Recommendations & next steps

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Objectives

- To document the nature and extent of social inequality in dietary intake and eating patterns using existing data;
- To assess current policy responses to food poverty in Northern Ireland;
- To identify priority areas and make recommendations for current and future policy;
- To heighten awareness at both strategic and operational level of the issue of food poverty and the implications for public health and stimulate action on the same; and
- To provide clearer understanding and create opportunities for all island collaboration to tackle food poverty.

Methodology

Secondary Data Analysis
- Consumer surveys
- Current government policies / strategies

Primary Data Collection
- Consultation with key stakeholders
  - Interviews
  - Seminar
- Focus Groups
Conclusions......

• Food poverty is alive and well in Northern Ireland, as in the Republic of Ireland.

• That this is so within so called “civilised” society is unacceptable.

• Potential solutions lie in existing government policy frameworks – provided that they are delivered upon and are coupled with sustainable and proven practical interventions.

.....to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland...where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come.

To achieve this we need to pursue an innovative and productive economy and a fair society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal health and well being.
Recommendations

- at strategic level
- at operational / community level

Strategic Recommendations

- many of the solutions lie in existing policy.
- comprehensive mapping would help.
- need better linkages between policy development and delivery.
- implementation not always as robust as it needs to be.
Structure is important!

- The principals set down in the terms of reference for RPA must be upheld.
- Must improve the opportunity for integrated, joined up working.
- Mechanisms to allow cross transference of funding.
- Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater!

Resource allocation – Have we got it right?

- Public awareness V practical intervention
- Longer term, sustainable resourcing of what has been proven to work!
- Communication – case studies and “seed planting”
Operational/Community level

- Food subsidy/voucher scheme?
- Integrated with other cross cutting objectives e.g. Sustainable development
- Ongoing roll out and delivery of practical interventions that work

Food standards

- Further development of simplified food labeling
- Greater emphasis on food standards work within local authorities
Planning

• “Out of town” as a last resort!

• Serious consideration of policies and incentives to limit closure of small independent retailers – particularly in rural areas.

Public transport

• extend existing community transport schemes.

• Frequency of service – an issue for more rural communities?

• Consultation with users
Food retailers

• Radical rethink of policies and incentives on delivery of food shopping.

• alternatives to “online”

• Improved assistance for elderly or “less mobile” customers.

The school setting

• Health promoting schools – vital!

• Fit Futures Task Group recommendations - crucial
Wider debate, engagement and action!

- This report is a starting point.
- For the first time we now have a picture for the whole island.
- Need wider engagement and commitment to action at multidisciplinary and multisectoral level.
- Government (DHSSPS?) should facilitate.
“Before you finish eating breakfast this morning, you’ve depended on more than half the world.”

Martin Luther King

Everyone has the right to have access to safe and nutritious food.

In 2001 it was reported that four million people in the UK cannot afford to eat a healthy diet and therefore have an increased risk of developing conditions such as heart disease and cancer.
There is a greater percentage of the population in Northern Ireland on low incomes and dependant on benefits than in the rest of the UK.

29.6% of Northern Ireland's population was living in poverty in 2002/2003

OFMDFM 2007

The gap between those who have, and those who have not is greater now in the UK than at any time since the 1930s

In both the North and the South of Ireland, the all causes mortality rate in the lowest occupational class was 100%-200% higher than the rate in the highest occupational class.

Institute of Public Health, 2001
Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely to die before the age of 15 as children of professional parents  

General Consumer Council NI 2000

In 2002 only 3% of all Travellers were aged over 65 compared with 11% of settled population
A successful society is one where everyone is valued, has the opportunity to make the best of themselves and participate actively. It is a fair and just society. It is a society free from poverty where there is equality and peace. It is a society where everyone has an adequate standard of living and access to good quality services. To what extent has Ireland been able to use its economic growth to build such a society?

Combat Poverty 2003

“Every Society clings to a myth by which it lives; ours is the myth of economic progress.”
Chasing Progress, New Economics Foundation

The poor - will die, on average, in NI, 7 years earlier than those better off!
To deny any person their human rights is to challenge their very humanity
Nelson Mandela

Health must be seen not as a blessing to be wished for but as a human right to be fought for
Kofi Annan

Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning, it’s an end. And therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy
Elie Wiesel. White House Millennium Evening 12th April 1999
"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"

Martin Luther King
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has

Margaret Mead 1901 - 1978

In NI people over 75 are most likely to live in a house built before 1919 without central heating or deemed unfit and are also at higher risk than others to have an accident in the home

General Consumer Council 2000

There is a strong causal relationship between poor housing, fuel poverty and adverse health. 87% of winter deaths in ROI are persons aged 65 years old.

Combat Poverty Agency 2005
The main issue is whether one has a rights based template. I do not believe we, in the political theatre, have had a proper informed debate about that.

Micheal Martin TD 2003

No amount of rationalisation can take away the fact that homelessness is a blight on the Irish Community, a symptom of an illness in the body of society.

Father Peter McVerry
December 2004
......and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.  

Isaiah II