

Household Food Insecurity

*A brief summary of findings from
Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment*

Place & Health Improvement

Southwark Public Health

August 2019

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

DEFINITION: WHAT IS FOOD INSECURITY?

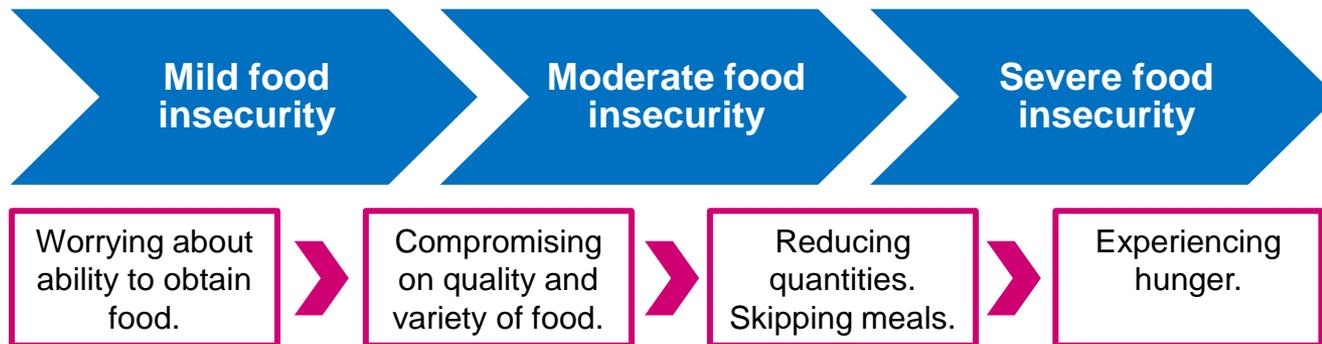
The Food Standards Agency (FSA) defines food insecurity as:

- “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, and 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)

Approximately 1 in 4 people living in Southwark are food insecure. The numbers of foodbank users are rising.

PREVALENCE

Approximately 1 in 4 Southwark residents are likely to be food insecure. This equates to some 75,000 people running out of money to buy food, skipping meals due to lack of funds, not being able to afford balanced meals and at the extreme end of the spectrum experiencing hunger.

- Southwark's levels of food insecurity are higher than both the London and national average. This is because our destitution levels, free school meal eligibility and levels of child and pensioner poverty are all higher than average.
- If we apply national findings to Southwark's elderly population, where 1 in 10 adults age over 65 are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition, this equates to 2,560 older adults in our borough at risk of malnourishment.
- Only 20% of people who are food insecure are likely to visit foodbanks. This is due to stigma, lack of awareness of help available or gatekeepers in the referral process preventing access. In Southwark during 2017-18, 4,674 referrals were made for emergency food provision. Southwark Foodbank, which accepted 2,495 referrals in 2017-18, saw a 30% increase in referral numbers from 2016-17.
- Mapping work shows that the borough has potential food deserts where there is limited access to healthy, affordable food options within a short walk from home. Many of the food desert areas fall within council estates, where the borough's more deprived residents are likely to live.

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
4. Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2015
5. Full Version. Household Food Insecurity. Southwark JSNA. Southwark Council 2019

Slide 4

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

RISK FACTORS FOR FOOD INSECURITY

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
- 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
- The elderly

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.

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

MAIN REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO SOUTHWARK FOODBANKS

- 40% of referrals to Southwark's two largest foodbank networks (n. 3,204) in 2017-18 were due to benefit problems, mainly as a consequence of the switch to Universal Credit.
- 60% of the Southwark Foodbank's users in 2017-18 were single person households. This may reflect that single people were the first household type to experience full rollout to Universal Credit. Previously, single parent families had been the largest household type using the foodbank.
- 1 in 6 households referred to Southwark foodbanks had a member in employment, however the household was not earning enough to feed itself.
- 1 in 7 households referred to foodbanks in Southwark have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). 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.
- Data from the GLA's recent survey on food security in London (n. 6,601) found that the groups most likely to experience food insecurity in the capital are single parents, those in the lowest income quintile (with a household income of under £14,900), the unemployed, Black Londoners and those with disabilities. 72% of those found to be food insecure had less than £1,500 in savings, 60% owed money. 45% of those living in food insecurity are socially isolated.

References

1. Full Version. Household Food Insecurity. Southwark JSNA. Southwark Council 2019
2. Food Security In London, City Intelligence – Greater London Authority – June 2019

Almost a quarter of Southwark adults have low or very low food security, with significant inequalities between groups

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR SOUTHWARK RESPONDENTS

- Almost a quarter (23%) of Southwark respondents had low or very low food security
- More Southwark black respondents had low or very low food security (46%), compared with white respondents (9%)
- In Southwark, worse food security 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 worse food security (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/yr 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.

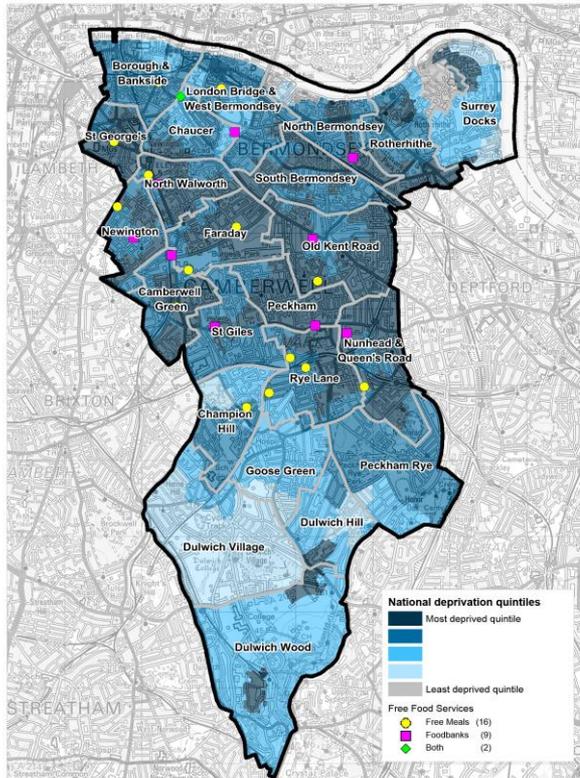
Reference

1. Greater London Authority 2019. Survey of Londoners

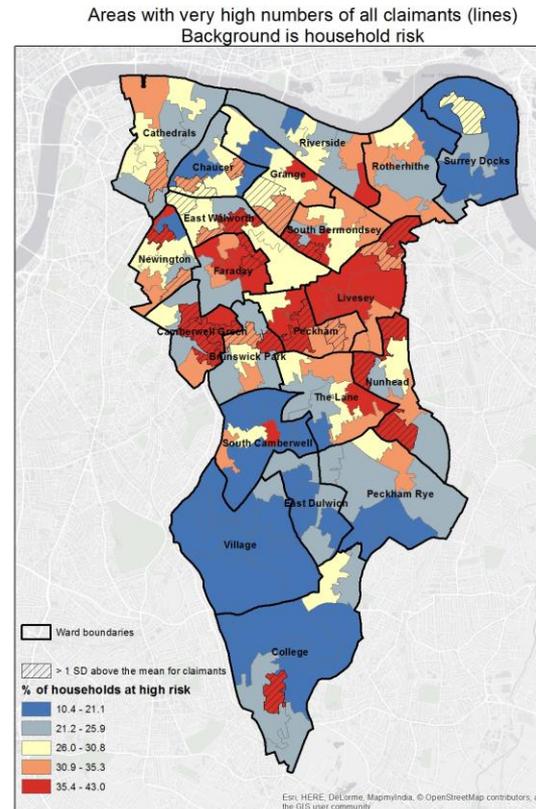
Slide 7

Some areas where food insecurity risk is potentially high lack easy access to foodbanks and free food provision

LOCAL RESPONSE: CRISIS PROVISION



Data source: Department for Communities & Local Government
Southwark Public Health Department | People & Health Intelligence | publichealth@southwark.gov.uk
December 2018.
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Data from 2011 Census; 2017 Department for Work & Pensions, 2017 ONS

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.

The map on the far left shows provision of foodbanks and free food, mapped against areas of deprivation. The map on the right (slide 18) shows areas where risk of food insecurity in the borough is likely to be highest.

The map shows no free meal provision in the north east of the borough. The Kingswood Estate in Dulwich Wood ward has no provision. Areas of Camberwell Green, Faraday and South Bermondsey wards appear underserved, given the potential high level of need there.

Note

1. The ward names and boundaries differ between maps as the wards changed in Southwark following the 2018 elections

Reference

1. Household Food Insecurity JSNA – Southwark Council - 2019

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

THREE-TIER MODEL

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 wider determinants, resilience building and crisis provision.

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: Garden Organic has taught growing skills to residents on 24 estates.

Example intervention: A referral to the Southwark Foodbank provides vouchers for three food packages in a six-month period.

References

1. Southwark Food Action Alliance steering group - 2018

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 span many different sectors, showing that food insecurity is a multifaceted problem requiring collaboration from a broad range of partners.

The 2018 results ranked Southwark joint 5th in London with a score of 60% (the highest score of 76% went to Tower Hamlets). Year on year, Southwark has improved since 2016 when we scored 40% (coming in 19th). Southwark won an award for improvement in 2017 with a score of 57% (7th overall). The chart below shows performance alongside neighbouring boroughs, indicating greater progress with darker shading under each coloured heading.

	Food Poverty Action Plan	Healthy Start	Baby Friendly	Children's Services	Holiday Hunger	Free School Meals	Physical Access	Meals On Wheels	Living Wage	Council Tax Reduction	Overall Score
Lambeth	Dark Blue	Light Blue	Dark Red	Dark Purple	Light Blue	Dark Grey	Dark Orange	Dark Green	Dark Orange	Dark Teal	76
Lewisham	Dark Blue	Light Blue	Dark Red	Dark Purple	Light Blue	Dark Grey	Dark Orange	Dark Green	Dark Orange	Light Grey	60
Southwark	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Red	Dark Purple	Light Blue	Dark Teal	Dark Orange	Light Grey	Dark Orange	Light Teal	60

A summary of progress against each of these 10 areas is available in Appendix 2.

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link

A preventive and co-ordinated approach is needed to stem the increase of food insecurity and its impacts

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a wide range of activity in the borough that seeks to address food insecurity, but this could be more co-ordinated.

- Southwark has various initiatives taking place in the voluntary, statutory and community sectors which are tackling food insecurity. There is strength to be drawn from bringing this together as a co-ordinated whole. This has started through the formation of the Southwark Food Action Alliance (SFAA). The SFAA is an independent, borough-wide, cross-sector partnership of 60 organisations working together to tackle food insecurity. Its membership includes the Council, health practitioners, voluntary and community organisations. The Food Security Action Plan will offer a further opportunity to create a coordinated, borough-wide approach and response.
- More systemisation and co-ordination is needed for the following areas in the borough: school holiday meal provision, growing schemes, surplus food redistribution and increasing Healthy Start voucher uptake.
- There is a need for a food insecurity referral pathway that will refer to statutory services first. Design non-stigmatising communication strategies to help residents and professionals access the existing help available, including food aid provision, resilience-building programmes, as well as statutory offerings. Join the dots to have clearer pathways between services.
- Frontline workers across many sectors need to be trained in how to recognise signs of food insecurity and how to refer and signpost accordingly.

A preventative and co-ordinated approach is needed to stem the increase of food insecurity and its impacts

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Stakeholders in Southwark are keen to move to a 'beyond the foodbank' model which is preventive and focuses on resilience and community building.
- An emphasis on foodbanks is not the right solution for those whose poverty or food insecurity is chronic.
- At least 23 tons of surplus food are used each month in Southwark by organisations serving the food insecure. There is potential for more surplus to be both collected and redistributed in the borough as a medium to short-term solution to food insecurity.
- 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.
- Embed food security into a wide range of Council agendas (e.g. Healthy Schools/ planning/ housing/ regeneration).

Find out more at
southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

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