



## Towards a collaborative Cambridge Food Action Plan: Are there food deserts in Cambridge?

### Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance: Interim report, July 2019

#### Does Cambridge have food deserts?

In an effort to answer this question, we looked at three of the most deprived wards in the city - Abbey/North-East Barnwell, East Chesterton and Trumpington. We considered the distance people may have to walk to the shop and what was available in those shops. There is no clear international consensus on what constitutes a food desert. However, we have used a definition by [Dr Hillary Shaw](#) who advises that **shoppers should not have to walk further than 500 metres to an outlet that sells healthy food**, and where possible we have compared prices, availability and range of produce.

**Example case study from Abbey/north-east Barnwell** (amongst the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK): The furthest someone needed to walk or travel to a store that sold a range of fresh produce (Tesco superstore) was 1.5 miles. Otherwise from the roads we measured, Fison Rd and Rawlyn Rd and the shortest distance was 320m and the longest 965m. The only food shops apart from the Tesco superstore are a One Stop and a Spar. In the One Stop there was no fresh fruit or veg and the shop assistant didn't know where the nearest shop selling fresh veg was. A customer with mobility issues in the shop at the time didn't know either although she guessed it might be Tesco. There was little choice in the Spar, although it did have a small range of vegetables and fruit at the back of the shop and pineapples and bananas close to the tills. Peaches were 50p each. Usually £1.25 for four in Tesco (31p each).

#### Challenges and learning

***"I usually go to a supermarket but have to take a taxi."***

Housing Association tenant (Towards a collaborative Food Poverty Action Plan – Oct.2018)

Choosing a measure for what constitutes a 'food desert' was a challenge. We went with a distance based approach primarily and then an availability/ price based approach as a secondary method of measuring. We would, given more resources to carry out a more in depth study in an attempt to incorporate a more consistent and uniform way of measurement across more than one approach.

#### Next steps

- Map 'food swamps' for comparison with food deserts.
- Use the data to build a better understanding of how food deserts impact health. For example by comparing the shops identified in this study with those accepting Healthy Start vouchers to see the potential range of available fruit and veg within walking distance for those receiving/ eligible for vouchers.

#### Outcomes

- We have identified specific areas of the city that are within a food desert.
- There is a correlation between low income wards of the city, instances of children being overweight/ obese and food deserts.