

Food Secure Barnet: Action Plan 2019-2021



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1. Vision for healthy weight in Barnet

In simple biological terms, a person’s weight is determined by energy balance: to maintain a stable weight, energy input must match energy requirements, and alterations to this will result in weight loss or weight gain. However, this energy balance is affected by a complex network of influences. A person’s weight is based on more than just their genetic makeup and simple conscious choices around what and how much they eat and exercise. Instead, we recognise that weight is also influenced by numerous factors beyond the control of an individual, including the accessibility of fast food, transportation, the impact of media and the wider determinants of health such as education, income and employment.

Our vision for health weight in Barnet is:

Those who are born, grow up, live, work and study in Barnet have every opportunity to adopt behaviours which support healthy weight maintenance. Barnet is a borough where residents are health literate and well-informed and where a healthy option is an easier option! This is delivered through mutual ownership and commitment across the borough. As a result, our collective actions optimise healthy growth and development, promoting active living, nutritious eating and psychosocial wellbeing.

Why is this plan is needed?

Due to the multitude of factors which influence healthy weight, Barnet has adopted a whole systems approach for implementing our healthy weight vision. It works across many different areas to enable residents to make healthier food choices and remain active for longer. One of our identified priority areas is food security. Food insecurity is defined as *the circumstances where a person does not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food in socially acceptable ways*. The Mayor’s Survey for Londoners (2019)¹ found that 11% of Barnet residents experience severe insecurity and in the Barnet Healthy Weight Survey (2018)², more than 1 in 4 respondents felt that they could not afford to prioritise the nutritious content of food over cost, indicating wider spread of moderate food insecurity. For a definition of mild, moderate and severe food insecurity please see Figure 1.

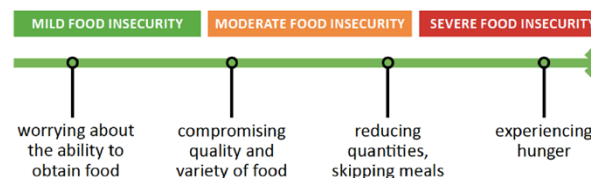


Figure 1. Different severity levels of food insecurity defined by FAO

¹ GLA (2019). Survey for Londoners. Available from, <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/survey-of-londoners-headline-findings>

² Barnet Public Health. (2018) Healthy Weight Survey Summary of Findings. Available from, <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-barnet/healthy-weight>



2. Summary of needs

Academic literature has found food insecurity to be associated with poor mental and physical wellbeing. Children living in food insecure households are at an elevated risk of anaemia, tooth decay and asthma. It also contributes to malnutrition and obesity across the lifecourse, as those on low incomes can find themselves unable to afford enough food, and/or are reliant on cheap, sugary and fatty foods low in nutrients³.

Before commencing work on this action plan, it was critical that we understood the breadth and depth of the issue in Barnet, particularly as the issue had not been measured on a national or local level previously. Therefore, an in-depth needs analysis was completed from April-December 2018. Expertise and support was provided by academics from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Southampton and University College London (UCL). The needs analysis started with a literature review, followed by a secondary data analysis and spatial analysis. This information was supplemented by focus groups conducted with frontline staff and third sector organisations to determine felt needs of food aid providers, as well as food insecurity questions within the healthy weight public survey conducted in November-December 2018. To further increase stakeholder engagement, a Food Security Summit was held with stakeholders to determine themes for the action plan and build momentum from the findings from the needs analysis.

Upon completion of the needs assessment and food security summit, the working group met quarterly to discuss appropriate actions for the plan.

Key findings from the assessment are outlined below.

Key findings

- Nationally, people with disabilities (both physical and learning disabilities), those on low incomes, 16-25 year olds who are vulnerably housed or care leavers, new migrants and isolated older adults are most at risk of food insecurity.
- In Barnet, the areas most at risk of food insecurity are West Hendon, Colindale, Burnt Oak and Underhill wards.
- Nearly 1 in 3 residents who responded to the Healthy Weight Survey felt they could not afford to prioritise the nutritious content of food over cost and 10% had to cut the size of meals or to skip meals because there wasn't enough money to buy more food.
- Food aid providers have proven themselves to be innovative, community-oriented and professional. However, they need support from the wider network to address the challenges of keeping their own operations going day-to-day and preventing clients from becoming long term recipients of food aid.

³ Further information on these findings are available in the Food Security Needs Assessment.



- There is strong demand for more data on the nature and scale of food insecurity, with interest from frontline staff in being more engaged in identifying and monitoring food insecurity trends.
- Food waste was consistently identified as a concern for food aid providers. Considering food insecurity and food waste in tandem will require partnerships with food retailers. Existing efforts, while laudable, we described as piecemeal, and lacking wider systemic and logistical support.

3. Project Vision

The long term vision for food security in Barnet is:

All residents, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life. We want to ensure people have such access consistently and reliably, without resorting to emergency supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies.

There are many factors which contribute to an affordable and consistent supply of high-quality food which are beyond the scope of local government or local community action, such as rising housing costs, changes to food stocks and welfare reform policies. Furthermore, achieving food security for all residents will take a significant amount of time, well beyond the 2021 lifetime of this plan. Therefore, the scope of this action plan is to build a collaborative network, governance structure and solid strategic foundation so that we can slowly build a comprehensive response to local food insecurity. This way we can adequately and appropriately respond should additional funding become available or national policies change.

Monitoring Plan

As an evolving area, there will be new actions and needs emerging on a continual basis. To ensure our response to food insecurity remains relevant to the needs of the population, this action plan is up until April 2021. The actions outlined below are incremental and intended to build momentum so that future versions of this plan have firm foundations to build on.

This timeframe has also been agreed so that we take fast and frequent action to achieve the aims of the plan over the next 18 months. All actions outlined were selected with time, staffing and financial considerations taken into account. As the first food security action plan for Barnet, there are several actions we can take which will have no financial implications and will require little officer time to implement. We will aim to achieve all key success indicators by January 2021, but have allowed ourselves additional time to build in contingency.

To ensure the plan remains on schedule for April 2021, the Food Security Working Group will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss progress, risks and challenges. An update on actions will also be reported to the Healthy Weight Strategic Group who already report overall progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board.



Membership for the food security working group includes key stakeholders, including: Barnet Homes, Public Health, Re, Young Barnet Foundation, Inclusion Barnet, Corporate Strategy and Communications and Adult Social Care.

4. Aims

There are three overarching aims for this plan:

- Tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity.
- Minimise the health impacts of chronic and emergency food insecurity.
- Support sustainability and resilience of third sector food aid providers.

Each aim has a series of objectives, a list of associated tasks and key success indicators. The rationale behind the split between tasks and key success indicators is to differentiate between actions that are essential to the success of the plan versus actions that might add additional value, but are not mandatory at this time. This will help ensure that we meet the April 2021 deadline for the plan and are able to remain flexible should other essential tasks present themselves. To help clarify the purpose of each aim, there are associated themes which group objectives together. For example, tackling the underlying causes of food insecurity involves both a policy approach and a food skills and budgeting approach from local government. The justification for each aim and theme is outlined at the beginning of each section.

Aim 1: Tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity.

The main role that the council can take to increase food security within the borough is to prevent it in the first instance. There are two themes within this aim: policy and food and budgeting skills. Integrating food security within council policy is a critical success factor for achieving the vision for the project as well as the overarching vision for healthy weight. Raising awareness of the vulnerabilities certain residents face, and by considering the ways that we deliver services for these residents, we can begin to develop food secure friendly policies across the council as a whole. The integration of food secure policies within wider council strategy will be underpinned by the multitude of evidence gathered with the needs analysis. The second theme, *food and budgeting skills*, is also valuable for us achieving the project vision. In the Barnet Healthy Weight Survey, more than half of residents felt that there were not enough affordable healthy options available in the borough. Although the council cannot control the cost of unhealthy/healthy foods on offer in the private sector, we can increase the food knowledge that residents have so that they can cook healthier meals that are affordable.

Objective	Annual Tasks	Lead	Stakeholders	Key success indicators
<i>Policy.</i> Get a commitment from different stakeholders about integrating food security into service areas when	Increase awareness of food security as an issue with key teams: care leavers, regeneration	Public Health	Family services, Children’s team, Adult Social Care, Re.	Each key service area/department pledges to consider food security within



policies/strategies are up for renewal.	<p>teams, Barnet Homes, Adult Social Care, social workers.</p> <p>Provide knowledge and specialist support for departments who need assistance implementing food secure policies into their service area.</p> <p>When completing internal and external consultation responses, identify opportunities to embed food insecurity within.</p>	Public Health		<p>service area plans and policies.</p> <p>Where relevant, each consultation response completed by public health will include reference to food security.</p>
<i>Policy.</i> Investigate new policies that the council can adopt which will help prevent food insecurity.	Review National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance for fuel poverty against actions currently adopted by the council.	Public Health	Environmental health, Barnet CCG, Barnet Homes	Adopt at least one additional NICE guideline on fuel poverty.
<i>Food and budgeting skills.</i> Improve access to food education and utility budgeting skills for residents.	<p>Provide online information and links to relevant websites online.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to integrate food budgeting and utility budgeting advice into the Barnet Homes webpage and within in-person services.</p>	<p>Public Health</p> <p>Food Security Working Group</p>	Public Health, Barnet Homes	<p>Launch Barnet One You website.</p> <p>Food budgeting and utility budgeting advice is available within relevant council & partners webpages.</p>
<i>Food and budgeting skills.</i> Identify people who would benefit from additional budget cooking training.	Frontline staff work to identify (anonymously) potential residents who would benefit from subsidised/free additional budget	Barnet Homes	Public Health	Pilot at least one 6 week budget cooking course following £1 meal scheme run in other councils.



	cooking training.			
	Test free budget cooking course with Barnet Southgate College.	Barnet Southgate College	Public Health	
	Explore options to run pilot budget cooking programme with UNITAS or at Community Hubs.	Public Health	UNITAS, Young Barnet Foundation	

Aim 2: Minimise the health impacts of chronic and emergency food insecurity

Although we want to prevent food insecurity in the first instance, there will be residents who will find themselves experiencing severe food insecurity and in need of additional support to ensure they are eating a balanced and nutritious diet. The two themes within this aim are: support vulnerable residents and food benefits maximisation. Many people who become dependent on food aid services suffer long term mental and physical ill health as a result. They may become reliant on specific types of foods which do not provide adequate nutrients to live a healthy life. By supporting vulnerable residents who are experiencing food insecurity, such as children or those with poor mental health, we can minimise these impacts, getting them the support they need sooner. The second theme, food benefits maximisation, was identified as a gap through our needs analysis. Barnet has low uptake of healthy start vouchers and free school meals, two schemes which are designed to support those at risk of food insecurity from having inadequate nutrients. With the limited funds available it is critical that we maximise the uptake of these free schemes.

Objective	Annual Tasks	Lead	Stakeholders	Key success indicators
<i>Support vulnerable residents.</i> Improve links between food aid services and primary care mental health support.	Embed food security knowledge within the Make Every Contact Count (MECC) Training.	Public Health	Family services, Children's team, Adult Social Care, Re., Barnet CCG	Inclusion of food insecurity information within online MECC training for London Borough of Barnet staff. Monitor whether food aid providers feel they know where to refer clients onwards through a qualitative questionnaire
	Provide food aid VCS organisations with up to date information on mental health employment services.	Barnet Homes		
	Conduct options appraisal to	Public Health		



	review potential primary care support within food bank plus models.			(January 2021).
<i>Support vulnerable residents.</i> Embed food security within social prescribing.	<p>Maximise referrals to local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) services which provide free/low cost hot meals or meals on wheels services, ensuring all staff are aware of local provision.</p> <p>Provide a list of community gardening groups that social prescribers can refer people to.</p> <p>Actively seek opportunities for funding and grants to fund meals on wheels or similar schemes.</p>	Public Health	AgeUK, Barnet CCG, Adult Social Care, Corporate Strategy and Communications team	All social prescribers in Barnet are aware of food insecurity as an issue and are aware of how to address it amongst patients.
<i>Support vulnerable residents.</i> Support at-risk children to access food 365 days of the year.	<p>Set up first free holiday hunger scheme in Barnet.</p> <p>Actively seek opportunities for funding and grants to expand holiday hunger programmes in Barnet.</p>	Young Barnet Foundation	Public Health, Food Security Working Group, UNITAS.	Develop at least one new low cost holiday hunger scheme within an at-risk area of the borough.
<i>Food benefits maximisation.</i> Actively encourage uptake of Free Schools Meals (FSM) in low uptake areas.	<p>Rapid assessment of reasons why FSM uptake is low (assessment of canteen set up, voucher claimant scheme etc.).</p> <p>Make appropriate changes and run relevant campaigns as a result of the rapid assessment.</p>	Food Security Working Group	Young Barnet Foundation, Cambridge Education Barnet Homes, Public Health.	Increase FSM uptake by 2% in targeted schools.



<p><i>Food benefits maximisation.</i> Increase uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers.</p>	<p>Work with businesses to encourage the number of businesses accepting healthy start vouchers.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to simplify the way that residents can obtain healthy start vouchers and actively seek opportunities to pilot new national healthy start prepaid card scheme.</p>	<p>Public Health</p>	<p>Public Health</p> <p>Barnet Homes</p>	<p>Provide a new up to date list for the Barnet website on vendors who accept healthy start vouchers, including markets.</p>
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Aim 3: Support sustainability and resilience of local food aid providers

In focus groups conducted with frontline staff and third sector organisations, it was clear there were many challenges that these organisations face when keeping their operations going day-to-day and preventing clients from becoming long term recipients of food aid. Although the other aims of this plan will also support these organisations, there are specific and direct actions that LBB and the Food Security Working Group can take to enhance this support. The three themes for these objectives are support, raise awareness and monitor. By providing support towards business engagement, volunteer capacity and referrals processes we can help relieve some of the pressures these organisations face. By monitoring use and changes in food insecurity within the borough we can enhance the data and support any future funding bids or grants. Finally, by raising awareness of food security with the general population we can highlight some of the great work these organisations do encouraging communities to engage and support.

Objective	Annual Tasks	Lead	Stakeholders	Key success indicators
<p><i>Support.</i> Promote opportunities to work with food aid organisations.</p>	<p>Promote food aid organisations as a volunteer opportunity within LBB employee volunteer scheme.</p> <p>Promote business partnerships with food aid organisations through promotion in the</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy and Communications team.</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Barnet.</p>	<p>Family services, Children’s team, Adult Social Care, Entrepreneurial Barnet.</p>	<p>VCS organisations feel supported by LBB when building business partnerships or when seeking new volunteers.</p>



	<p>Entrepreneurial Barnet newsletter and business breakfast lunches.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to encourage repurposing of leftover food for food aid use.</p>	Public Health		Options appraisal developed to develop food waste reduction plan.
<i>Support.</i> Provide resources to assist with referral processes	<p>Put together workshop presentation for lunch & learn events or department workshops on food security and how to identify the signs & symptoms.</p> <p>Finalise care pathways for chronic and emergency food insecurity so that third sector organisations and frontline staff know where to refer vulnerable residents.</p> <p>Publicise the care pathways.</p>	Public Health	Barnet Homes, Corporate Strategy and Communications Team	Publish care pathways for chronic food insecurity and emergency food insecurity on the LBB website.
<i>Raise awareness.</i> Run public campaigns to increase awareness of food security/insecurity.	<p>Consider running a WRAP Food Waste Warriors Campaign or Eat Well for Less campaign within the borough.</p> <p>Use council advertising space to encourage residents to use food leftovers.</p> <p>Provide information on the LBB website on food security with links to find out further</p>	Public Health	Corporate Strategy and Communications Team, Environment Team, Entrepreneurial Barnet.	<p>Run at least one public facing campaign relating to food security.</p> <p>Update the LBB website with information on food security for residents.</p>



	information.			
<i>Monitor.</i> Enhance ability to monitor food insecurity rates within the borough and whether needs have changed.	Explore opportunities to track foodbank referral voucher handouts and other food security action taken via the ECINS system already used by BOOST.	Public Health	Community Safety Team, BOOST, Young Barnet Foundation.	Provide an update on food security needs in the borough in April 2021, including information on referrals.

