renters (both 25%).
- In September 2020, less than 1% of Londoners aged 16+ reported using a food bank in the last 4 weeks, compared with 4% in July.

Proportion of adults who were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food



Base: Sept-20 16-29: 129; 30-49: 363; 50+: 657 White: 676; BAME: 447; Own outright or with mortgage: 817; Renting: 299

Reference

1. University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research 2020 – Understanding Society: Covid-19 Study, 2020.

Southwark's high destitution levels mean that food insecurity levels will be greater than average

DESTITUTION AND FOOD INSECURITY

Nationally, 2.4 million people were destitute in 2019, including 550,000 children. This is a 35% increase since 2017. 1.19% of Southwark's households are destitute. The borough has the 5th highest destitution levels in London and the 23rd highest nationally.

Destitution differs from poverty in that it is more severe and means that people cannot afford the bare minimum needed to eat, stay warm and dry and keep themselves clean.

People are classed as destitute if they have lacked two or more of the essentials listed below in the last month because they have been unable to afford them, or if their income was so low that they could not pay for these things themselves and needed to rely on charity.

Food	Clothes	Toiletries
Heating	Lighting	Shelter

The figures in the Destitution In The UK 2020 report are relevant to food insecurity as the most common essential item lacking was food, with 57% of destitute people having eaten fewer than two meals a day for at least two days in a row. Those who are at the more severe end of the food insecurity scale are likely to be struggling with other essentials, such as fuel payments and basic toiletries. 36% of food insecure Londoners struggle to keep their homes warm in winter.

References

1. Destitution in the UK 2020 – Joseph Rowntree Foundation – 2020 (including appendix F)
2. Destitution in London 2020 – Bramley & Fitzpatrick 2021 Heriot-Watt University
3. Food Security In London, City Intelligence – Greater London Authority – June 2019

Proxy measures suggest that many Southwark residents are at risk of being food insecure

PROXY MEASURES

Proxy measures are another way to assess the scale of food insecurity risk in Southwark. These stand-in measures include: deprivation, fuel poverty, benefit recipients and obesity.

▪ **Poverty and deprivation**

- 1 in 5 Southwark residents live in areas considered the most deprived nationally
- 1 in 4 children live in low-income families
- 1 in 3 people over the age of 60 are income deprived
- 1 in 10 people live in 'fuel poverty', being unable to afford to heat their homes.

▪ **Unemployment, benefits and low income**

- 5.1% of adults of working age are unemployed. This is the 8th highest rate in London
- 9% of residents of working age are receiving benefits
- 1 in 7 employees in Southwark are paid below the London Living Wage (£10.85 per hour).

▪ **Obesity**

- There is a well-researched link between obesity and deprivation. People on a very low income may rely on cheap, calorie dense foods to fill them up. In Camberwell Green ward, 67% of the population are in the most deprived quintile nationally. The ward also had the highest prevalence of obesity in London and the 2nd highest in England for those in Year 6 (2015-16).

References

1. Southwark Council – JSNA Indices of Deprivation 2019
2. Southwark Public Health – Protected Characteristics in Southwark – JSNA Factsheet – Nov 2017
3. Public Health England Fingertips Report Health Profiles 2016
4. www.gov.uk Sub-regional Fuel Poverty Data 2020
5. NOMIS Labour Market Profile Southwark 2020
6. Trust For London – 2017/18
7. National Child Measurement Programme - England, 2015-16

Levels of food insecurity are estimated to be highest within our most deprived communities

MAPPING HIGH RISK AREAS

The map uses two risk factors to assess where food insecurity levels are likely to be highest in the borough. These factors are:

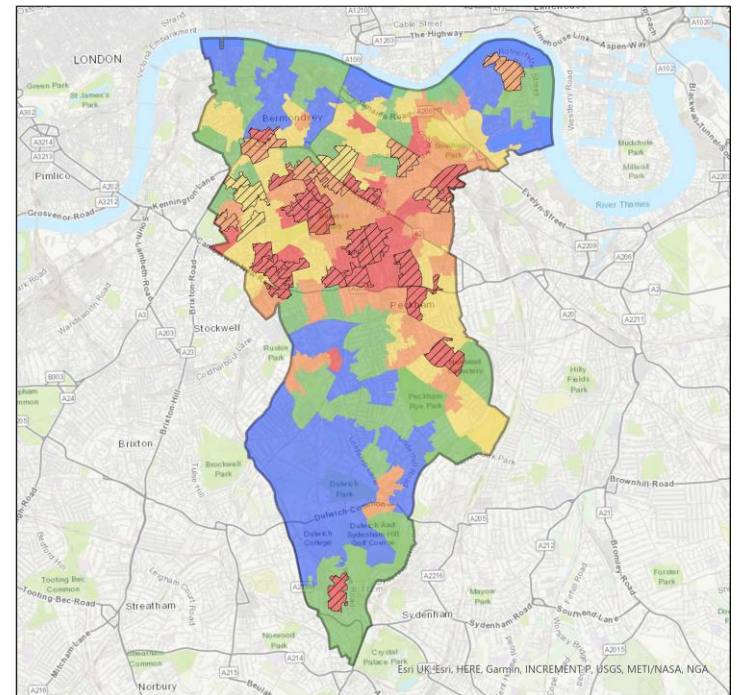
- A high concentration of benefit claimants (shown on the map with diagonal black stripes). These areas have up to 30% of residents claiming benefits.
- A high percentage of the most at risk household types which are: single adults over the age of 65, low-income single adult households and those on low-incomes with dependent children. These are shown on the map in red (23-29% of residents fall into the most at risk categories) and peach (19-23% of residents are in these categories).

By combining both risk factors, the red areas with black stripes show the areas where residents are likely to be at most risk. These are in Old Kent Road, Peckham, Rye Lane, Faraday, South Bermondsey and Walworth wards, and in the south of the borough, the Kingswood Estate. These are areas where deprivation levels are higher.

Identifying these high-risk areas can help to ensure that there is adequate provision in the areas of greatest need. As voluntary responses to food insecurity are likely to spring up in an ad-hoc fashion, based on where volunteers are enthusiastic to start projects, provision may not always geographically match the areas where need is greatest.

References

1. Smith, Thompson et al 2021



Total High Risk Population (%)



% Benefits Claimants

Top quintile of benefits claimants (37.3-49.7%)

Data from 2011 Census, 2020 DWP, 2020 OS, 2019 ONS
High risk includes single adult households if over age 65; low income households of single adults or with dependent children under age 65. Benefits data are from the Pension Age Claimant Group, excluding those claiming State Pension only (May 2020) and the Working Age Claimant Group (May 2020).



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Marginalised and vulnerable groups in Southwark are at higher risk of becoming food insecure

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Income

- Those on benefits (particularly transitioning to Universal Credit)
- Low income workers (part-time, zero hours, seasonal)
- Those in debt and/or with little savings

Household Type

- Single people, particularly men
- Single parents
- Large families

Ethnicity & Legal Status

- Ethnic minorities
- Migrants
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- No Recourse to Public Funds
- Those without English as a first language

Age

- Low-income school-age children and their families during school holidays
- Children of parents age 16-24
- Young people leaving care
- The 50-65 age group
- Older adults

Lifestyle Factors

- Isolation
- Chaotic lifestyles
- Those in poor housing

Health Factors

- Those with disabilities
- Those with mental health conditions
- Those with chronic health conditions

References

1. Left Behind – Is Universal Credit Truly Universal? Trussell Trust 2018
2. Destitution In The UK 2018 – Joseph Rowntree Foundation – 2018
3. Faculty of Public Health – Food Poverty and Health – 2005
4. Financial Insecurity, Food Insecurity and Disability – Loopstra and Lalor – 2017
5. Food Security In London, City Intelligence – Greater London Authority – 2019

* NRPF is an immigration status which allows a person to work in the UK but restricts their access to many mainstream benefits drawn from public funds, such as welfare and social housing.

Insufficient income and NRPF were the reasons for 2 out of 3 referrals to Southwark's main foodbank in 2020/21

REFERRAL REASONS FOR FOOD AID

Research has shown that only 20% of food insecure people will use a foodbank and during the Pandemic only 23% of food insecure people looked for and succeeded in finding help. Reasons for this include: stigma, lack of awareness and problems accessing referrals. This means that foodbank data does not give an accurate picture of the overall extent of food insecurity in Southwark. However, it can tell us more about those in most acute need who have been referred for help.

- 5,408 households used three of Southwark's most established foodbanks in 2019/ 20. This compares to 3,379 households during 2017/18. The data comes from three sources: Southwark Foodbank and Oasis Hub Waterloo Foodbank (both part of the national Trussell Trust network) and the Spring Community Hub (formerly called CSCH), which is an independent foodbank. The overall figure will be higher, as there are many smaller, independent foodbanks working in the borough .
- During April-Nov 2020, the Southwark Foodbank, which is the borough's largest foodbank, had assisted 5,485 households. This compares to 1,492 households for the same time period in 2019-20 – an increase of 368%
- The Southwark Foodbank records data on the reason for referral. For April-Nov 2020, the top 4 reasons for referral were: low income (48%), NRPF (17%), sickness (13%), debt (10%). In 2019-20, low income was also the largest reason for referral (28%), followed by debt (15%), benefit delays (15%), NRPF(12%). Benefit changes and delays with Universal Credit accounted for 1 in 4 referrals, during 2018/19 and 2019/20. However, since the Pandemic, this has decreased to 1 in 7 referrals.

* No Recourse To Public Funds (NRPF) is an immigration status which allows a person to work in the UK but restricts their access to many mainstream benefits drawn from public funds, such as welfare and social housing.

References

1. Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2015
- 2 The Food Foundation, The Impact of Covid-19 on Household Food Insecurity, 2021
3. Smith et al – Identifying Population Areas At Greatest Risk of Household Food Insecurity in England – Applied Geography, vol 91 – 2018
3. Data from Southwark Foodbank, Spring Community Hub and Oasis Foodbank

High living costs and low salaries put those in low-paid, insecure and part-time jobs at risk of food insecurity

VULNERABLE GROUPS - INCOME: LOW-PAID WORKERS

Declining or stagnant incomes combined with rising living costs mean that many households are struggling to get by. In Southwark, households are likely to be extra squeezed by high London housing costs. Southwark residents will spend 52.1% of their median monthly income on rent (compared to a national average of 24.1%).

- The poorest 10% of English households would need to spend 74% of their disposable income on food to meet the Government's nutritional guidelines, as set out in the NHS's Eatwell Plate. This makes a healthy diet unaffordable for many.
- 52% of households with children are unable to afford a 'socially acceptable diet' as defined by the Minimum Income Standard. This applies to a diet which is both healthy and allows social participation (e.g. inviting guests for dinner or going out occasionally to a restaurant for a celebration).
- Those with insecure, variable or lower incomes are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. This includes freelancers, seasonal workers, those on zero-hours contracts and part-time workers. 60% of food insecure Londoners are either in part-time or full-time work. In 2021, 40% of those claiming Universal Credit in Southwark are working, but with low earnings.
- Data from the Community Support Alliance (which combines data from the eight main food hubs involved in Southwark's Pandemic response) showed that low income was the largest reason for referral during October 2020-March 2021, accounting for 45% of foodbank referrals.

References

1. Trust For London – London Rent As A Percentage of Gross Pay - 2020
2. Food Foundation – The Broken Plate – 2019
3. O'Connell et al – Which Types Of Family Are At Risk Of Food Poverty In The UK? A Relative Deprivation Approach – Social Policy and Society February 2018
4. Food Security In London, City Intelligence – Greater London Authority – June 2019
5. DWP StatExplore 2021
6. Community Hub and Food Hub internal data July 2021

35% of destitute households in London have no income at all after housing costs. 45% have less than £70 per week

VULNERABLE GROUPS – INCOME: THE DESTITUTE

440,000 Londoners experienced destitution in 2019, including 60,000 children. Destitution is defined by lacking two or more of the following in the previous month: food, clothes, shelter, toiletries, heating, lighting. This would be due to an inability to afford these items, or having to rely on charity to provide the items due to low income.

- 35% of destitute households in London have no income at all.
- 45% of those who are destitute have less than £70 per week of income after housing costs to live on.
- 47% of heads of destitute households in London are UK born,
- Destitution disproportionately affects migrant households. 55,000 destitute Londoners are migrants. 47% of those with no income at all were migrants. The majority of destitute migrants are from sub-Saharan Africa (24%), followed by the new EU (8%) and South Asia (7%). There is high need among the sub-Saharan African population for charitable assistance and in-kind support.
- 62% of destitute households are single-person households
- 50% of destitute households are female headed
- 30% of destitute Londoners are aged under 25. With young people more at risk of destitution, the Destitution In London study recommends having support in youth-friendly settings, as this age group is less likely to use foodbanks.
- 45% of destitute Londoners are homeless. 17% are in unsuitable temporary accommodation. 7% are rough sleepers.

References

1 Destitution In London 2020 – Bramley & Fitzpatrick 2021, Heriot-Watt University

Slide 27

Welfare reforms have left benefit claimants vulnerable to food insecurity, debt and health problems

VULNERABLE GROUPS - INCOME: UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANTS

Those who had been on Universal Credit (UC) before the Pandemic were three times more likely to be food insecure during the first 6 months of the Pandemic than those who were not previous claimants. This illustrates the financial fragility of this group.

Benefit changes and delays with Universal Credit accounted for 1 in 4 referrals to the Southwark Foodbank (the borough's largest foodbank), during 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Southwark was particularly affected by the introduction of Universal Credit as it was one of the first local authorities to have full service rollout. The following differences to the old system proved problematic.

- **Paid monthly, rather than weekly.** Those who are used to budgeting weekly could find themselves short of money at the end of the month.
- **All benefits paid together as one lump sum.** The recipient is responsible for paying rent from their monthly payment, if they receive housing benefit. This means that after rent is paid there may be little money left for living expenses.
- **A 5-week period without benefit income after applying for UC as it is paid in arrears.** Many of those receiving benefits do not have savings to tide them over during this transition period.

A 2018 Trussell Trust survey on the impact of Universal Credit rollout among foodbank users (n. 284) found that the transition to Universal Credit had put 70% of respondents in debt; 35% of the sample waited more than 6 weeks for their first UC payment and 57% of respondents said that they had experienced mental or physical health issues as a result of the wait for their first payment.

References

1. The Food Foundation – A Crisis Within A Crisis – The Impact of Covid 19 on Household Food Insecurity - 2021
2. Left Behind – Is Universal Credit Truly Universal? Trussell Trust 2018

The Universal Credit switch has left single person households particularly vulnerable to food insecurity

VULNERABLE GROUPS – HOUSEHOLD TYPE: SINGLE PEOPLE

Single people on benefits without children are particularly vulnerable during the migration to Universal Credit, as they do not have a partner's income or child benefit to sustain them during the transitional period. Single person households were also the first group to experience full rollout to Universal Credit.

62% of destitute households in London are single person households. Destitution is defined as having insufficient income to afford two or more of the following in the last month: food, heating, lighting, clothing, toiletries, shelter.

Data from the Southwark Foodbank (n. 3,344 households) showed that single people now make up the largest household type using the foodbank, accounting for 58% of referrals in 2019-20. Single parents used to be the largest household type using the foodbank. Yet, in 2019-20 they only accounted for 23% of referrals.

Pandemic Update: Numbers of Universal Credit claimants in Southwark double during 2020

In December 2020, 43,000 Southwark households were claiming Universal Credit - that figure having doubled since January 2020. The Pandemic has severely impacted the tourism, hospitality and entertainment sectors which make up a disproportionately large part of London's (and Southwark's) economy.

The new Universal Credit cohort differs from that from before the Pandemic in a number of ways. Claimants in Southwark are more likely to be younger, single, from minority ethnic groups, without dependent children, living in private rented accommodation or without housing costs and to have higher levels of educational qualifications.

References

1. Left Behind – Is Universal Credit Truly Universal? Trussell Trust 2018
2. Destitution In London 2020 – Bramley & Fitzpatrick, Heriot-Watt University 2021
3. DWP Stat Explore 2020

Those with no home or who living in inadequate housing are at higher risk of being food insecure

VULNERABLE GROUPS – LIFESTYLE FACTORS: POOR HOUSING

Rough sleepers, the homeless, vulnerable people in the private rented sector (particularly those in houses in multiple occupation) and those in temporary accommodation and are at higher risk of food insecurity. As well as financial circumstances putting these groups at risk, there may also be a lack of safe, adequate space for storing and cooking food.

Rough sleepers: 567 rough sleepers were identified in the borough in 2020/21 – a rise of 84% since 2017/18

- 62% were new rough sleepers.
- 50% had been evicted or asked to leave their previous accommodation. A rise from 30% in 2019/20
- 29% had previously been living with friends and family. 26% had been in the private rented sector
- 52% of the rough sleepers were UK born. 27% were from other European countries (with 19% coming from Central or Eastern Europe). 17% were from Africa.

The Southwark Homeless Needs audit interviewed 53 homeless people. 21% said they only ate one meal a day. 45% of the sample said they had used foodbanks.

Private rented sector: Only half of all privately owned or rented properties in Southwark were estimated to be of decent standard (2006 survey). Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) have among the poorest quality standards, posing a risk to physical and mental health. This can include overcrowded conditions, poor quality kitchens (often shared) and little storage space for food. Additional problems can exist for vulnerable tenants and families using shared kitchens in terms of safety and food security.

References

1. CHAIN report 2019/20 and 2020/21
2. Southwark Homeless Health Needs Audit 2016
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

Those with no home or who live in inadequate housing are at higher risk of being food insecure

VULNERABLE GROUPS – LIFESTYLE FACTORS: POOR HOUSING

Temporary accommodation: The numbers of residents in temporary accommodation (as given in quarter 1 of each year) has increased by 59% between 2017 and 2021.

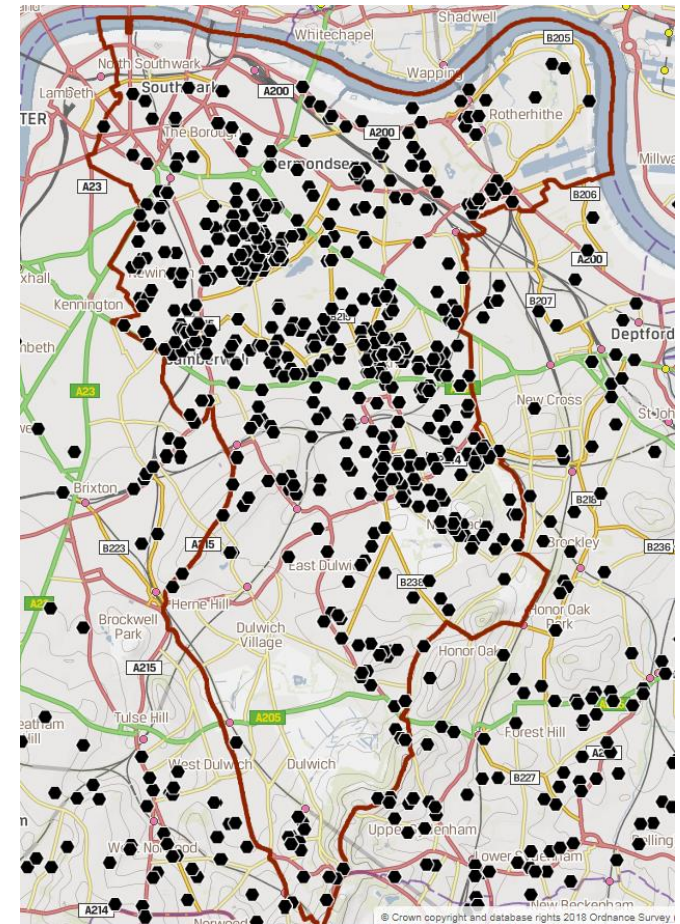
Year	Number of residents in temporary accommodation at the end of Q.1
2017-2018	1991
2018-2019	2473
2019-2020	2591
2020-2021	3013
2021-2022	3170

The increase in the use of temporary accommodation is a result of the insecure nature and unaffordability of the private rented sector. 43% of those who found themselves homeless in Southwark between April 2020 and Jun 2020 were staying with friends or family who could no longer accommodate them. Domestic abuse was the reason for 16% of homelessness in this time period.

The average length of stay in temporary accommodation (taken from quarter 1) is 22 months. The Council has a target of 30 months. During this time, some may not have adequate facilities for storing or preparing food, increasing their risk of being food insecure.

References

1. www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness
2. Internal audit – Housing Solutions – Southwark Council



Migrants are particularly vulnerable as they may be receiving either low levels of benefits or no benefits at all

VULNERABLE GROUPS – ETHNICITY AND LEGAL STATUS: NRPF

Those with leave to remain in the UK but with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) have an immigration status which allows them to live and work in the UK, but without access to most benefits paid by the state. This means that there is no safety net if they lose their job, are unable to work or become homeless. In these circumstances, it falls on local authorities to assess whether they are eligible for support under the Children Act 1989 or Care Act 2014.

As of December 2020, the Council was supporting 282 households with NRPF who were assessed as eligible for this support: 148 families and 134 single adults. The main nationalities being supported were Nigerian nationals (46%), Sierra Leonean nationals (8%) and Jamaican nationals (8%).

NRPF also applies to people who are unlawfully in the UK (either through overstaying a visa or entering the country illegally). The overall number of people with NRPF in the borough is unknown. The Pandemic highlighted the high need for food among this group. Data from the Community Support Alliance (which combines data from the eight main food hubs involved in Southwark's Pandemic response) showed that NRPF was the second largest reason for needing help from a foodbank, accounting for 32% of referrals.

People with NRPF are vulnerable to food insecurity. They are also limited in what help is available to them through statutory routes:

- Free childcare is not available. This takes many women with NRPF out of the workforce – impacting family income and leaving single parents with NRPF without income and at high risk of food insecurity.

References

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups> (accessed 8/2/2021)
2. Community Hub and Food Hub internal data July 2021

One in three children in London have problems concentrating at school due to hunger

VULNERABLE GROUPS - AGE: CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Food insecurity impacts children's future health. It increases the risk of developing asthma, depression and suicidal tendencies. 80% of paediatricians surveyed in London said that food insecurity contributed 'very much' to the ill health of the children they work with. Nationally,

A third of London children have problems concentrating at school due to hunger.

- This equates to almost 13,700 Southwark children.

Locally, a high percentage of foodbank recipients are children

- 44% of those fed by Spring Community Hub's foodbank in 2019/20 were children.
- 37% of those fed by the Southwark Foodbank in 2019/20 were children.

London children who are food insecure are more likely to have parents who are:

- In the lowest income quartile (41%)
- Disabled (39%)
- Socially isolated (49%)
- Single parents (36%)
- Age 16-24 (70%)

References

1. Kirkpatrick et al. Child hunger and long-term adverse consequences for health. Archives of Paediatric and Adolescent Medicine 2010;164(8):754-62.
2. McIntyre et al. Depression and suicide ideation in late adolescence and early adulthood are an outcome of child hunger. Journal of Affective Disorders 2012;150(1):123-9.
3. McIntyre et al. The pervasive effect of youth self-report of hunger on depression over 6 years of follow up. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology. 2017;52:537-47.2
4. Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health: Views From The Frontline 2017
5. GLA/ IPSOS MORI – Child Hunger in London - 2013
6. Office for National Statistics population data mid-year 2017
7. Food Security In London, City Intelligence – Greater London Authority – 2019

The number of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased significantly during the Pandemic

VULNERABLE GROUPS - AGE: FAMILIES DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

34% of all Southwark pupils are now entitled to free school meals. This compares to 26% before the Pandemic showing a rise in levels of need among families in the borough.

School Census data	Spring 2020	Summer 2021
TOTAL Southwark pupil roll	43,659	43,481
Total FSM eligible	11,547	14,737
Nursery FSM	172	251
Primary FSM	6271	8098
Secondary FSM	4747	5977
Special FSM	332	378
PRU FSM	25	33
% FSM eligible of total roll	26%	34%

Table 1 – Free School Meal eligibility in Southwark pupils 2020-2021

In 2021, Southwark ranked 5th out of the 33 London Local Authorities for having the highest percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

References

1. School Census – Spring 2021

Low-income families are at greater risk of food insecurity during the school holidays

VULNERABLE GROUPS - AGE: FAMILIES DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

School holidays are hard for low-income families whose children are reliant on their free school meal.

- Nationally, 41% of households with children eligible for free school meals had experienced food insecurity during the Pandemic.
- For parents earning under £25,000, one third skip meals during the holidays so that their children can eat. Half of parents earning below £15,000, skip meals to feed their children in the holidays.

As well as holiday time putting extra financial pressure on parents, children from low-income families can have a holiday experience gap – being less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health; and more likely to experience social isolation.

The plight of low-income families during school holidays received widespread public attention in 2020 through the high-profile campaigning work of footballer Marcus Rashford MBE who set up the Child Food Poverty Task Force and made demands on the Government to expand the provision of free meals and activities during school holidays.

References

1. The Food Foundation – A Crisis Within A Crisis – The Impact of Covid-19 on Household Food Insecurity - 2021
2. Poverty and Social Exclusion UK – The Impoverishment of the UK - 2017
3. Ensuring Children’s Access To Food 365 Days A Year – Sustain – March 2018
4. Counting The Costs 2018 UK Report – Contact (For Families With Disabled Children) – 2018

Government funding enables more vulnerable children to be fed during school holidays

VULNERABLE GROUPS - AGE: FAMILIES DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS (CTD)

The Department of Education funded a programme of research and pilot schemes from 2018 -2020 to evaluate the effectiveness of free school holiday food schemes around the country over a 4-week period in the summer holidays. This pilot included a programme in Southwark in 2020.

The holiday activities and food programme was expanded across the whole of England in 2021. Local authorities received funding for 6 weeks of provision to be spread across the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. Free places were made available to those eligible for benefits-related free school meals. The scaling up of activity with the Government funding received since 2020 can be seen in the chart below.

Southwark Activity	2019	2020	2021
Number of hubs	5	35	46
Number of Children	1,258	2,115	3,654
Number of Meals	5,288	103,707	121,637

Table 2 – Free school holiday food provision in Southwark hubs 2019-2021

With over 14,700 pupils entitled to free school meals, as of summer 2021, there are still some 11,200 pupils who could potentially benefit from additional food support during school holidays.

References

- 1) Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2021> (accessed 23/12/20)
- 2) Data from Kitchen Social and Southwark Council

1 in 10 over 65s are at risk of malnutrition nationally. That equates to 2,710 of Southwark's older residents

VULNERABLE GROUPS - AGE: THE ELDERLY

10% of over 65 year olds in the UK are either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition. This compares to a prevalence of 1.8% for malnutrition in the general population.

Although food insecurity is only one factor that can contribute to malnutrition in older adults, it is an important driver. Bereavement, ill health and social isolation can lead to older people losing interest in food, while increasing frailty can make it harder for older people to access and prepare food.

An Age UK report found that 11% of over 65s find it difficult to get to a corner shop and 12% find it difficult to get to their local supermarket. BAPEN surveys found that 32% of over 65s are at risk of malnutrition when admitted to hospital. Need in this population can be hidden as due to mobility issues, pride and not wishing to be a burden, older adults are under-represented at foodbanks.

If the national malnutrition rate for older adults, of 1 in 10, is applied to Southwark, where 27,100 adults are aged 65 and above, 2,710 older adults may be malnourished or at risk of malnutrition in the borough.

Due to reduced Government funding combined with the increased demands of a growing older population, Southwark Council decommissioned the wider Meals on Wheels service in 2018 and now targets its assistance to older people in the greatest need. The 65+ population is set to grow in the borough by 13,700 by 2030 – an increase of 51%.

References

1. Malnutrition Task Force. State Of The Nation – Older people and Malnutrition In the UK Today (2017)
2. British Association For Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
3. Hidden Hunger And Malnutrition In The Elderly – APPG on Hunger 2018
4. AGE UK Agenda For Later Life Survey 2015
5. TNS for Age UK 2013
6. ONS Local Authority Estimates by SYOA 2019

Those with mental health conditions, disabilities or long-term illness are at high risk of being food insecurity

VULNERABLE GROUPS - HEALTH FACTORS

Those with mental health conditions, long-term health problems and disabilities may have reduced ability to work, which will affect household income, putting these residents and their families at greater risk of becoming food insecure.

People with disabilities and people experiencing ill health: A national survey (n. 32,475) showed that those who were limited a lot by health conditions or disabilities were five times more likely to be food insecure than those with neither. Another national study (n.413) showed that 50% of households using foodbanks had a disabled member and 75% had a member experiencing ill health. A 2018 survey revealed that 33% of families with disabled children had taken out a loan to buy food. 15% of people living in inner London have a disability, equating to a potential 47,900 people in Southwark.

People with mental health problems: A national study (n. 413) showed that 1 in 3 households using foodbanks had a member with a mental health condition. Pre-Pandemic (2019), The Dragon Cafe was the only community cafe in Southwark catering to those with mental health needs who are food insecure. It was only open one day a week and closed during August. In 2014, mental health charity CoolTan Arts did research to assess the feasibility of setting up a community kitchen in Southwark. Of the 48 Southwark residents with mental health problems that were surveyed, only 12 had working cookers.

Before the Pandemic, there was no provision for delivering foodbank parcels to the homes of those who are disabled or in poor health. There is likely to be unmet need and higher levels of food insecurity among both of these groups in Southwark.

References

1. The Food Foundation – A Crisis Within A Crisis – The Impact of Covid-19 on Household Food Insecurity - 2021
2. Financial insecurity, food insecurity and disability – Loopstra and Lalor 2017
3. Counting The Costs 2018 UK Report – Contact (For Families With Disabled Children) - 2018
4. DWP Family Resources Survey, 2018-2019 4 ONS Local Authority Estimates by SYOA – mid 2019

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Lack of access to affordable, nutritious food is an important factor in food insecurity

FOOD DESERTS AND THE POVERTY PREMIUM

A 'food desert' is a geographical area where there is a lack of accessible options for buying fresh, nutritious, affordable food. Residents at risk of food insecurity are normally disproportionately hit by the effects of food deserts as they lack the funds for bus fares or cars to travel to competitively priced supermarkets further afield. 85% of those earning under £150 per week in the UK do not have access to a car. Residents at risk of food insecurity may also have disabilities or health problems which prevent them from walking far to go shopping.

The poverty premium

Generally, people in 'food deserts' rely on convenience stores and corner shops where prices are higher than in competitively priced supermarket chains and the range of fresh, healthy foods is less. Typically, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents and low-income families are more likely to live in areas with fewer supermarkets and more convenience stores. A Southwark shopping basket study compared the prices of 21 healthy, culturally appropriate food items across 7 supermarkets in the borough and 18 convenience stores in areas of Southwark that have been marked as potential food deserts.



21 items cost £17.59 at the cheapest supermarket. The median price was £23.45



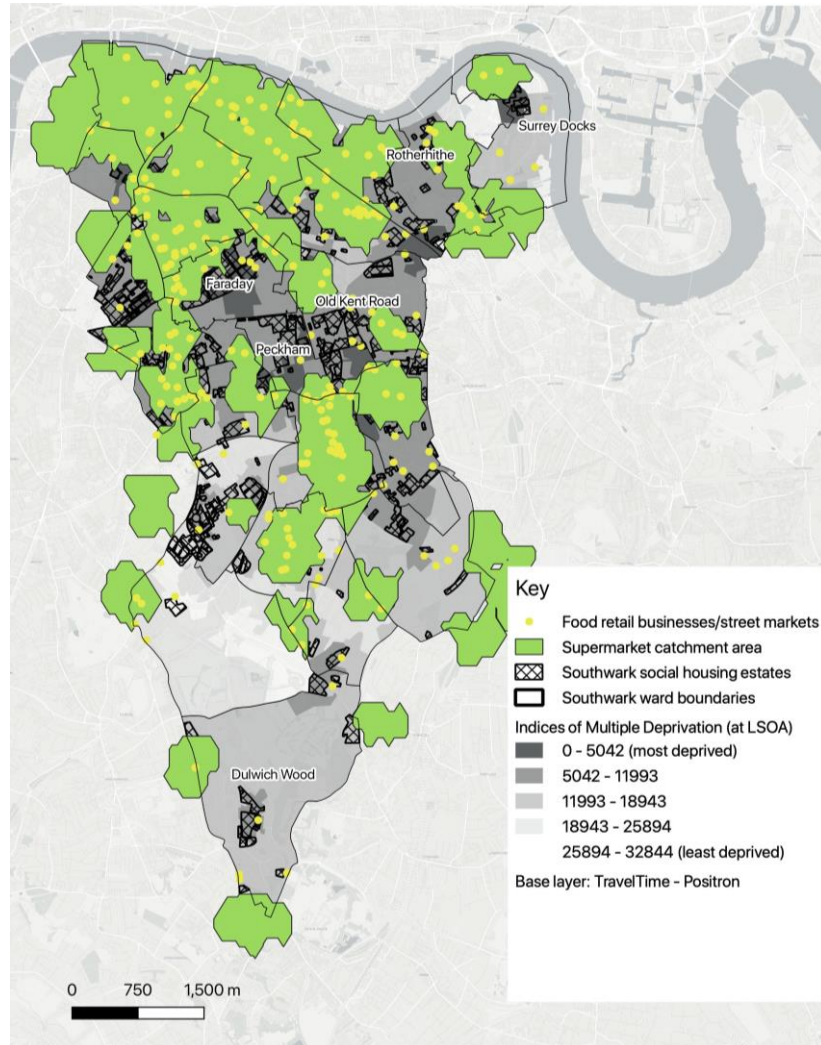
The same items cost £58.30 at the most expensive convenience store in a food desert area. The median price was £46.44.

The most expensive basket was more than three times more costly than the cheapest basket. This is known as the 'poverty premium' where the most socio-economically disadvantaged pay more for goods.

References

1. Walking The Breadline: The Scandal of Food Poverty in 21st Century Britain. Oxfam. Church Action on Poverty. 2013.
2. Southwark Healthy Basket Study – Reid, S. - 2020
3. Gustafson et al. – Measures of the consumer food store environment: a systematic review of the evidence – Journal of Community Health - 2012

Pockets of food deserts appear to exist in Southwark, including in some of the borough's most deprived areas



MAPPING METHODOLOGY

Various parts of Southwark have high deprivation, a high concentration of housing estates and are outside of the green supermarket catchment areas on the map. These potential food deserts include areas around Faraday and the Old Kent Road in North Peckham, the Rennie estate and surrounding estates in South Bermondsey, Downtown Estate North and South in the Rotherhithe/ Surrey Docks area and Kingswood Estate in the south of the borough in Dulwich Wood ward.

- **Method:** Southwark Council's Food Safety team provided location data for supermarkets and street markets. The rationale being that this is where fresh, healthy food is most affordable. Maltby Street, Spa Terminus and North Cross Road markets were excluded as their produce is high end and they are only open 1-3 days per week. The green on the map shows areas within a maximum 6 minute walk of a supermarket or street market (500m at 6km/hour). The darker the area, the higher the deprivation level.

Small, retail interventions with food education and healthy food subsidies may be more effective than supermarkets

INCREASING ACCESS IN FOOD DESERTS

Although supermarket chains are used as a proxy for the availability of healthy, affordable food, creating more supermarkets is not necessarily the best solution for encouraging food desert residents to buy more fresh fruit and vegetables.

American studies have shown that opening large supermarkets in food desert areas did not change the fruit and vegetable intake or quality of the diet of local people. Evidence suggests that small, local interventions run in partnership with food education projects, along with means-tested subsidies for healthy food provide a more effective way to both tackle food insecurity and improve health outcomes. Several models exist for this kind of intervention:

- **Community markets** which target vulnerable populations either through location (e.g. on a housing estate) or through accepting vouchers, such as Healthy Start, aimed at low-income households.
- **Mobile shops or stalls.** This solution works well where shop rent is expensive. It also gives local authorities a low-cost way to bring fresh produce into food desert areas. The mobile shop drives its affordable, fresh food to set locations during the week, with its visits coinciding with nutrition or cooking classes.
- **Online shopping** can overcome transport barriers, however it is unsuitable for many low-income groups due to delivery fees, access to digital payment methods and lack of internet access or literacy.
- **Encourage corner shops** to stock more affordably priced, good quality fruit and vegetables. This will need to be coupled with community engagement to ensure that there is demand.

References

1. Food Deserts: Increasing Access To Healthy and Affordable Food – Local Government Information Unit – 2019
2. Fast Food Restaurants and Food Stores – Longitudinal Young To Middle-Aged Adults: The CARDIA Study – JAMA Internal Medicine – Boone Heinonen et al 2011
3. Food Deserts and The Causes of Nutritional Inequality – National Bureau of Economic Research – Alcott et al 2018

Supermarket pricing and promotion strategies can increase healthy buying among low-income customers

COLLABORATION FOR HEALTHIER LIVES

Low-income families spend 76% of their food budget in supermarkets. In 2019-20 Southwark and Lambeth were the pilot sites for a 12-month trial conducted by the Collaboration For Healthier Lives (UK) to see how large retailers and manufacturers could influence supermarket customers to make healthier choices by sharing marketing and behavioural and marketing insights.

200 stores participated across the two boroughs and 34 interventions took place. The interventions which did impact on the healthiness of consumer shopping baskets included:

- **Pricing and promotion:** 13% more fruit and veg sold and 72% more lower-sugar baked beans sold
- **Availability:** 19% fewer regular chips from McCains compared to their new low-fat version
- **Positioning:** 22% fewer packets of confectionery sold when moved off a prominent display.

An intervention using both price and Disney collectable cards (branding with cartoon characters is shown to push up sales) led to a 387% increase in fruit and vegetable sales at Sainsburys, however this increase was not sustained once the intervention was over.

The conclusion is that multiple interventions are needed at one time and need to be scaled up and sustained. Big retailers and manufacturers need to continue collaborating and learning from one another. There is also a call for stronger regulation from Government.

References

1. Can Supermarkets Help Turn The Tide On Obesity – Collaboration For Healthier Lives In The UK (CHL-UK) 2020

'Food swamps' are areas with a high density of takeaway outlets selling high-calorie, low-nutrient food

MAPPING TAKEAWAYS

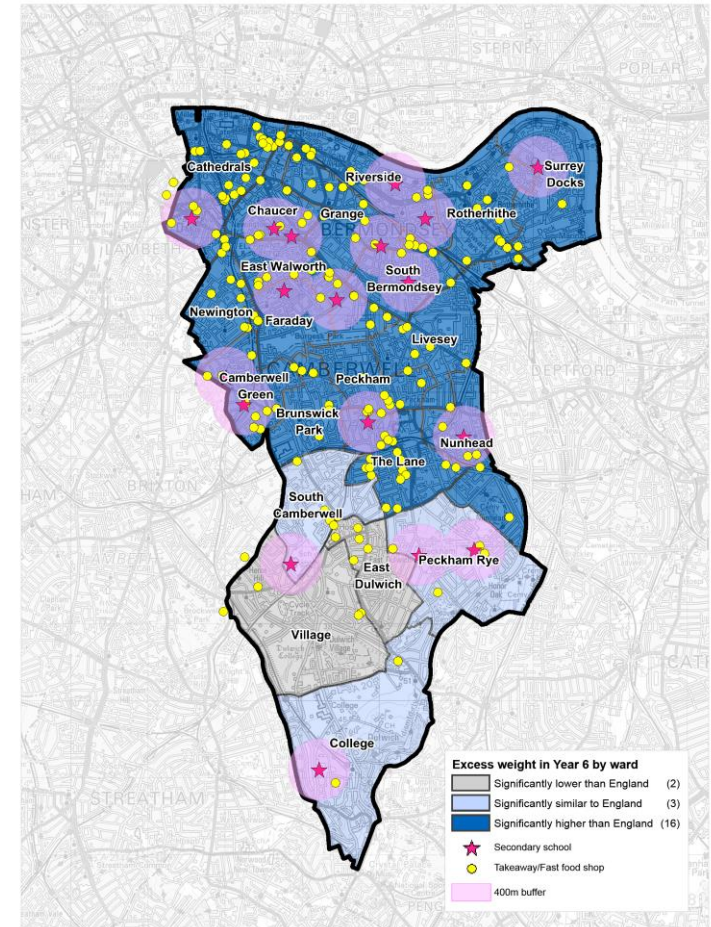
'Food swamps' are areas where there is a high density of establishments selling fast and junk food in relation to healthy options.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents, as well as those on low incomes are more likely to live near unhealthy food retailers. American evidence has linked food swamps to an increased risk of obesity, particularly when residents are less mobile and there is greater income inequality. This puts those groups who are vulnerable to food insecurity at greater risk of obesity and diet-related disease.

The map shows the relationship in Southwark between obesity levels in year six students and concentration of fast-food takeaway outlets. The map shows a clear north-south divide in the borough in both obesity levels and numbers of fast food outlets, with the north having high levels of both.

When there is a lack of good access to affordable, healthy food (such as in food desert areas) and residents are living in a 'food swamp', they may become reliant on takeaway meals.

For those without access to good kitchen facilities, such as those in temporary accommodation, takeaway food is sometimes the only option, making the healthy choice a harder one.



Proximity of takeaways to secondary schools with excess weight in Year 6

Data source: Food Standards Agency, Public Health England
Southwark Public Health Department | People & Health Intelligence | publichealth@southwark.gov.uk
September 2018.
© Crown copyright and database rights 2018. Ordnance Survey (0)100019252

References

1. Cooksey-Stowers et. al – Food Swamps Predict Obesity Better Than Food Deserts In The United States – International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health - 2017

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Southwark organisations recognise that food insecurity needs to be addressed at multiple levels

LOCAL RESPONSE: THE THREE-TIER MODEL

Local food insecurity organisations created the following model to explain how responses are needed at different levels in Southwark to tackle food insecurity. The rest of this section will highlight examples of how food insecurity is being tackled locally in each of the tiers.

Wider determinants: Solving structural and policy issues that cause food insecurity, such as poor access to affordable, healthy food and insufficient income (e.g. poor wages, benefit cuts and zero hours contracts). This can be done through local authority policy in areas such as planning, regeneration, local economy and public health – and through using evidence at the local level to advocate for national policy change.

Building resilience: Empowering and upskilling people through teaching cooking, nutrition and growing skills. Getting people into work. Creating food co-ops and community cafes. Redistributing surplus food, building a local, food economy.

Crisis provision:
Emergency food aid.

Example intervention: Southwark Council introduced universal free school meals for all primary school children in 2013.

Example intervention: As part of the Great Estates programme, grow your own projects are running on 10 estates.

Example intervention: During the Pandemic, the Council's Community Hub organised food parcels for shielding residents.

References

1. Southwark Food Action Alliance steering group - 2018

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Local authority policy can influence the wider determinants that lead to food insecurity

THE LONDON FOOD POVERTY PROFILE

The London Food Poverty Profile (a joint initiative of the Greater London Authority and Sustain) is a regional measure for tracking efforts made by London's councils to tackle food insecurity and its wider determinants.

Local authorities submit data on 10 policy areas under council control which can improve equality and food security if acted on. These measures, which are shown on the right, span many different sectors, showing that food insecurity is a multifaceted problem requiring collaboration from a broad range of partners.

In 2020, the profile league table was suspended due to the Pandemic. Instead, Southwark was one of 8 councils to receive a special mention: *'We highlight the following London councils for their leadership in local authority food responses to Covid-19: Tower Hamlets, Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Waltham Forest, Greenwich, Croydon, and Lewisham. There is much to learn from the joined up approaches to food in these boroughs, where numerous and impressive initiatives have been supported.'*

In 2019, Southwark won an award for placing 3rd in London for its response, scoring 67% (The highest score of 69% went to Islington). Appendix 2 contains detailed information of the borough's progress in 2019. Year on year since 2016, Southwark has improved when the borough scored 40% (placing 19th). Southwark won an award for improvement in 2017 with a score of 57% (7th overall) and ranked joint 5th in 2018.

The London Food Poverty Profile tracks progress on these policy areas

Food Poverty Action Plan

Free School Meals

Healthy Start

Physical Access

Baby Friendly

Meals On Wheels

Children's Services

Living Wage

Holiday Hunger

Council Tax Reduction

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2019 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
2. Response, Resilience and Recovery 2020 – Sustain/ GLA

Southwark has taken many measures to improve. A gap still exists with Meals on Wheels provision.

IMPROVEMENTS AND GAPS

Some of the measures that Southwark has taken to tackle food insecurity include:

- Implementing a borough-wide Food Security Action Plan with 80 actions spread across five areas
- Promoting Healthy Start and Alexandra Rose vouchers to low-income pregnant women and families
- Offering food activities, such as healthy cooking classes, at Children's Centres
- Having some free food and activity provision for low-income children during the school holidays
- Providing Universal free school meals to all primary school students
- Using planning, regeneration, retail and housing policy to improve access to affordable, healthy food
- Being a London Living Wage Place
- Adopting a cross-sector approach to fuel poverty
- Having a hardship fund
- Keeping the minimum Council Tax payment at 15% since 2013

GAPS:

1) Southwark Council does not provide a Meals on Wheels service. This means that potential is lost for add-on services, such as nutritional advice, befriending and signposting. This may leave a gap in protecting older, housebound and less mobile adults against food insecurity and loneliness. The Pandemic also showed the need for the delivery of affordable, nourishing, prepared meals for those who are unable to shop or cook for themselves.

2) The future focus of this work will take a food systems approach and encompass sustainability and food, creating stronger links between the food security and climate change agendas.

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2019 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
2. Response, Resilience and Recovery 2020 – Sustain/ GLA

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Resilience works at a personal, community and systems level to improve food security in the longer term

LOCAL RESPONSE: BUILDING PERSONAL RESILIENCE

Resilience building, along with tackling wider determinants, provides a preventive approach to creating greater food security. It works at a personal, community and systems level.

Personal resilience is the upskilling of individuals. This can include improving people's life circumstances through boosting their income and employment prospects. It also includes enhancing food-related skills, such as how to shop on a budget, cook healthily and grow vegetables. There are numerous agencies and organisations in Southwark undertaking this work:

- Citizens' Advice Bureau gives support with Universal Credit claims.
- The Council's Local Support Team's income maximisation service helped individuals access £4.5m of unclaimed benefits in 2019-20.
- The public health team mapped 11 providers offering basic cooking skills in the borough in September 2019. These include general classes, as well as those aimed at a specialist audience such as: parents of young families, school children, adults with learning disabilities, youth groups, those who are on low incomes, older adults, the visually impaired and those from diverse ethnic communities
- The Council has created a gardening co-ordinator post to develop and support community growing projects (including on estates), to map growing spaces and create a network for growers in the borough.

Southwark has an active community sector with many organisations working across sectors on food insecurity

LOCAL RESPONSE: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Community resilience involves empowering communities to form strong alliances and networks around food to increase voluntary sector capacity.

There are a range of initiatives in Southwark that are working to build community resilience:

- The Southwark Food Action Alliance (SFAA) is an independent, borough-wide, cross-sector partnership working together to tackle food insecurity. As of July 2021, its membership stood at 130. Members includes the Council, health practitioners, voluntary and community organisations, academics and faith groups. The SFAA was established in September 2017. It aims to get ‘beyond the foodbank’ by creating a more holistic, long-term, co-ordinated response to food insecurity. The SFAA has meetings every other month for networking, learning and sharing best practice.
- A longer-term vision for the alliance is for Southwark to gain accreditation as a Sustainable Food Place. Here, tackling food insecurity will form part of a much broader food vision for the borough, which also encompasses health, sustainability, food systems and food culture.
- The Southwark Community Support Alliance was established for one-stop support during the Pandemic. The Community Support Alliance has a working group on food distribution, which has been able to increase food-aid capacity during the Pandemic. Its members are organisations that belong to SFAA.

Systems resilience: 700 tonnes of food diverted from becoming waste and redistributed to the food insecure

LOCAL RESPONSE: SYSTEMS RESILIENCE - USE OF SURPLUS FOOD

Systems resilience looks at how to create a more resilient local food system. Ways to do this include encouraging a vibrant, local food economy and making better use of surplus food.

For every two tonnes of food eaten in the UK, one tonne is wasted. From an environmental perspective, this is not sustainable. In line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the UK has committed to halving the UK's food waste by 2030. Until the food industry becomes more efficient at minimising waste, a co-ordinated redistribution of food surplus can offer a short to medium-term solution to food insecurity.

During the Pandemic, London's three largest food redistribution charities (Fareshare, the Felix Project and City Harvest) joined forces as the London Food Alliance. During 2020, Southwark food insecurity projects received over 700 tonnes of surplus food through the alliance.

Organisation	Tonnes redistributed in 2020	Fareshare: Tonnes redistributed in 2019	Fareshare: Tonnes redistributed in 2020
Fareshare	578.3	87.7	583.8 *
Fareshare GO **	89.3		
City Harvest	36.8		
Felix Project	5.5		

Table 3 – Surplus food redistributed 2020

References

- (1) London Environmental Strategy 2018
- (2) UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015
- (3) Data from Fareshare/ Felix Project and City Harvest

Table 4 – Surplus redistributed by Fareshare 2019 and 2020

In the case of Fareshare, this was more than a six-fold increase on the amount of surplus redistributed in the borough during 2019.

* The Felix Project merged with Fareshare in Oct 2020, so this is a combined figure

**The Fareshare GO project involves organisations making private arrangements to go to supermarkets to pick up surplus. The volume of surplus it redistributed was an 86% increase from 2019.

A more centralised delivery system and facilities to chill and freeze food are needed to increase surplus use

LOCAL RESPONSE: USING SURPLUS FOOD

To further increase the use of surplus food in Southwark, VCS organisations need storage facilities to accept more fresh, chilled and frozen foods. Frozen food made up only 1.4% of all food delivered by City Harvest to Southwark in 2020.

The Felix Project (who merged with Fareshare London in Oct 2020) and are our largest delivery partner also recommend centralising the delivery system to increase the volume of surplus available in the borough. One way to do this is to have large volumes delivered to key locations in the borough, such as food hubs, with VCS partners and/or the Council taking care of the last mile of delivery.

The quality and choice of surplus food on offer needs to be acceptable to the VCS organisation. Several local organisations have cited this as a barrier that has prevented them from using surplus, along with the inability to plan menus in advance due to the uncertainty of what the delivery could include.

The table shows the top seven food types redistributed in Southwark by the Felix Project/ Fareshare in 2020 according to volume. Healthy food types, such as vegetables and protein are well represented. This covers a key gap, as typically fresh foods are harder to access at foodbanks. The soft drinks category includes water, as well as less healthy drinks.

Food type	Tonnes redistributed in Southwark in 2020
Vegetables	108
Tinned food	106
Dairy	79.8
Fruit	49
Soft drinks	43
Grains/pasta	33
Meat	27

References

(1) Data from City Harvest – 2020

(2) Data from Fareshare – 2020

Table 5 – Redistribution according to food type

Surplus food project highlights high food insecurity, particularly among the Latin American population and men

CASE STUDY: THE ALBRIGHTON COMMUNITY FRIDGE (2021)

The Albrighton Centre Community Fridge is a surplus food redistribution project in South Camberwell on the Dog Kennel Hill Estate. It is part of environmental charity Hubbub's national Fridge network which works to to share good quality, unwanted food that would otherwise go to waste. Neighbours and local retailers donate surplus food to the Fridge that anyone can pick up for free. Although not designed as a food crisis intervention, survey data has shown high levels of chronic food insecurity among users surveyed in May 2021 (n. 68).

- Only 6% of the sample said they would be able to manage well without free food from the Fridge.
- Only 1 in 5 of the sample knew where their next meal was coming from
- Almost 1 in 2 (47%) said that they were experiencing anxiety or stress because of their food situation
- 50% of the sample visit the Fridge 2 or 3 times per week.

Data from the survey showed emerging need in the Latin American population. This was the ethnic group most highly represented in the survey (31%), followed by Black (25% - with approximately 2 out of 3 Black users being from Africa) and White (21%). The majority of Latin American users were women (71%), with children (76%), able-bodied (90%), with no mental or physical health conditions (71%). 71% of those from the Latin American community said that they were not getting food support elsewhere and 67% felt stress and anxiety about their food situation.

The survey also showed men as a group who may need some targeted intervention. 68% of men surveyed said that they could not eat well because of their current financial situation (compared to an average of 46% for the general sample).

References

1. Data from the Albrighton Community Fridge - 2021

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The Pandemic has led to a 19-fold increase in the number of applications for crisis food help via the SESS scheme

LOCAL RESPONSE: CRISIS PROVISION

The need for crisis food provision has been growing year on year in Southwark and has risen exponentially with the Pandemic.

The Southwark Emergency Support Scheme offers food support through vouchers to those in crisis who are on benefits and have been resident in the borough for a minimum of 3 months. During April 20-Jan 21, it administered 11,740 household food grants, compared to 610 for the same period in the previous year – more than a 19-fold increase. It also saw a 350% increase in households applying for food-related white goods, such as cookers, fridges and freezers (2,203 grants made in 2020, compared to 618 for 2019).

In 2019-20, professionals and statutory services referred 5,408 households for emergency food provision. This is a rise of over 80% from the 3,379 households referred during 2017-18.

The Southwark Foodbank (a Trussell Trust foodbank run by PECAN) – is the borough's most established foodbank, which pre-Pandemic operated in 5 sites in the borough. During its first year of operation in 2009, it received 400 referrals. In 2019-20, it received referrals for 3,331 households. The borough's other more established foodbanks include the Trussell Trust's **Oasis Hub Waterloo Foodbank** which operates out of one site in Southwark, in Borough High Street and the **Spring Community Hub** (formerly CSCH), an independent foodbank, which before the Pandemic operated out of 4 sites in the borough.

Since the Pandemic, more independent foodbanks have been set up in response to need – many by faith groups, mutual aid groups and residents' associations. One example is San Mateo church's Agape project which helps 400 families per week from the South American community with food. As of February 2021, 29 food aid organisations belonged to SFAA. At the beginning of the Pandemic, the GLA compiled a list of 50+ Southwark organisations offering food aid.

The Council created a Community Hub as a triage point for help during the Pandemic. Most requests are for food.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The Southwark Community Hub was set up in March 2020 in response to the Pandemic to support residents who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), extremely vulnerable (EV) or in need of extra support from the Council. The hub quickly evolved to become a joint voluntary and community sector, Council and NHS initiative to support and assist those who are isolated and who cannot get support from friends or family. It is predominantly a telephone and online service which provides advice, social support and emergency food aid.

Enquiry Type	Number	Percentage
Needs shopping	4056	25%
Food parcels	3977	24%
Medical or isolation advice	2131	13%
Money concerns	2029	12%
Advice on paying bills council tax etc.	1886	11%
Enquiries for business	1010	6 %
Pension not collected hence no cash	764	5 %
Carers haven't arrived	695)	4 %
Total	16 548	

As shown in Table 1, food parcels and needing shopping were the top reasons for calling during April 2020-March 2021, accounting for 49% of the 16,548 calls received.

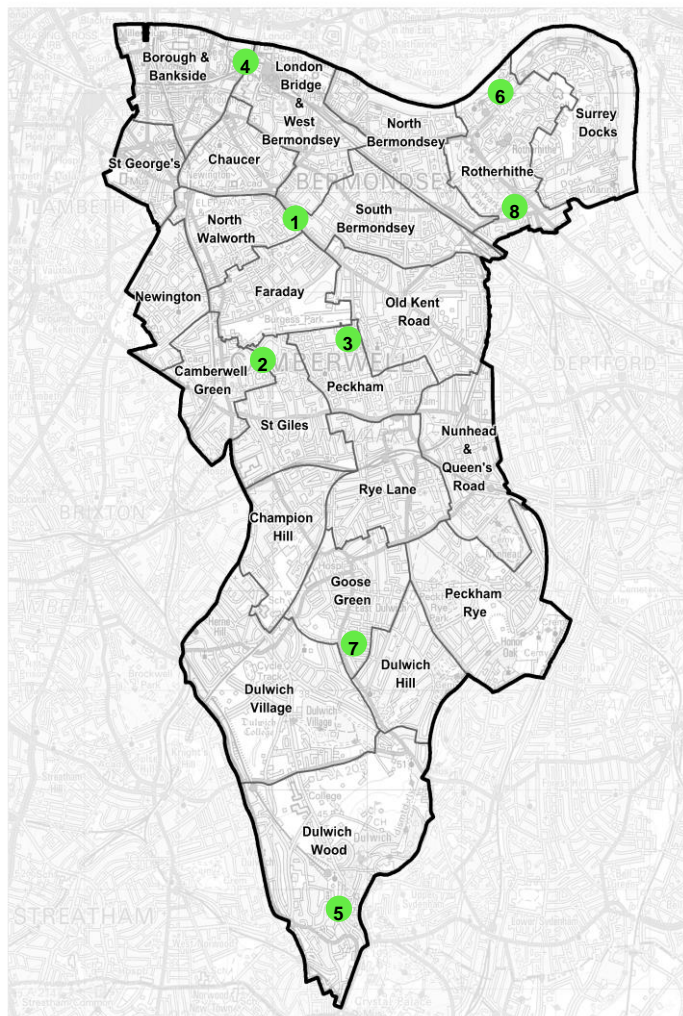
Table 6: Enquiry type for calls related to the Community Support Alliance telephone line between April 2020 and March 2021

References

1 Southwark Community Support Alliance data – 2021

Pandemic food distribution centres were set up with partner organisations at eight hubs across the borough

PANDEMIC RESPONSE



Eight organisations became local food distribution hubs for the Community Hub during 2020-21 in response to the Pandemic, providing much needed food support to many shielding and vulnerable people.

Southwark was well prepared for this due to a strong record of partnership working with many of the hubs through the Southwark Food Action Alliance, the borough's independent, umbrella organisation for improving food security. The increased resourcing for the hubs during the Pandemic has helped to achieve many other food security actions including improved referral pathways and intelligence sharing, access to more holistic support and using surplus food more effectively.

● Food hubs during 2020/2021

- 1 Pembroke House
- 2 Spring Community Hub
- 3 Pecan
- 4 St George the Martyr
- 5 Paxton Green Time Bank
- 6 Time and Talents *
- 7 Albrighton
- 8 L & Q

* Time and Talents only worked with food during the Pandemic response. The other organisations are exploring models of food provision which go beyond the traditional foodbank approach, such as community fridges, pantries, community building through food and improving access to advice

Food hub data shows that 3 in 10 users came due to poor health and almost 1 in 5 users were aged 50-59

INTELLIGENCE

Data was collected from residents who used the food hubs between October 2020 and March 2021.

4,734 residents used the food hubs during Oct-Dec 2020.

4,784 used the hubs during Jan-March 2021.

Reasons for accessing the food hubs:

Low income	45%
No recourse to public funds	32%
Sickness/ ill health	31%

Age

0-19	30%
20-59	44% *
59+	26%

* The age group with the highest representation was 50-59 years old at 18%.

Ethnicity:

White – English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British	33 %
Black – African/ Caribbean/ Black British	30 %

Limitations: The data collected between the food hubs has its limitations as a number of the hubs did not collect details on ethnicity, and other protected characteristics, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the populations accessing the food hubs. Supporting the food hubs to improve data collection will improve intelligence on food security, leading to making more informed strategic decisions.

References

1. Community Hub and Food Hub internal data July 2021

Although emergency food aid is essential, provision needs to look ‘beyond the foodbank’ to the longer term

LOCAL RESPONSE: CRISIS PROVISION

Emergency food aid should always be available to ensure that those in crisis have a safety net. However, national food campaigners take the view that food aid alone is not a sustainable, long-term solution, and this is also recognised by the Southwark Food Action Alliance.

Southwark’s main foodbanks favour moving to a model that is more preventive, sustainable, empowering and community based. This draws on work done by the Scottish Government who recommend applying four ‘Dignity Principles’ to the design and delivery of all responses to food insecurity:

- Involve people with direct experience in decision making
- Recognise the social value of food
- Provide opportunities to contribute
- Leave people with the power to choose

The Southwark Food Action Alliance supports this and recognises the need to go beyond a ‘sticking plaster fix’ to try and address the problem at source because:

- Wages and benefits are insufficient for many to live on.
- People who are chronically food insecure need help to maximise their incomes as well as to access affordable, healthy food.
- 80% of food insecure people do not use foodbanks for reasons such as unclear referral pathways and the perceived stigma of using a foodbank, so more accessible and acceptable help is needed.
- Food aid providers have little control over the quality and quantity of food offered when they rely on donations. They may stock minimal fresh food and be unable to cater for special diets.

References

1. UN Declaration of Human Rights – Article 25 (1948)
2. Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2015
3. Dignity in Practice – Nourish Scotland - 2018

'Beyond the foodbank' models include add-on services and encourage ownership, participation and community

LOCAL RESPONSE: CRISIS PROVISION

Other models of provision are being explored locally and across the country to bring those in food crisis to a greater place of resilience including:

- **The Pantry model:** Members pay a small fee to access healthy, surplus foods and make decisions about what foods to buy as a community. In a national survey (n.490), 95% of the sample said that membership had improved their household finances, 70% felt more connected to their community and 54% were eating more fruit and vegetables. Southwark has pantries in Peckham, Camberwell and Borough. Members pay approximately £4-5 per week for £15 worth of food.
- **Community Fridge model:** An environmental initiative where retailers and neighbours leave unwanted good quality food for others to take, minimising food waste. Southwark residents are served by community fridges in Camberwell, Walworth and Waterloo. More are planned to open in 2021.
- **Community-led food buying co-ops.** Groups of up to 20 households pool funds and order food together. Cooperation Town offers a model where co-op members pay £3 per week to receive a mixture of surplus food and goods bought in bulk from wholesalers.
- **Community meals/ café:** Everyone is encouraged to prepare the food as well as to eat it. The meal/café provides a place for social cohesion and can be used to promote mental wellbeing and tackle loneliness.
- **Neighbourhood food model:** The Mayor's Food Strategy for London suggests that a food hub is located in every key area of deprivation in a borough. This is a place where people can learn more about healthy food and cooking. It would encompass multiple activities such as growing projects, wraparound services, a community café, cookery classes, holiday provision, lunch clubs and a Pantry or Community Fridge*. Pembroke House are currently piloting this model in the Walworth area.

References

1. Your Local Pantry – Social Impact Report 2021 – Church Action on Poverty
2. The London Food Strategy – 2018 – Greater London Authority

Summary of Council and statutory provision for key vulnerable groups in Southwark and gaps to address

Community fridges, Pantries and foodbanks are open to all in the borough who need them. The Community Support Alliance is also available to all for triage, signposting and referrals. The chart below details additional support for some of our vulnerable groups and where the gaps in provision may lie.

Vulnerable group	Existing provision	Gaps
<p>Those experiencing delays/ problems with Universal Credit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwark Emergency Support Scheme • Southwark Hardship Fund (for those in debt with housing/ fuel bills) • Local support team (for income maximisation) • Universal support (for help with claim forms and digital access) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A systematic way to ensure that people do not go hungry during the 5 week-plus transition period to UC • Access to low-cost, healthy food options • Support for those whose food insecurity is chronic (including support around mental wellbeing, accessing food and improving life circumstances)
<p>Those in low-paid work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwark Emergency Support Scheme • Southwark Hardship Fund (for those in debt with housing/ fuel bills) • Local support team (for income maximisation) • Healthy Start and Rose vouchers for pregnant women and young children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to low-cost, healthy food options on an ongoing basis • Support for those whose food insecurity is chronic (including support around mental wellbeing, accessing food and improving life circumstances)

Vulnerable group	Existing provision	Gaps
<p>Those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the Pandemic, free school meals have been extended to all school students whose households have NRPF and are on incomes of under £31,200 (one child) or £34,800 92 or more children). • Rose vouchers for pregnant women and young children who live in the SE1, SE5, SE15 and SE17 areas. • Healthy Start vouchers • Food vouchers for families with NRPF who due to their exceptional circumstances are being supported by the borough (see slide 32) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inability for mothers of young children to return to the workforce due to a lack of childcare • No statutory support for adults with NRPF (apart from in exceptional circumstances)
<p>Low-income families with children (particularly during school holidays)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwark Emergency Support Scheme • Southwark Hardship Fund (for those in debt with housing/ fuel bills) • Local support team (for income maximisation) • Healthy Start and Rose vouchers for pregnant women and young children • Universal free healthy nursery meals and free school meals for all at primary school • Government funding for school holiday meal provision in 2021 for those eligible for free school meals. • Some school breakfast provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for those whose food insecurity is chronic (including support around mental health, accessing food and improving life circumstances) • A lack of statutory support between a child's 4th birthday (when Healthy Start vouchers stop) and starting school where there will be access to free school meals. The 2021 National Food Strategy had recommended extending this support until a child's 5th birthday.

Summary of Council and statutory provision for key vulnerable groups in Southwark and gaps to address

Vulnerable group	Existing provision	Gaps
<p>Older adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwark Emergency Support Scheme • Southwark Hardship Fund (for those in debt with housing/ fuel bills) • Local support team (for income maximisation) • Some community meals are available for older people via voluntary organisations (generally on a paid for basis) • Community Support Alliance for triage, signposting and referral. • Paid for shopping delivery service commissioned through Age UK's Food2You service (funded until April 2023) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Meals on Wheels (or equivalent) service which can also provide social contact and signposting • No guarantee that vulnerable, older people are getting a well-balanced hot meal every day or having any human contact to encourage or monitor their food intake • A lack of commercial food opportunities catering for older people's budgets and tastes • No facilities (pre Pandemic) for delivering foodbank parcels to those who struggle with mobility • Paid carers may lack training in nutrition and have little time during a visit to provide a well-balanced, hot meal. • There are areas of the borough that have no lunch club provision. Some lunch clubs only meet weekly, fortnightly or monthly

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Professionals explain the impact that food insecurity can have on many aspects of people's lives

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: HOW FOOD INSECURITY MAY AFFECT RESIDENTS

The negative effects of food insecurity on people's lives are summarised by professionals, including frontline workers from Southwark:

- [Food insecurity] varies from choosing to pay Council Tax rather than buying food, not taking necessary medication because it needs to be taken with food, feeding children chips instead of appropriate, nourishing food, paying off debts leaving no money for food, staying in unsafe relationships to have food to eat.
Director of Spring Community Hub
- [A typical food insecure person that we see] will have no recourse to public funds and have 2 or 3 kids. They will be staying with a friend or in some form of insecure accommodation – not knowing from week to week where they are going to stay. The mother is likely to be depressed because of her situation and because of this she won't be coming forwards to the Children's Centres and other services that can help. Because of the lack of food, she will be lethargic and not have the energy needed to follow through with suggestions that will help her and her family.
Family Support Workers – First Place Southwark Children's Centre
- [Paediatricians] see parents in A & E who are limiting their eating to care for their children. Children are worried, scared and upset.
Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health: Views From The Frontline 2017
- [Food insecurity] means people are too poor to choose diets that are healthy for them. They develop diseases. They have health problems.
Olivier de Schutter – UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2008-2014)

Qualitative research was taken to include the views of frontline workers and those with lived experience

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

To gain an informed and rounded picture of food insecurity in Southwark, local stakeholders were engaged from February 2018 to February 2019.

Stakeholder views taken into account range from Bermondsey and Old Southwark MP Neil Coyle, who heads the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Foodbanks, to academics and national lobby groups, to local foodbank users, frontline staff and Southwark Food Action Alliance members. The views were gathered through two stakeholder workshops (n.50), face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with those who are food insecure (n.9) and qualitative surveys of frontline workers (n.28). The composition of respondents for the surveys was, as follows:

▪ Children Centre staff	(6)	- Elderly workers	(4)
▪ Local support team	(2)	- Mental health workers	(2)
▪ Young adult workers	(1)	- Growing skills providers	(1)
▪ Cookery providers	(3)	- Food surplus redistributors	(1)
▪ Primary school staff	(1)	- Social work staff	(1)
▪ Foodbank staff	(2)	- Medical staff	(4)

Key themes summarised in the following slides include: the groups felt to be most affected, problems navigating the system, the need for wraparound services including mental health support, issues with food aid, a lack of affordable options on the high street, food provision during school holidays, issues affecting the 50+ age group and suggestions for improving the system.

References

1. Frontline worker survey - 2018

Frontline workers have observed a rise in food insecurity, citing NRPF and benefit problems as the main causes

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: GROUPS THAT ARE MOST AFFECTED

The qualitative work undertaken with the sample of 28 frontline workers revealed the following:

- Those with NRPF and Universal Credit problems were the largest groups that frontline workers were noticing who were presenting with food insecurity.
- Food insecurity seems to be increasing. It is affecting a wider range of groups and communities than before, including middle-class people and those in employment.
- Concerns were raised about:
 - The higher number of people being discharged from hospital without being able to feed themselves
 - A rise of people in temporary accommodation where cooking and food storage facilities may be inadequate
 - An increase in people being deemed fit to work despite health barriers
 - Benefit issues taking longer to resolve.

References

1. Frontline worker survey - 2018

Accessing support around food and referrals for food aid is inconsistent: 'It's a lottery who you get.'

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: REFERRAL

It is the responsibility of frontline teams to pick up on those in need and to refer them correctly

- The face-to-face interviews at foodbanks revealed that most had received their referral because someone had noticed they needed help. Testimonies from two foodbank users follow: “The drug support worker noticed I was eating lots of the biscuits they provide with the coffee and asked if I needed help with food.” (#1); “I wouldn't tell the job centre I needed food – I'd wait to be asked.” (#2) When foodbank users were asked what advice they would give to those in a similar situation, the consensus was to ask for help earlier. A Careers Coach from SLAM articulated: “Most people do not speak up about needing support for food so we have to be observant and pick up on how the client is presenting.”
- There were reports of frontline workers being either unobservant or unhelpful. At a women's refuge, one woman had not been referred for help with food despite presenting as very hungry, having not eaten in two days. One food insecure person commenting on the consistency of support from job centres said: “It's a lottery who you get”. The interviewees said they had been deterred from approaching services again after a bad encounter, be it with social workers, the Council or DWP.
- There were also reports of frontline staff referring away from statutory services. A volunteer with The Fridge said: “Social workers take people to us who have come straight out of care. Our type of provision should not be part of the welfare system. Statutory services should be where people are sent for help, rather than signposting straight to The Fridge.”

The stress of food insecurity creates anxiety, trauma and depression. Emotional support is essential.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: MENTAL HEALTH

There is a high level of mental health need among the food insecure.

Mental health was mentioned by 7 of the 9 food insecure people interviewed, two of whom had a pre-existing condition. Others mentioned how the stress of the situation had brought on ill health and made them anxious and depressed. A first-time foodbank user commented: “I was so anxious that I couldn’t leave my home for the first month after my benefits stopped.” The support gained from having a listening ear, “a hug and cuppa” and sense of community at the foodbanks was of huge importance to those interviewed.

The CEO of PECAN (which hosts Southwark Foodbank) said at the 2018 Southwark Stakeholder Conference on Universal Credit: “Universal Credit has created a system of stress and depression. We feel that three out of four people we see have developed a mental health issue.” He also observed that when people are in trauma and crisis they need their basic survival needs met before they can respond to more holistic interventions. The foodbank now has counsellors working with its volunteers to reduce the risk of vicarious trauma (which can happen when helpers are exposed to difficult stories).

A Southwark GP noted in written evidence that the increase in food insecurity among low-income patients “has created high levels of psychological distress, anxiety and related mental health problems.” A community mental health professional added: “When you're food insecure, you don't have choice or control over food. Choice and control are two key things that are good for mental health.”

The Brighton and Hove Food Partnership (who are seen as leaders in food insecurity work in the UK) observed a high level of mental health problems among the city’s food insecure, concluding that “because of the level of undiagnosed mental health issues – people need 1:1 support – not factsheets.”

References

1. Frontline worker survey – 2018
2. Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Action Plan 2015-18 ‘One Year On’

Charity and NHS workers are reluctant to use food aid or attend communal meals due to a fear of being recognised

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: ACCESSING FOOD AID

A King's College PhD student has been interviewing people using Southwark foodbanks and community meals since 2016 as part of his research. This has involved in-depth interviews with 43 people so far. Preliminary findings show the following:

- People using food aid services have widely varying skills, knowledge and capabilities. Deficits in these areas may contribute to some people's food insecurity, but should not automatically be assumed.
- Charity and NHS staff who are struggling financially seem reluctant to go to food aid services for themselves and are often worried about being recognised. Open services, like community meals, are particularly difficult for this group, as well as others who feel vulnerable in more public environments.
- Community meals can be a source of enjoyable social contact and a place to share information about other services. However, social cohesion at meals can be limited when people sit alone, in groups of like-minded people or when clear distinctions are made between volunteers and service users.
- Most food-aid services in Southwark are only open during weekday working hours.
- Research suggests that the South American community is under-represented at Southwark foodbanks and community meals. More research is needed to understand if this is because the community has its own resources or whether it is unaware of the help available. *
- While people are often grateful, there is frustration at having to rely on charity services for a wide range of support needs, particularly when the services have experienced cut-backs or are under-funded.

* 2021 update: The Pandemic did reveal unmet need among this group. San Mateo church started its own foodbank, helping 400 South American families per week. The SFAA website now has guidance on South American food staples.

References

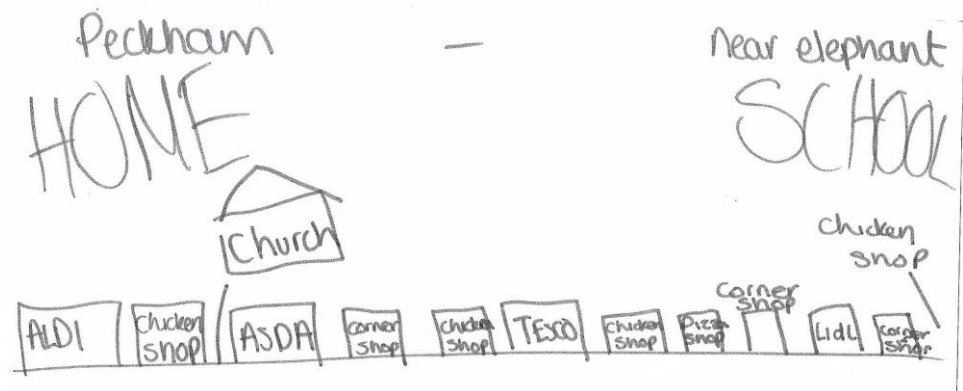
1. Wolf Ellis (King's College London and Evidence for Development) wolf.ellis@kcl.ac.uk

Regeneration and planning: 'There are too many bakeries selling loaves of bread for £3+'

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, HEALTHY FOOD

To combat food insecurity, access is needed to affordable and healthy options. The testimony below shows how both an abundance of fast-food outlets and expensive, up-market options can inhibit this. Planning, regeneration and local economy policies are needed to make healthy, affordable choices easy choices for Southwark residents.

The illustration is a mental map drawn by a Southwark teenager during their time on the National Citizen Service programme during summer 2018. It shows the food options they have on their walk from home to school. Takeaways, such as chicken and pizza shops feature largely in how they perceive their local food choices.



In written testimony, a staff member from Link Age Southwark commented that responsible regeneration is needed to protect affordable food choices: "Ensure regeneration does not drive out traditional food sellers and sensibly priced shops. The number of coffee shops and restaurants on Lordship Lane and the loss of Iceland is a case where ordinary people now find it challenging to buy affordable food. There are too many bakeries selling loaves of bread for £3+."

The CEO of the Alexandra Rose Charity said: "There needs to be a market response to food insecurity. You can't leave the voluntary sector to solve it. We need to make the retail of healthy, affordable food profitable in low-income areas."

‘Withering away in their homes’: Hunger and malnutrition in the elderly is hidden and under-reported

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: OLDER ADULTS

The 2018 All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger in the elderly, which collected evidence from many stakeholders around the country spoke of “older people spending two or three months withering away, starving [in their homes] before entering hospital weighing five and a half stone with a urine infection or pneumonia” and “older people living alone in high-rise flats that they are no longer able to leave ‘having services pulled from under their feet’ feeling angry, hungry and let down.” The stakeholders interviewed spoke of the hidden nature of the problem:

“Most older people become malnourished in their own homes and, in many cases, the problem is never acknowledged or addressed.” (Age UK)

“So many frail, older people are invisible in the community, so we’re not fully aware [of the extent of malnutrition]” (Food Train)

“There may be under-reporting of food insecurity amongst older people due to generational tendencies to ‘make do’ or ‘not make a fuss’ about difficulties... poor nutrition was often a problem for older people discharged from hospital with little support in place or limited social networks” (Church Urban Fund)

In written evidence for this JSNA, Age UK for Lewisham and Southwark commented: “People in their 80s and 90s are more likely to be malnourished, but it seems to go unnoticed.” A Southwark General Practice nurse wrote: “I have noticed malnutrition in the elderly and when I ask them if they have hot food, they rarely get it.”

References

1. Hidden Hunger and Malnutrition In The Elderly – APPG on Hunger – 2018
2. Frontline worker survey - 2018

Dementia, isolation, lack of statutory help and lack of support for the 50-65s all contribute to food insecurity

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: RISK AMONG AGE 50+ AND OLDER ADULTS

Southwark and Lewisham Age UK identified two at risk groups in the 50+ age group it works with:

- Those in the pre-retirement years who do not yet have the stable income of a pension. “There’s not much support for the age 50-65 group if they are able-bodied.” This finding was backed up by data from the Community Support Alliance during the Pandemic when 50-59 year olds were the age group requesting the most help with food.
- People with dementia “who don’t feel like eating or forget to eat or go to the shops.”

Link Age Southwark which works with 600 isolated, over 60s in the borough said that the most at risk are “those who can’t easily get out to shop and are not supported by statutory services or family members.” Even those with friends and neighbours who help can find that the provision is ad-hoc, for example, “if they are away, it limits their choice of food.”

A Consultant Dietician at Guys’ and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust said: “It is difficult for me to understand how older people without a care package survive. I see a high reliance on ready meals.” However, a care package does not guarantee good nutrition as the package does not cover the purchase of food. She adds: “The carer’s focus is 80% on toileting, washing and dressing; 5-10% on administering medication and perhaps 5% on food.” This could be remedied with training on nutrition and malnutrition for all care workers. In written evidence for this JSNA, an AGE UK staff member commented: “As people aren’t eligible in care packages for things like shopping, people are spending more on getting people to shop for them, leaving less money for food.”

The Consultant Dietician from Guys’ and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust felt that health promotion was needed to encourage older people to eat. “There is a sense with eating that it’s not worth doing it ‘just for me’. Older people aren’t aware that not eating enough food is bad for them.”

A lack of appropriate, affordable eating places and nearby shops for older people impacts their food choices

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: AGE 50+ AND OLDER ADULTS

Older adults are affected by the choices they have for food within their price range and within easy reach of their homes:

“Living alone and social isolation lead to a loss of confidence in going to the best places to buy good food cheaply. There’s insecurity about going to Peckham as they used to do in the past to shop for food. The closure of useful small shops, like butchers and greengrocers impacts people”. (Link Age Southwark)

“I can’t go out on my own because of osteoarthritis. Now I know I have stuff in the cupboard, whereas before sometimes there was nothing to eat.” (former Food2You service user - Southwark)

A Commissioning Manager for Older People’s services in Southwark Council said: “Most of the older people in Southwark are poor. The commercial market in Southwark doesn’t see opportunities in Southwark with the older population.”

Evidence in the APPG report on hunger in the elderly mentioned other barriers:

“It is expected that if you are not able to get out, that you have the option to shop online, but... there are many of the older generation that would not be in a position to use a computer and set up online shopping” (Ian Lucas MP).

“One hour is insufficient for many older people to get around a large supermarket” (Centre For Research In Primary and Community Care, University of Hertfordshire).

Free meal provision during the school holidays is a 'lifeline' for food insecure families

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: FOOD INSECURITY DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

The Council piloted its first holiday provision with free food and activities for children in 2018 with two partner organisations. This led to the establishment of a Southwark holiday provision network. In 2020, Southwark was successful in receiving joint funding with Lambeth via a Kitchen Social bid to the Department of Education to host a 6-week holiday provision programme. This included funding a coordinator's role for the borough.

2,115 children attended programmes during the 2020 Summer of Food and Fun. It was held at 35 centres in the borough, with a mixture of online and on site activities, breakfast boxes, 'take and make' boxes for cooking at home, as well as lunch provision. 66% of the programmes operating in Southwark were located in areas in the top 2 deciles on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). 1,700 children participated either in person or remotely during Easter holiday programmes in 2021.

Previous evaluation of Kitchen Social Holiday programmes found that some of the benefits of running holiday provision included: improved diet, less weight gain compared to those not on the programme, exposure to new foods, significant increase in water consumption, improved behaviour, readiness to learn, new friendships, better opportunities for parents, parents feel more integrated into the community, improved parental wellbeing and optimism about the future.

"The holiday club has been a life line as she didn't have to worry about feeding the children at lunchtime. This has helped prevent her going into debt this summer." [Interview with a mother of three who attended sessions at Mercato Metropolitano]

"The clubs ensured that their children were fed well. They [the families] didn't have to spend money that they don't have. One parent told me that she retained her sanity by attending the club as her son was calmer because he had somewhere to go and he would be fed." [Interview with the programme manager at Spring Community Hub].

Stakeholders see the need for a multi-layered approach to food insecurity that addresses all tiers of the pyramid

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (2019)

Stakeholders identified a range of opportunities for improvement in Southwark:

Opportunities relating to wider determinants

- To move beyond foodbanks, a strategic approach is needed to tackle the root causes of food insecurity such as poverty, inadequate housing, insufficient income and problems with benefits.
- Create incentives for social enterprises and businesses to make the retail of healthy, affordable food profitable in low-income areas.

Opportunities relating to resilience building

- Food growing projects need more coordinated support to access funding, volunteers and training to be sustainable over the longer term. *[Update: A 2-year post was created for this in 2020]*
- Use housing staff and residents' organisations to reach out to the large number of Southwark residents living in social housing.
- Support social prescribing for cooking and growing programmes. Support needs to be given to the host organisation to ensure that they have the capability to deliver.

Opportunities relating to crisis provision

- Develop a communications strategy and referral pathway to counter the current lack of awareness about where food insecure people can go for help.
- Train frontline staff on how to identify food insecurity and how to refer and signpost appropriately.
- Provide support outside of typical Monday-Friday, 9-5pm times.
- Have welfare rights officers/ benefits advisors on site at places used by food insecure people.
- Create ways for the housebound and less mobile to access food aid.
- Ensure that food aid contains fresh fruit and vegetables and that it meets nutritional, cultural and religious needs.

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A preventive and coordinated approach is needed to stem the increase of food insecurity and its impacts

SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

Food insecurity is an important issue that affects the health and wellbeing of our residents

- Access to adequate food is recognised as a basic human right.
- Food insecurity is connected to poorer mental and physical health. It is costly to society and the health system. It disproportionately affects those who are most marginalised, adding to health and life inequalities in the borough.
- There are likely to be high levels of unmet mental health need among the food insecure, yet before the Pandemic there was only one community café catering for this group in the borough.

Food insecurity affects a large and potentially growing number of residents.

- Pre-Pandemic, 1 in 4 Southwark residents were likely to be food insecure. This equates to 75,000 people who due to lack of money are skipping meals, cutting down on quantities eaten, are unable to afford balanced meals and at the most extreme end of the spectrum experiencing real hunger. If we apply national findings to Southwark's elderly population, 2,710 older adults in the borough could be malnourished.
- Food insecurity levels in Southwark are higher than the London and national average . This is because our destitution levels, free school meal eligibility, levels of child and pensioner poverty and obesity are all higher than average. One in three pupils in Southwark schools are eligible for free school meals.
- Since the Pandemic, there has been a sharp increase in the need for emergency food help. The number of residents requesting food help through the Southwark Emergency Support Scheme has increased 19-fold from the previous year.

A preventive and coordinated approach is needed to stem the increase of food insecurity and its impacts

SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

Food insecurity affects a large and potentially growing number of residents (ctd).

- In 2019-20, professionals and statutory services referred 5,408 households for emergency food provision. This is a rise of over 80% from the 3,379 households referred during 2017-18. Not all food insecure households will seek help for reasons such as stigma, lack of awareness of help available or gatekeepers in the referral process preventing access. A national study during the Pandemic showed that only 23% of those who were food insecure looked for and succeeded in finding help.
- Mapping work shows that the borough has potential food deserts, many of which fall within council estates, where the borough's more deprived residents are likely to live. People living in food deserts often pay a poverty premium as they rely on convenience stores for their shopping. Here, prices are generally more expensive than at supermarkets. A 2020 study showed that those shopping at convenience stores in Southwark were paying three times more than supermarket prices for the same basket as food.

A wide range of groups are vulnerable to food insecurity, and this may be broadening further.

- Low income was the biggest reason for referral to the Community Support Alliance Food Hubs during Oct 2020-March 2021, accounting for 45% of referrals. Having no recourse to public funds was the second largest reason for referral (32%). This is a change from previous years when benefit delays and problems with Universal Credit transfer had been the main reasons for referral.
- According to Southwark Foodbank data (the borough's largest foodbank) single person households are the largest household group to be referred (58%) followed by single parents (23%).

A preventive and coordinated approach is needed to stem the increase of food insecurity and its impacts

SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

A wide range of groups are vulnerable to food insecurity, and this may be broadening further (ctd).

- The Survey of Londoners in 2019 found that black Southwark residents were 5 times more likely than white residents to be food insecure. The Pandemic also revealed a high level of food insecurity among the Latin American community, many of whom have no recourse to public funds or who were in insecure employment in industries that were badly affected by the Pandemic. There are high levels of destitution among migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in London. Almost 1 in 2 London households who have no income at all after housing costs are headed by migrants.
- The Survey of Londoners 2019 showed that in Southwark: social renters were five times more likely to be food insecure than owner occupiers, 1 in 2 of those who were food insecure were 'often lonely', those with burdensome debt were four times more likely to be food insecure than comfortable repayers. Those who were unemployed, with long-term illness or disabled had poor food security.

Since 2019 steps have been taken to create a more coordinated approach.

- The launch of the 2019 food security action plan as well as the creation of coordinator posts for the Southwark Food Action Alliance, holiday provision and community gardening has led to a more networked approach and response. The Pandemic has also brought food security to public attention.
- The Community Support Alliance has developed a food security referral pathway. An alternative pathway still needs to be created for those who cannot access statutory services. Frontline workers across many sectors need to be trained in how to recognise food insecurity and how to refer.
- There is a borough-wide gap in providing for the housebound and those who due to poor health, disabilities or age are unable to cook or shop for themselves.

A preventive and coordinated approach is needed to stem the increase of food insecurity and its impacts

SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

Focusing on prevention and building resilience rather than on crisis management offers a more sustainable approach for the future.

- Southwark has developed a three-tier approach to tackle food insecurity, recognising that it needs addressing on multiple levels. The three areas of focus are: addressing wider determinants, building resilience and offering crisis provision.
- Due to the Pandemic, crisis provision has been a large focus of the 2020-2021 response.
- A reliance on foodbanks is not the right solution for those whose food insecurity is chronic. Stakeholders in Southwark are keen to move to a 'beyond the foodbank' model which is preventive and focuses on dignity, resilience and community building.
- A longer-term response needs to address health and nutrition inequalities and improve access to affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate food.
- With food accounting for approximately a third of all greenhouse gas emissions, food security work needs to align with the sustainable food agenda.
- 700 tonnes of surplus food were used by food projects in Southwark in 2020 – a six-fold increase on the previous year. There is potential to make more use out of surplus as a short to medium-term solution to food insecurity with the correct infrastructure in place, such as fridges and freezers for organisations to receive more fresh produce. It is important to ensure that the surplus used by local organisations is nutritious and supplemented by wholesale foods, if needed.

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Food insecurity needs a strategic, borough-wide approach with clear referral pathways

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that Southwark tackles food insecurity at a strategic, community and individual level and that implementation of the action plan is done with key partners, including the Southwark Food Action Alliance and relevant Council departments.
- Whilst crisis provision is a necessary focus during the Pandemic, the medium to long-term focus needs to be on prevention and resilience building.
- Embed food security into a wide range of Council agendas (e.g. Healthy Schools/ planning/ housing/ regeneration).
- Design clear referral pathways and non-stigmatising communication strategies to help residents and professionals access the existing help available, including food aid provision, resilience-building programmes and statutory offerings. Join the dots to have clearer pathways between services.
- Review gaps in support, both geographically and for vulnerable groups. Explore options for change with relevant commissioners, partnerships and commercial interests. The most noticeable gaps in provision in 2021 are for the housebound and older adults, as well as for those with no recourse to public funds.

Key recommendations include developing community-based solutions and having well-trained frontline staff

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage the development of neighbourhood model 'food hubs' in deprived areas across the borough (as recommended in the Mayor's London Food Strategy) to promote local access to affordable, healthy food support. The hubs will include wraparound support and resilience building opportunities. They can house food growing and cooking programmes, be a drop-off point for redistributed surplus food, host community cafes and be a base for models such as Community Fridges and Pantries.
- Work with frontline staff and services (including schools) to identify signs of food insecurity. Support them to have the confidence to signpost accordingly when issues arise.
- Identify mechanisms via housing, regeneration and planning to build infrastructure to support communities to shop, cook, eat and come together in a healthy and affordable way.

Next steps:

- 1) Deliver against the priorities set out in the action plan with key partners.
- 2) Continue to embed mechanisms and systems to support food security in a sustainable way.

Find out more at
southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

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