

COOKING UP IDEAS:

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF FOOD
POVERTY IN KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

2016



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ENDORSEMENTS

I hope that putting forward a multi-sector approach will help to eradicate food poverty in Kensington and Chelsea. I trust that the findings of the report will provide a way forward for those working to end food poverty and bring about positive change in people's lives.

Cath Vadhia, Information and Advice, Age UK Kensington and Chelsea

Kensington and Chelsea Social Council have raised such an important issue related to food poverty in the borough, and produced a beneficial, and easy to read food map of the location of food aid providers in the borough.

Billy McGranaghan, Dads House

The report addresses an important issue of food poverty faced by a disadvantaged section of the community in one of the richest boroughs in the world. It also explored the reasons behind the causes of the problem. More importantly the report addresses a particularly disadvantaged community: refugees and asylum seekers who have different social and cultural experiences related to the matter.

Ali Mohammed, Eritrean Lowlanders League, Kensington and Chelsea

The rise in food poverty and resultant increase in those needing to access food banks are areas of genuine concern. Fortunately, there is a cross-sector recognition of this with Kensington and Chelsea and a willingness to work to address it. This well-written and properly thought through report offers a much needed way forward.

Jamie Renton, Chief Executive, Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea

This report contains timely research into disparities in income in the borough, causing more & more to resort to food banks. At a time when over 16 million people in the U.K. have savings of less than £100, it is right that the plight of low income families is highlighted.

Keith Usher and Firoozeh Fattahi, Citizens Advice Kensington and Chelsea

This report uncovers a growing problem at the heart of the community which usually goes unnoticed due to stigma attached to poverty. It brings to light that families and individuals are living in poverty and going without in a borough where people are seen to be more advantaged. As the problem grows, the reasons for this are uncovered in this report in a way accessible to all.

Nadia Elbhiri, Older Person's Outreach Project Leader, Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Project.

Hunger and food bank use have become increasingly prominent issues in public debate over the past few years, but those debates have often generated more heat than light. CPAG therefore welcomes this research, which explores the experiences of many of those at the sharp end of poverty, and proposes practical solutions to help alleviate the challenges they face.

Moussa Haddad, Senior Policy Officer, Child Poverty Action Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last 15 years charitable food aid provision has been expanding at an unprecedented level to meet the needs of people experiencing food poverty (see Lambie-Mumford 2015). Trussell Trust statistics on the use of food banks shows us that the national picture of a growing demand and supply of food aid provision is simultaneously reflected at a local level in Kensington and Chelsea.

'Food poverty is the inability to access or afford healthy food' (cited in GLA 2013, p7). This report is based on a series of interviews with food aid providers and users to gain a better understanding of food poverty at the local level. At the core of our analysis is the recognition of the human right to food. We raise the compelling question on why we are seeing people going hungry and using food aid provision in Kensington and Chelsea?

More importantly, our research throws light on a relatively unexplored area of food aid provision. We make a necessary distinction between formal food banks and informal food aid provision - that equally seek to alleviate food poverty in the borough. Where research has mainly focused on the former, our study prioritises the latter. We demonstrate how community action in Kensington and Chelsea



has been responding (amongst challenges and opportunities) to the needs of its residents experiencing food poverty. This form of action is relatively unaccounted for in literature and moreover far from reflected in official statistics on food poverty. The statistics the government currently holds on food poverty relate to people accessing formal food banks only, and the larger food banks have already expressed this as an area of concern to government, arguing that many more are indeed experiencing food poverty. We therefore make a stronger case for this argument in the report to understand the true scale of food poverty in the modern day.

Looking forward, while we highlight the factors inducing local residents into food poverty through our participative research, we also put forward a multi-sector approach to tackling food poverty and the appearances of food aid or food banks in our community in Kensington and Chelsea.

KEY FINDINGS:

- In the interviews we conducted we found the most recurrent causes of food poverty to be: rising living costs, low pay and insecure work and benefit reforms.
- Our interviews also suggested some people were experiencing 'hidden hunger', whereby due to stigma attached to using a food bank or aid certain vulnerable groups were deterred from their use.
- The interviews also highlighted certain vulnerable groups that were experiencing the worst effects of food poverty: children, low income families, refugees or those with asylum status, single parents, and the homeless.
- Our interviews with voluntary sector organisations providing food aid, suggested several challenges: the general insufficiency of formal aid, referral systems needing to be strengthened, better community outreach, improvements in food quality and cultural appropriateness and better funding and operational facilities. We also highlight several opportunities: sector cooperation, private partnerships, a community supermarket, the adoption of the London Living Wage and a conversation with government on the role of the voluntary sector on providing food aid in the future.

BACKGROUND

RATIONALE

The 'Cooking up ideas: Addressing the challenges of food poverty in Kensington and Chelsea' study stemmed from a consultation with the members of the Poverty and Inequality Network in Kensington and Chelsea. Amongst members there was consensus that there was a need to understand the rise of food banks, who is accessing them and what is being done in the community to tackle food poverty.

The aims of the project therefore were to raise the profile of the voluntary and community sector's (VCS) experiences of mobilising on the issue of food poverty, an area relatively under-explored in research. It also aimed to identify specific local needs, in addition to the existing socio-economic and individual characteristics (such as old age or refugee status) that have pushed residents into food poverty. By doing this, the research seeks to inform the local debate on the causes of food poverty, seek local solutions to help alleviate the causes and simultaneously facilitate innovative thinking on new ways to address food poverty.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most comprehensive definitions of food poverty or food insecurity was provided by the academic, Elizabeth Dowler:

The physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet [people's] dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, and the confidence that access can be assured in the immediate and long-term future, alongside the freedom not to have to make trade-offs between immediate poor nutritional status and long-term livelihood sustainability (2012, p4).

The Trussell Trust is the largest provider of food aid in the UK, other notable ones being Foodshare and Food Cycle. The Trussell Trust's data on food bank use is the most robust nationally collected statistics across the UK. It is well recognised, however Trussell Trust is not the only food aid provider. A wider network of other charities and independent providers are also in operation. In Kensington and Chelsea alone, our research highlights that there are at least seven food aid providers. This means there is a greater number of people using food aid not captured in national and local statistics. It suggests the "true scale of food poverty is therefore under-reported" (cited in Cooper et al 2014, p7).

FOOD POVERTY

To put food poverty into context, currently there are 13 million people estimated to be suffering from poverty in the UK with an estimate of 4-5 million suffering from food poverty (Dowler 2012; Food Ethics 2013). However, unlike fuel poverty, there is no official definition of food poverty, so the exact numbers of people affected in the UK are not known (CEBR 2012).

When we refer to 'food poverty' in this report we mean the 'problem' which causes people to seek food aid. This usually refers to the lack of access to food; and 'hunger', 'food poverty' and 'food security' have all been used interchangeably to describe this experience (see Lambie-Mumford 2015).

In the official government definition, a link is drawn between poverty and healthy food, and food poverty is therefore defined as: "the inability to afford, or to have access to food to make up a healthy diet" (Department of Health 2005, p7). A number of studies have articulated the issue of food poverty as a human rights issue using a right to food argument, an approach that is advocated for and developed in our report (Lambie-Mumford 2015, p6; Just Fair 2014)

Oxfam reported that food prices have increased by 30.5% in the last 5 years – that is 2.5 times the rate of increase in the National Minimum Wage – meaning for many work is not paying, leaving them to undergo crisis management and seek food aid from suppliers (Haddad 2012).

FOOD BANKS

A food bank is a non-profit organisation that receives food donations (including food that would otherwise go to landfill) from the food industry or public to distribute to those in need. For the purposes of this report, we define an informal food bank or food aid provider as a local group or charity that offers free food directly to residents in response to tackling food poverty.

Food banks are no new phenomena in the UK. They have existed for a long time. As recent as 2013, the coalition government had been hesitant to highlight them as they have been run mainly by faith-based and other voluntary organisations. However, the issue has received a high political and media profile since the publications of Trussell Trust statistics on the rapid proliferation of food banks since the recession (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014, 2015). In addition, there was a report from the Parliamentary inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty (Food Poverty Inquiry 2014) which later drew further attention to the issue (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014, 2015). A number of national reports have followed since then on the rise of food poverty (see also Perry et al 2014), but publications taking a local focus have been scarce, whilst virtually none represent the issue in Kensington and Chelsea.

The latest figures by The Trussell Trust shows that (formal) food bank use remains at record levels, increasing 2% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 1,109,309 three-day emergency food supplies were provided to people in crisis by the charity's network across the UK, of 424 food banks in the 2015/16 financial year, compared to 1,084,604 in 2014/15. Of this number, 415,866 went to children. This is a measure of volume rather than unique users (Trussell Trust 2016).

According to the Trussell Trust the most common reasons for people using formal food banks were: benefit delays, reduction or withdrawal of benefits and low income (2016).

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

In 2015-16, Kensington and Chelsea Foodbank (delivered by Trussell Trust) provided 1,074 three-day emergency food supplies to local people in crisis. In the previous year 2014-15, Kensington and Chelsea Foodbank provided 992 three-day emergency food supplies to local people in crisis (Trussell Trust 2016).

The Royal borough is therefore seeing an increase in demand for supply of food aid which indicates that demand could be expected to rise in the future given on-going changes to welfare benefits and the persistence of low income (see Trussell Trust 2016).

Indeed the increase of food poverty in the borough as a result of welfare cuts reported by local food schemes was first highlighted in the 2013-14 Kensington and Chelsea JSNA Highlights Report when looking at the health challenges for its residents (2014).

'HIDDEN POVERTY': THE RISE OF INFORMAL FOOD BANKS

Voluntary and community organisations are recognised across local and central government as being well placed to understand and respond to local need. Many organisations within Kensington and Chelsea are small and locally based, delivering services for defined areas of the borough or for specific communities. It is therefore reasonable to assume that such organisations will have a good understanding of the issues facing the people they are set up to support. A report provided by the Local Government Information Unit highlights this through stating local charities 'can display a capacity to maintain self-help within their communities.' Local organisations 'know their communities intimately. They can respond effectively to local needs. They can be agents of change' (2014, p9).

Based on this premise, local organisations are likely to know if the people they interact with through their services are suffering from hunger poverty, or know people that are. At the core of our research is a recognition of the array of community organising carried out by local groups to help alleviate hunger poverty for their residents. While it is formal food banks that have been highlighted in national reports and conversations, the mobilisation and support offered by local groups is unknown in research. The lack of local intelligence on voluntary food aid provision suggests that the scale of food poverty goes beyond the number provided by larger food banks.

METHODOLOGY

This project utilises a multi-method research approach. It is important to begin by representing numerically the use and rise of food aid, in this case through the more formal channels of referrals to the largest food bank, The Trussell Trust.

The Trussell Trust, operates the largest franchise of food banks, and collects statistics on their referrals across the country. Meanwhile, informal food aid providers largely do not collect such information in a systematic manner.

With this in mind, and given the research constraints on accessing a comprehensive picture of the use of food aid provision at a borough level, our research combines the statistical data from Trussell Trust with in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with two target groups: seven interviews with local groups that offer food aid in the borough to capture experiences of community organising, and a further seven interviews with their service users to gain a better understanding of the causes of food poverty and their experiences of using the service.

The final approach involved two focus groups, one with 13 and the other with three participants from local and regional charities delivering food aid and/or knowledge of food poverty. The aim of the discussions were firstly to stimulate innovation on local approaches to strengthening the sector's response and models of working. Secondly, to advise the local authority on how policy can be improved to reduce the risks of hunger poverty in a first world country, and more pertinently in the wealthiest borough in London.

Our study draws on our findings to develop our analysis and local policy recommendations. We also set out the national picture in the first chapter to provide some context and background to the relationship between crisis management, hunger poverty, and the use and rise of food banks in the UK.

THE RISE OF FOOD AID

GROWTH IN EMERGENCY FOOD PROVISION

The growing provision and uptake of food aid in the last five years demonstrates food poverty as one of the biggest poverty issues affecting the UK. The number of Trussell Trust three-day emergency food aid supplies had risen to 1,109,309 in 2015-16 from 1,084,604 in 2014-15 (2016). As the voluntary and community sector in Kensington

and Chelsea, we are aware of other local charities that also provide food aid to residents. This means that the figures on people receiving food aid is at a larger scale than previously recognised.

A Trussell Trust report suggests that the rising costs of living have hit Britain's poorest the hardest. Britain experienced the highest rate of general inflation over the ten-year period from 2003 to 2013 with prices increasing by 30.4%. This compares to increases of 28.4% in the United States,

19.8% in France and 19.6% in Germany (APPG into hunger 2014).

The right to adequate food was originally enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), which recognised the 'right to food' as a basic human right. Ratified by the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s- this begs the question: why are people in a first-world country going hungry in 2016?



SUPPLY AND DEMAND

A recent report by Goldsmiths, University of London suggests that the food bank model has a number of supply and demand effects. And that this influenced the development of food aid provision in recent years across the UK (Green et al 2014).

On the supply side, we find that social action is a key driver in the acceleration of food banks. Turning to the demand side for emergency food provision, it is thought that this falls into two inter-related areas: 'rising food prices' and 'tough economic times' (cited in Green et al 2014, p11). These two areas will be further explored in the following section.

CAUSES OF FOOD POVERTY

FOOD PRICES

According to the report by Kellogg's and the Centre of Economics and Business Research (CEBR), it is estimated that the poorest 10% of households in the UK spent nearly a quarter (23.8%) of their gross income on food and non-alcoholic beverages in 2012. This is in contrast to the richest 10% of households who spent 4.2% on food. Certain vulnerable groups such as, pensioners, low-income and single parent households are being hit the hardest, by paying the highest percentage of household income on food (2012).

The same report also noted that while people were spending more on food, less were actually consuming nutritious food. The poorest households are therefore cutting back on foods like fruit by 20% and vegetables by 12% between 2007 and 2012. While substituting to cheaper products helps higher income groups, those already suffering hardship suffer most as they already buy the cheapest products (Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2012).

It was also projected that the average household food bill is expected to increase by £357 between the years 2012-2017, reaching £3,297 up from £2,940 in 2011. Food spending, then, is likely to continue taking up a higher share of household incomes in comparison to 2007 (CEBR 2012).

THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY

The Goldsmiths University report suggests that government austerity measures have contributed more to the rise in food poverty than the global economic crisis itself (Green et al 2014).

In 2015/16, the Trussell Trust revealed that the three most common reasons for people being referred to food banks in London were:



- Benefit delays (27%)
- Low income (21%)
- Benefit changes (11%)

(Sources: Trussell Trust 2016)

The above categories vary slightly from the 2013 findings of the London Assembly, which found people being referred to Trussell Trust food banks in London for the following top reasons:



- Benefit delays (24%)
- Low income 21%
- Unemployment (10%)

(Source: GLA 2013)

It is interesting that the variable between these two reports from 2013 to current was the switch to benefit changes which has superseded unemployment in recent times.

WELFARE REFORMS AND IN-WORK POVERTY

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) was introduced by the Coalition government as a radical overhaul to the social security system. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) notes that the changes were driven by four outlined policy proposals:

- Reducing the welfare bill
- Simplifying the benefits system
- Protecting the most vulnerable in society
- Creating a system that incentivises work

Other key areas of the change have been:

- Replacing Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments
- Restricting Housing Benefits for social tenants whose accommodation is larger than needed (removal of the spare room subsidy)
- Setting the Local Housing Allowance by the Consumer Price Index (a measure of consumer price inflation)

- Limiting the payment of income-related Employment Support Allowance to a 12-month period
- Capping the total amount of certain benefits you can get if you are working age
- Introducing a tougher system of sanctions

A key welfare reform has been the Universal Credit. Universal Credit, is a single benefit which replaces the six existing means-tested benefits: Jobseeker's Allowance; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Income Support; Child Tax Credit; Working Tax Credit; and Housing Benefit (cited in Finnegan 2016).

The NCVO notes that research by the London School of Economics found that social housing tenants experiencing benefit sanctions were still less encouraged to find work (cited in Finnegan 2016).

Recent studies have additionally indicated that despite policies to support people into employment, and falls in worklessness (people living in households with no earnings), these measures have not been enough to lift people out of poverty. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reports that meanwhile there have been increases in people in households with low earnings and falls in high-earners. These changes in earnings have subsequently pushed up poverty (Belfield et al 2016).

THE PICTURE IN KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

KCSC's report, titled: 'Private Renters' Rights' confirmed that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is the most unaffordable borough for private renting in London (Khatun 2015). The borough also had one of the highest rates (fourth) of households in temporary accommodation in March 2015 in London (Aldridge et al 2015).

In relation to employment and low pay, the number of workless households slightly rose in the borough between 2011 and 2014, while it fell for the rest of London in the same period. While the borough has fewer low paid residents, it has more low paid jobs compared to the rest of London. However, the proportion of low paid residents increased from 7% to 13% in the period 2010 to 2014, at a similar rate to London (14% to 21%). The borough has a higher rate of lower paid jobs (19%) than the rest of London (17%) (Aldridge et al 2015).

CHARITY FOOD AID: THE NEW WELFARE STATE?

As already established, there is a close relationship between welfare cuts and the rise of food aid provision by the voluntary and community sector.

So how is it that the voluntary and community sector and faith based organisations are bearing the brunt of dealing with food poverty amongst their local residents and beyond? Since the economic crash in 2008, the coalition (2010-2015) and existing government have responded with widespread cuts to services and to social security (cited in Lambie-Mumford 2015). Food banks have come to represent this changed welfare state (cited in Lambie-Mumford 2015). A number of organisations locally in Kensington and Chelsea have then taken the initiative to set up their own provisions which they see resulting from welfare cuts.

What does this growing need for food aid mean for local charities in the long-term? It is now a given that there is a co-dependent relationship between the cuts or withdrawal of the welfare state and the growth in need and supply for food aid. Whilst there are obvious concerns that food aid charities are left to fill the gaps, it is of greater concern that both formal and informal food aid may be becoming an extension of the welfare state and ultimately enabling its further removal (cited in Lambie-Mumford 2015).

WHY ARE RESIDENTS ACCESSING FOOD AID?

Food poverty is a complex economic and social phenomenon and there are multiple drivers for it. Low income, welfare reform, rising prices and food deserts all play a part (GLA 2013).

All seven users we interviewed spoke of a range of circumstances that led them to use food aid in the borough. Contrary to popular view, the food banks were being utilised by a diversity of people. We noted one example where a user had previously worked in

investment banking, but due to unforeseen circumstances and ill health was out of work and now using food aid.

While it is important to capture general drivers it is equally significant to address those most vulnerable and at the sharp end of this hardship. We therefore spotlight particular disadvantaged groups, such as: refugees, single parents, and children/parents from low-income families.

LIVING COSTS

A report by the Greater London Authority, found that food poverty was driven principally by a reduced spending power. Low income or unemployment, coupled with problems of living expenses, debt repayments and pressing demands for keeping on top of bills and other essentials compounded people's circumstances leaving them to use food banks, especially by the end of the month when they were short of money (GLA 2013).

The JRF has shown that households in poverty are more likely (four times) to be behind on a household bill, and any exponential rise in price of essentials will leave exposed these families the most (2016).

A common experience for all users in our research therefore related to the increase in living costs. While both single people and families were struggling with living costs, it was felt that families and single parents were most affected.



One food aid provider stated that even if a person has a job, they can struggle making ends meet for their children. For some paying bills, tube fares, rent, food and other essentials means they have to sometimes compromise on food. One client told us: 'maybe when you've got more spending for this and ...this, you don't have enough money for food.'

The food aid provision therefore enables them to subsidise their budgets: 'because I spend less on shopping it means I can use that money for my bills or my rent.'

LOW PAY AND INSECURE WORK

In London, low pay is a persistent problem, and in Kensington and Chelsea it has only risen in recent years. In Kensington and Chelsea, the proportion of low paid residents increased from 7% to 13% in the period 2010 to 2014, at a similar rate to London (14% to 21%).

There is a link between food poverty and income poverty, but they are not synonymous. The GLA report suggests that 'careful budgeting, cooking skills – and chance – can keep a low-income family from food poverty' (GLA 2013). However, one user told us that: 'I... know families that are working and are still struggling, they're two income families and still struggling.'

Low income families are further challenged due to the inability to accrue savings. Their household budgets may not stretch to cover an unexpected bill or expenditure. The 'risk of food poverty is therefore particularly acute at crisis points' (cited in GLA 2013, p10).

An additional issue concerning employment relates to insecure work. A user who was intermittently using food aid told us how he became trapped by temporary work, stating that he:

"just [does] seasonal contracts. That's all I've been getting recently."

He went onto say that:

"I mean I have found work but not really permanent work for a while now, I can't really judge how long that is. I worked earlier this year but within this year I've been mainly unemployed."

BENEFITS

Changes to social security including Personal Independence Payments, Housing Benefit, caps and sanctions have a disproportionate impact on low-income families (cited in Herden et al 2015).

A large proportion of the users we spoke to considered cuts to social welfare as a significant issue:

"I think since the cuts to benefits a year or two ago happened that it's put a lot of people in trouble."

One participant told us that they had first come to the food bank when they experienced problems with their Jobseekers Allowance.

For another participant social security was a necessity for their health reasons: 'I've had my money cut. I've had my DLA stopped, saying I'm not disabled enough so it's really impacted me a lot.'

VULNERABLE GROUPS

This section highlights the voices of the vulnerable groups we interviewed that were accessing informal food aid.

CHILDREN FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

In the UK, more than half a million children live in families where they are unable to afford a minimally acceptable diet (Cooper et al 2014). In addition, a London Assembly survey of teachers in 2012 showed that: 'over 95 per cent of teachers reported some children arrive at school hungry' (2013). One user told us: 'my kids love their fruit, but it's so expensive to shop in the shops right now.' Other research has also shown that families were 'trading down' from providing the best sources of food for their children given the high costs of these items (see GLA 2013).

REFUGEE/ASYLUM STATUS

In addition to our research, the London Borough of Lambeth found 27% of refugees had 'no recourse to public funds'. This is because their immigration status 'disqualifies them... from public funds and they consequently fall outside the welfare safety net' (cited in GLA 2013, p10). Our research highlights this persistent problem requires urgent attention especially as the borough seeks to increase the intake of new refugees.

One local charity organiser told us the following:

"[We've had] people that have at some point been refugees and they're now being housed in the UK...but they are still vulnerable because...their nationality or community doesn't have that level of network infrastructure in place... The majority are Eritreans and Sudanese, from the same culture and things like that... and they need housing and they need benefits. They need training, they need education."

SINGLE PARENTS

The Trussell Trust suggests that single parents, of which 89% are women, are twice as likely to be living in poverty than couple families (2014). Single parent households will also spend more than 10% of their income (before tax) on food and non-alcoholic drink, at 12.2% (CEBR 2012), a significant portion.

One single parent told us about her perils of making ends meet:

“Because [I’m] always short of pay on my own, [a] single mother, always short of money... especially with teenage children. They want this and that and that and... you completely have to set a cap on food.”

HOMELESS

In 2014/15 roughly 420 people were accepted as homeless by the Royal Borough (London Poverty Profile 2016). A food aid provider who works with homeless people reports that an ex-serviceman with post-traumatic stress syndrome, whose marriage had broken down ‘became homeless... [lived] on the street... and [couldn’t] work...because they [hadn’t] got a home.’ Another community organiser, told us about some of the limitations for accessing food aid for homeless people in the borough:

‘There are no places in Kensington and Chelsea that are known by homeless people to congregate to come and get food. When we feed in Westminster these places are actually known by homeless people.’

CASE STUDY: A LOCAL FOOD AID PROVIDER

HISTORY

The Dalgarno Trust foodbank grew out of partnerships with various businesses to provide food to homeless people. With a surplus of food left over at the end of their sessions it was put to better use by offering the food to local residents. The scheme first operated on a word of mouth basis. With demand quickly growing, the Trust decided to organise the scheme more formally, creating the Dalgarno foodbank in 2011.

USAGE

Despite a more organised structure from other informal food aid provision, Dalgarno stayed away from a means tested criteria for the foodbank. It was feared that stigma attached to admitting the need for support would deter users. The decision proved effective; the foodbank has since registered over 300 users into its database, and serves an average of 30 to 40 clients each week.

ADMINISTRATION

The foodbank is run by volunteers. Many of these volunteers are or have been users of the foodbank, with other residents also contributing. Dalgarno has been assisted by the Kensington and Chelsea Social Foundation's 'Business in the Community' initiative, which enabled them access to corporate volunteers participating in their employer's Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.



FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

The foodbank remains unfunded- excluding the wages paid to staff in the foodbank's formative stages. The Dalgarno Trust funds its foodbank service from donations.

The foodbank has partnerships with various organisations to ensure that it can supply its clients with substantial, quality food. Private partners include Harrods and Marks & Spencer, whilst philanthropic sources such as City Harvest, St Francis Church and St Mary Abbots Church also make significant contributions.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

The services provided by the foodbank are not exclusively food-related, and extend to health and wellbeing. The foodbank acts as a referral agency, directing its clients to external sources of support for issues such as hunger, addiction and mental health problems, as well as providing its own one-to-one support and awareness services.

The foodbank has made a number of efforts to promote social wellbeing as part of its services. Two years ago it began hosting monthly art classes for

its users run by a local resident. The Christmas meal initiative is another example. Here, vouchers donated by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation- which can be exchanged for an entire Christmas meal including a whole turkey- were given to twenty of the foodbank's most disadvantaged clients.

The foodbank also works towards physical wellbeing. Its partnership with the Munro Health Cooperative has allowed clients afflicted with physical difficulties to attend sessions of physiotherapy, and the foodbank regularly hosts healthy eating sessions encouraging its clients to improve their lifestyles.



MAP OF LOCAL FOOD AID

1	ERITREAN LOWLANDERS LEAGUE	
OPEN: SAT * 4:00pm - 8:00pm *occasional	The Dalgarno Trust, 1 Webb Close, Dalgarno Way, London, W10 5QB	
	USAGE CRITERIA	
	Food is provided by members of the local East African community, and shared at community meals.	

2	DALGARNO FOOD BANK	
OPEN: THURS 2:00pm - 3:30pm	The Dalgarno Trust, 1 Webb Close, Dalgarno Way, London, W10 5QB	
	USAGE CRITERIA	
	Dalgarno Foodbank has no formal criteria for use of its services.	

3	AL HASANIYA MOROCCAN WOMEN'S CENTRE	
OPEN: FRI 1:00pm - 3:30pm	Bays 4 and 5 Trellick Tower, Golborne Road, London, W10 5PL	
	USAGE CRITERIA	
	The Al Hasaniya Lunch Club is held for Arabic- speaking women over the age of 55.	

4	CARA TRUST FOOD BANK	
OPEN: MON - FRI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	240 Lancaster Road London, W11 4AH	
	USAGE CRITERIA	
	The Cara Trust foodbank works on behalf of people living with HIV who are in financial difficulty.	





SALVATION ARMY LUNCH CLUB	
OPEN: TUES 12:30pm - 1:30pm	205 Portobello Road, Notting Hill London, W11 1LU
	USAGE CRITERIA
	Open to people who are isolated, homeless or in crisis.

5

DADS HOUSE FOOD BANK	
OPEN: MON 10:00am - 6:00pm	300 Old Brompton Road Kensington, London, SW5 9JF
	USAGE CRITERIA
	Dads House has no formal criteria for use of its food services although primarily set up for single dads.

6

CHELSEA METHODIST CHURCH DROP IN (RAN IN ASSOCIATION WITH GLASS DOOR HOMELESS CHARITY)	
OPEN: M. T. Th. 9:00am - 2:00pm	155A King's Road London, SW3 5TX
	USAGE CRITERIA
	Food aid is provided for homeless guests who are registered with Glass Door. They also provide food for those in precarious housing.

7

KARIMAH'S CUISINA
Looking for a permanent location in Kensington and Chelsea. Food is currently distributed to local homeless people in Kensington and Chelsea by a team of volunteers.
KARIMAHCUISINAA@GMAIL.COM

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The voluntary and community sector has been at the frontline in providing food aid provision. We are well aware of the adversities faced by formal aid food banks, yet little is known

about the challenges other 'informal' food aid providers face. Equally, the contributions by community groups can sometimes be overlooked, and partnership working and

collaboration stifled as a result of the lack of information sharing. Subsequently, this section draws out many of these threads and some recommendations are made for alleviating these obstacles in the final chapter of the report.



CHALLENGES

INSUFFICIENT FORMAL AID

One theme that emerged strongly in our interviews with all seven local charities was that of insufficient food aid. One charity expressed the following:

"I come across a lot of foodbanks where you get a few items, you're allowed to go three times in a six-month period - unless you get a special exemption in which case it's usually six times in a six-month period. Sorry, if you're in need you're in need."

The local charities recurrently stated that one of the reasons for them establishing their own food aid provision was due to the insufficiency of- or restrictive requirements within- the referral system. As a result, a number of local charities have started up their own luncheon clubs, feeding the homeless or indeed their own informal food bank.

REFERRAL SYSTEMS

Some charities spoke of the bureaucracy of using a referral system, and how their client groups would rather use an informal food bank or, as a last resort, go hungry.

"You know, with the vouchers, GPs and the social services, and a lot of people go to the informal food banks, just to get away from that bureaucracy... Because these (formal) food banks require referrals most of these people won't access them. If instead it was something that was put out there for people to just walk in..."

STIGMA

A common theme that emerged from our interviews with users, local groups and during the focus group(s) was the problem of the 'stigma' associated with using a food bank (see also Green and Henri 2014). There was a general feeling that more people were in need, and there were 'hidden' groups that were difficult to reach, sometimes due to limitations around outreach, but in other cases due to the client's pride itself. One local group stated that:

"There's a lot of older people who are really embarrassed to say: 'listen, I don't have enough to get me by.'"

In another case a local group suggested that more formal food banks could be a deterrent to visit as 'a lot of people won't use them because it's too embarrassing.' There were also concerns that some people were turning down the offer to use a food aid: 'because they don't want people to see them collecting the food.' One user explained how the food aid provision is sometimes viewed by the community:

"People think 'oh' you know like 'I'm demonstrating I'm poor, I'm going to the...'. You know like the old- I've forgot what they call it- the workhouses that they used to have where you had to turn up at the soup kitchens. They see it as a sort of glorified soup kitchen."

Food banks and aid could do more to be culturally and socially sensitive: One community group stated that:

"I told some of our communities to come and select some food and they said 'no'. Because they don't want people to see them collecting that food because of the background maybe, because of the tradition."

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Two or more charities articulated how community outreach could be a stumbling block. The charities recognised that while they could take certain measures to better promote their work, it would involve a borough and sector-wide effort. One charity stated:

“A lot of [groups] don’t know exactly what we do in Kensington and Chelsea, because there’s no promotion.”

Another charity expressed the following reflections on their community outreach:

“I suspect that there are many people who could use our services who we don’t reach out to... I don’t know how we’re going to link. The support we are doing, we want to promote it, we want to make it better, we want to involve more people, we want to help more people.”

By the same token, the charities recognised that other services could support and ease the work of informal food banks better by signposting or working directly with informal food aid providers:

“The Job Centres who send us a few people here. These people don’t have smartphones, they get lost. I’ve had ladies... I had a lady, a foreign lady... spend four hours looking for our building... I’d like the Job Centres to target truly needy people... on a larger scale, and to give them our food bank business card... one side’s a map and where we are, the other side is how the food bank works, and... when we’re open.”

Another charity considered the representation of food aid provision across the borough to be uneven, with a preference for more food banks in the north of the borough:

“There’s two different sides to the borough, and I don’t think the food banks are placed where they should be. I mean, I think there should be more food banks in the north of the borough rather than towards the south where they’re less likely to be needed.”

This also demonstrated that there needs to be a better understanding of need across the borough and where foodbanks should be ideally placed.

FOOD QUALITY/APPROPRIATENESS

The local charities also informed us about the quality and appropriateness of the food that was being provided to service-users. Several issues emerged from our interviews, namely, cultural inappropriateness, scarcity of relevant food items and a lack of healthy and nutritious food. And two food aid providers were also concerned about the quality of the food.

Cultural appropriateness:

“The food we get sometimes doesn’t culturally match... Because a lot of the food bank recipients are African/ Afro-Caribbean.”

Food items:

“It’s just a matter of getting food that is something that a person would actually cook, rather than providing them with loads of healthy food that they have no idea what to do with. It needs to be more practical.”

Low quality:

“One issue that I have with them is that the food we do get tends to be lower quality, high-fat food.

[Interviewee would like to see] Lots of healthy, fresh food and vegetables, not so much of the processed foods. People cooking from scratch, you know?”

Healthy/nutritious:

“There’s lots of places you can go to the back of food shops and take food out of a bin or something. But to actually give homeless or- you know- needy people something healthy, that’s what we were really targeting, something healthy for them.

I think quality is an issue... People think oh because they’re needy let’s give them the rubbish, let’s just give them the rubbish.

We’re not talking about ‘good quality’ going to the Ritz for Afternoon Tea, we’re talking about brown rice that’s got minerals in it that will actually help their brain function in a better way.”

SPACE, STORAGE AND TRANSPORT

Two charities felt their food bank could be improved if they had more space and storage facilities. We heard of a food aid provider who had resorted to using their own wardrobe- filled with their evening dresses- to keep saucepans for cooking.

A respondent mentioned how they were successful in securing funding for some of their transportation. However, as the demand for food aid has grown the charity affirmed that:

“We should have our own van and ideally it should be a chilled van. You know, it doesn’t need to be a brand new one it should be a 3k second-hand...”

One charity proposed an inventive idea on how providing food aid to the homeless in the community could be done by the following:

“It would be great for us if we had a parking space and a mobile kitchen. You know one of those film set kitchens? That would be something fantastic for us. And we could drive to different places, cook on the spot, and that would be good.”

FUNDING

A significant, and partly foreseeable stumbling block to the progression of community action on food aid related to limited funding streams. Informal foodbanks are technically unfunded services that are based on the good will of volunteers and those who donate the food. What has been recognised is the need to ensure that there is a robust structure in place to guarantee an effective and efficient service, and this does require funding. Funding could help recruit a volunteer coordinator, fund transport for collection of food and perhaps pay for storage.

We have concerns that a small number of charities are sustaining their operation by using their own personal funds:

“The funding completely depends on us as individuals, and it is not enough.”

Another charity expressed how they encountered strict requirements on securing funding for their specific client group. We also heard about how lack of or limited funding presented additional challenges in relation to developing the service to provide a more holistic approach, collecting data/monitoring information and retaining staff and volunteers.

OPPORTUNITIES

SECTOR COOPERATION

A number of respondents spoke of the positive relationships they had with other community organisations and how they felt they benefited from them. For instance, one charity stated that food banks were well placed to signpost users to:

"...various other organisations. They can also help them with any problems they do have as well in regards to maybe housing benefit or income support or any local jobs that are going."

There were other constructive examples of partnerships and collaboration between local groups:

"We do work quite closely with a few organisations around here. We've ran workshops for the elderly on health and wellbeing, malnutrition, illnesses and diseases that they may come across and the causes of them. So, we've got quite strong ties to the community."

One charity suggested that capacity could be bumped up, if

"other organisations [gave] us one person and [said] this person will work for you and they will pay them."

PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Two of the charities we interviewed had established beneficial corporate partnerships. These partnerships enabled the charities to do more, and other charities are quickly realising the added value of being supported by a big brand with significant resources. Below are some of the statements from the respondents:

"Tescos used to give us donations for the foodbank. Wholefoods give us toys and donations of food. Waitrose have been amazing- they've been the best."

"We are very lucky in that I have a number of key corporate relationships with people like Harrods, people like Marks and Spencer, so what we get is incredibly good... We also have a direct relationship with Harrods. So for example at Christmas their corporate offices had a lot of Christmas puddings [so] they phoned me up and asked if I wanted the excess. You bet, I gave everybody... a Christmas pudding... If there is any opportunity to reflect on a company like Marks and Spencer's how important what they do is, and how appreciated it is both by our recipients and us... I'd give them a gold star."

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

During the two focus groups we ran with charities and local groups we collected some ideas along with our desk-based research on good practice models on where food aid provision could be improved and the ways in which food poverty could be tackled. We outline some key themes that emerged from these discussions.

A SOCIAL SUPERMARKET

Given the growing demand for food aid in the borough, an idea that was explored in our focus group pertained to a 'social supermarket.' The social supermarket has been piloted by 'The Company Shop', the UK's first 'social enterprise' supermarket. The latter is a community interest company, which was set up with the aim of assisting those 'on the cusp of food poverty' but 'wanting to make a positive step to change their lives' (see <http://community-shop.co.uk>). Members in receipt of certain means tested benefits can shop for surplus at 70% cheaper than usual prices from leading supermarkets.

In December 2014, a similar initiative was set up in West Norwood, Lambeth. Both these two have been funded by the Community Shop's parent organisation Company Shop. Following the set-up costs being covered, the store became self-funded, using sales revenue to sustain itself.

The latter was the result of negotiations between the Company Shop Ltd and Lambeth Council. The Council was

not responsible for financial assistance. Rather, it played a facilitating role, identifying a local unused building, agreeing a heavily reduced rent, securing relevant planning permissions, providing officer support and providing referrals once the store opened (see <http://community-shop.co.uk>).

THE LONDON LIVING WAGE AND TARGETED EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Reducing the effects of low income on the lives of those who access food aid is central to the goal of eradicating food poverty and long-term food insecurity. We welcome the council's commitment to the national living wage. We believe the council, could be maximising its local powers and modelling itself as a fair and progressive workers 'fair pay' champion.

The London Living Wage is an hourly rate, currently this is £9.40 for London (the UK rate being £8.25). Evidence has shown that paying the London Living Wage would lift thousands of families out of poverty (Citizens UK 2016).

CASE STUDY:

Leeds City Council and Leeds City Region have been working in partnership with Joseph Rowntree Foundation to tackle poverty by creating more and better jobs. This has included an emphasis on 'good growth' in their strategic economic plan; creating jobs through planning and procurement; targeted employment programmes for young people creation of a Leeds Low Pay Charter; development of in-work progression programmes; and a city region-wide, targeted employment and skills strategy. More than 2,000 young people were helped into employment, education and training through the Devolved Youth Contract as a result of the 2012 City Deal (cited in JRF 2016 p25).

DE-STIGMATISING FOOD AID USE

The supply of food aid provision could be extended to include more diverse food items, and laundry items. The food bank could be organised in a more social way as a community hub or social network, as the title 'food bank' or 'food aid' could pose some barriers to encourage people to use them. Such an approach will aid with establishing better community cohesion, integration and support those sometimes facing isolation.

This should go alongside a stronger referral system between the voluntary and statutory sector providers that can seek to de-stigmatise food aid use to engage people who are genuinely in need.

MAXIMISING PARTNERSHIPS WITH CORPORATES

There are already some positive examples of partnership working with corporates. VCO's could work together to better engage local and other businesses to increase and diversify supply of food, such as: healthy, culturally appropriate and cupboard items of food. The voluntary sector should work together to identify a more strategic approach to work with corporates and businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. LOCAL COUNCIL

‘WORLD’ SUPERMARKET

Given the diverse communities established in Kensington and Chelsea and our research findings which suggested a gap in food bank provision on diverse and culturally-appropriate food, the social supermarket, or what could be named the ‘world supermarket’ would meet that requirement. The administration and model of such an enterprise we recommend be debated and thought-out through a multi-sector plan with support of the Council.

FOOD AID IN KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA WEBSITE

A webpage to be set up sharing good practice and knowledge amongst food aid providers in the borough. The map of food aid provision to be hosted on the page along with relevant and up to date information for clients. The Council to support the Social Council with subsidising the costs of management of the web page.

REFERRAL SYSTEMS TO BE STRENGTHENED

Given the current limits of using a formal food bank (users can normally access three vouchers in a period of six months) and often the prolonged periods of crisis in a person’s life (short term work contracts, benefit sanctions or persisting low pay), we advocate that the statutory sector and frontline professionals should additionally refer users to informal food aid providers.

By the same token, referring users to informal food aid, must come with a recognition and support to the sector. If we are to encourage greater use of informal foodbanks through a more effective referral process then this should be supported through localised funding from the council, trusts and foundations.

WIDER PROMOTION OF LOCAL SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Currently, the Local Support Payment scheme is in operation across the tri-borough. It exists as a non-cash payment and is used for quality goods, second hand

furniture or white goods (such as a refrigerator or washing machine) or store vouchers or specific goods. A resident must be in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

While we welcome the council’s initiative to support residents experiencing a short term crisis, we believe wider promotion of the scheme could reach out to those most in need. We recommend the scheme along with other help is promoted with formal and informal food banks through a council leaflet campaign and promoted regularly through social media.

ADOPT THE LONDON LIVING WAGE

We believe the Council should also join the 25 of the 32 boroughs across London that are already committed to paying the London Living Wage (see GMB 2016). We have seen that the London Living Wage has been taken up by other local employers, such as WestWay Trust in January 2015 (see: www.westway.org). We therefore advocate that the council stipulate that any new tenders or outsourced contracts should follow suit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MONITORING OF FOOD POVERTY

In the absence of a national monitoring system of those who experience food poverty, we are unable to quantify the real number of people affected (see Taylor and Loopstra 2016). This raises many concerns, as our report has highlighted the potential that many more people are living in food poverty than expected. The current statistics are not robust enough to be given the status of national statistics or estimates. Without accurate or strong figures, the issue remains one of speculation and contestation, especially when seeking to influence public and policy debate on the matter.

We believe such a recommendation must be advocated at a grassroots level and the council plays a role in feeding this recommendation at a national level and proactively engaging in government and voluntary sector discussion on this area.

TACKLING IN-WORK AND WORKING AGE POVERTY

In a similar vein, while we advocate for an economic strategy on jobs and investment which prioritises employment and mobility for local residents, we recognise this is equally a national challenge. With poverty centred in working households and low pay a persistent factor inducing the rise of food banks, it is time for a national strategy to commit to ending working age and in-work poverty. The local council similarly plays a key role in highlighting to central government, and wherever possible committing at a local level to a stronger fairer and better paid jobs strategy.

FOOD BANKS AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Throughout the report we have raised an important question on whether food aid is naturally forming a part of the welfare state and its legitimacy. We therefore recommend a local and national government conversation to resolve this problem which is adding increased pressure on a sector already under severe challenge.

CONCLUSION

In this report we make a case that poverty is just as much a local issue as a national one. In the face of more localised services and the drive to localise power, we make a case for local solutions to tackle head-on the effects of food poverty in the borough.

It has been demonstrated that local groups are playing their part in supporting communities access the healthy food they require to nourish and sustain themselves, as a part and parcel of their basic human right. Often, we have heard that local groups are facing challenges to take full advantage of the support they offer. This is why we have made recommendations for a multi-sector approach involving the local council and private companies to work collaboratively and in an empowering manner to lift their communities out of food poverty.

Reverting to our original question posed in this report, we must ask again why people in a first world country are going hungry? Central and Local Government will need to work together to address this growing problem. Charities at all levels and in particular at the grassroots need to be included within the debate to advocate on behalf of communities experiencing hardship. We seek a society that works for all by tackling the roots of poverty and food poverty. The ideas set out in this report are part of that debate which we must build on collectively.

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