



Measuring and mapping food poverty and the local response

March 2018

Introduction

Food poverty alliances and partnerships have found it useful to map and/or measure levels of poverty or household food insecurity, as well as the local response to food poverty. Maps, charts and infographics can provide a helpful summary, as well as help to engage local people and decision makers by presenting information in a clear, concise and engaging way. Mapping can also be a useful tool to prompt further action. Alliances and networks that have conducted mapping and/or measuring have learnt that it is important to consider who will be using the information, what action you would like them to take and how any information can be maintained and reviewed.

This briefing highlights how a variety of areas have measured and mapped food poverty and the local response. A [Food Power webinar](#) in February 2018 included a summary of activities from around the UK, as well as presentations by Feeding Coventry about their 10 Facts document and by Greater Manchester Poverty Action on their Food Providers Map.

Measuring and/or mapping need

Surveys

There is no national measure of household food insecurity in the UK, however over the last few years, a coalition of organisations, politicians and experts have been calling on the UK Government to implement one. There are two methodologies which are recommended for this. The first is the [U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module](#) which includes a module for children aged 12 years or older. Some questions from this survey were used by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in their [Food and You Survey \(Wave 4\)](#) (see p26).

The second is the United Nations' eight questions in the [Food Insecurity Experience Scale \(FIES\)](#). The Scottish Government now includes some of these questions in a national survey and plans to include the full set of questions in due course. In the absence of national measurement, either of these sets of survey questions can still be used by local areas. Indeed if multiple local areas use the same questions this could allow for comparisons to be made (subject to the robustness of application).

In the absence of a national measure and moving away from specific measurement of food poverty, the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership wanted their local council to estimate the level of household food insecurity. Brighton & Hove Council therefore decided to ask people about their ability to meet basic living costs in their [annual City Tracker Survey](#) (p.37). The answers over the last four years have shown a level of consistency (roughly 1 in 5 say they are unable to meet basic living costs), indicating that food and fuel poverty is an ongoing pressing issue for Brighton & Hove.



Indicators and risk factors

There are also a number of data sources which can be used as indicators or risk factors for household food insecurity. These can be used to estimate the extent of food poverty and can help illustrate the local situation in the absence of an official measure. Public Health England provides useful profiles of key data such as [child poverty](#) (England only). Sustain's guide to [Developing Food Poverty Action Plans](#) suggests data sources for these indicators, as well as research possibilities for assessing the extent of poverty and food insecurity (p.3). These include indices of multiple deprivation, in and out of work benefit claims, discretionary support and uptake of specific entitlements such as free school meals and Healthy Start vouchers. The [Trussell Trust's experimental data visualisation tool](#) explores local demand and specific drivers for food bank use; the [Mapping Hunger](#) report presents background to developing the tool. The tool has not been funded beyond this pilot stage, but it is used internally by the Trussell Trust.

Mapping food access

The [Food Environment Assessment Tool](#) (FEAT) provides data on cafes, convenience stores, restaurants, speciality outlets, supermarkets and takeaways in England. The tool allows you to compare neighbourhoods and assess changes since 2014. [Good Food in Greenwich/ RLB Greenwich's Food Poverty Needs Assessment](#) maps different types of food retailers against deprivation data alongside 400m buffer zones indicating walking distance and proximity to schools (p.16-17). Several maps in the report cover food premises and markets, takeaways, confectionary and snack retailers and retailers accepting Healthy Start vouchers (p.25-31). [Mapping the Availability of Healthy Food in Sandwell](#) includes two maps contrasting the generally good walking access to food shops overall but the much more limited walking access to reasonably price fruit and vegetables. [Food Mapping for Community Food Activity: A Briefing Paper from the Scottish Community Diet Project Round Table Discussion](#) (2004) sets out the methodology for the Sandwell study and offers some advice on assessing community food access.

Conducting shopping basket surveys

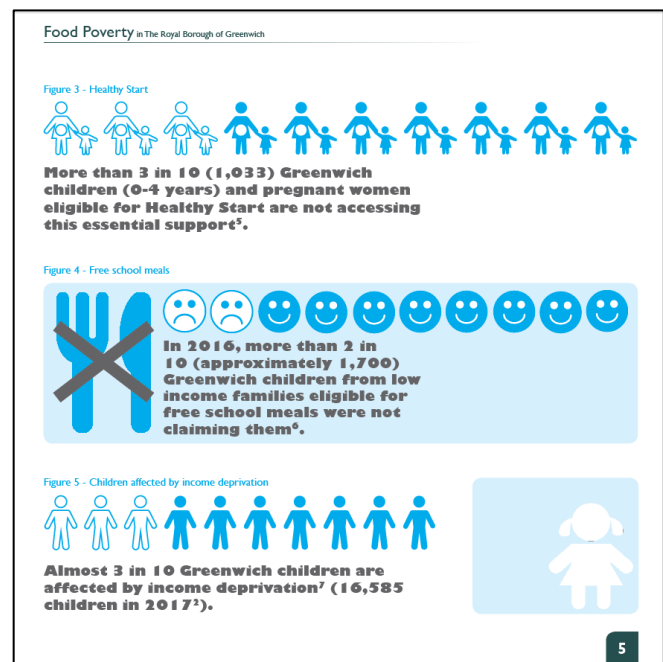
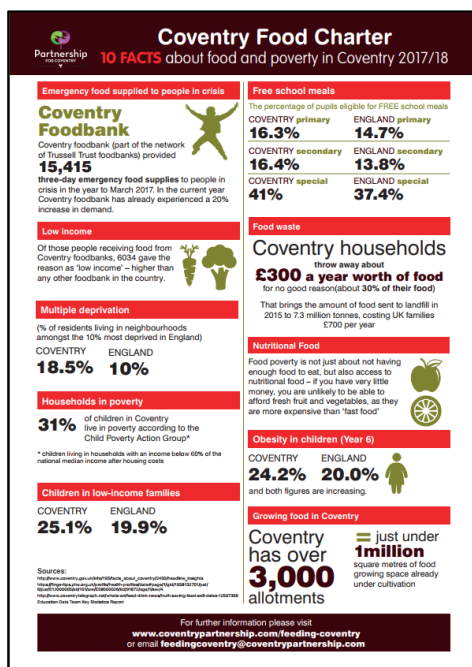
[Good Food in Greenwich/ RLB Greenwich's Food Poverty Needs Assessment](#) shopping basket survey assessed availability and price of a healthy shopping basket of 22 items in 35 shops (p.17-18, 33-36, 86). [Shopping for Food: Lessons from a London Borough](#) explores food access in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Importantly the study used food baskets and diets for four key communities - White British, Black Caribbean, Turkish and Black African (p.8-10). [A tale of two localities: Healthy eating on a restricted income](#) assesses availability in the Deepdale and Ingol areas of Preston using shopping baskets representing the cultural preferences of White British and South Asian families (p3-4).

Presenting data

Food Poverty Action Aberdeen's [Food Poverty/Insecurity in Aberdeen](#) (p.8) provides a summary of key indicators of the extent of food insecurity. The Partnership for Coventry produces a one-page document [10 Facts about food and poverty in Coventry](#) which it reviews annually (please note that this document is broader than food poverty only). Greenwich's summary of its food poverty needs assessment presents local indicators using infographics. The [Devon Strategic Partnership](#) has set out the definitions and indicators



which can be used to assess food poverty and have produced maps using this data. The New York City [Food Metrics Report 2017](#) uses infographics to present estimates of levels of household food insecurity and the ‘meal gap’ in different parts of the city (p.9-10).

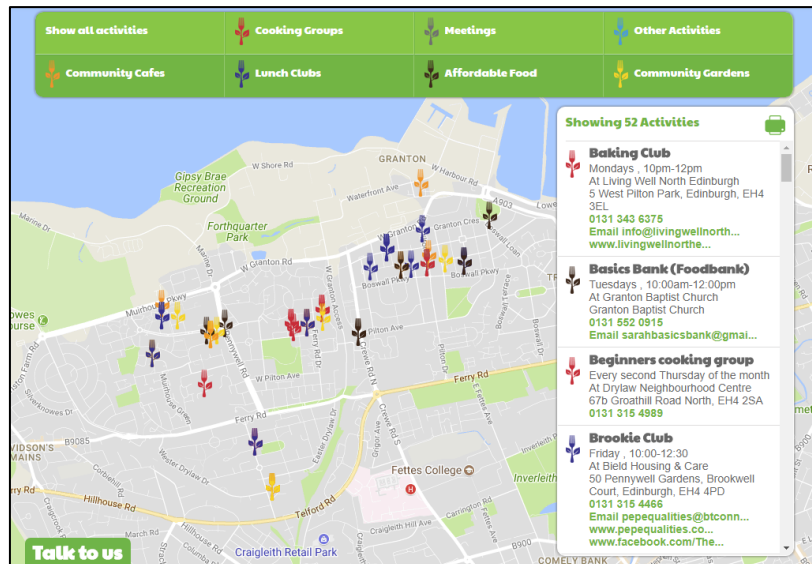


10 FACTS about food and poverty in Coventry 2017/18 (Coventry Food Partnership); Food Poverty 2017 (Royal Borough of Greenwich)

Mapping activities

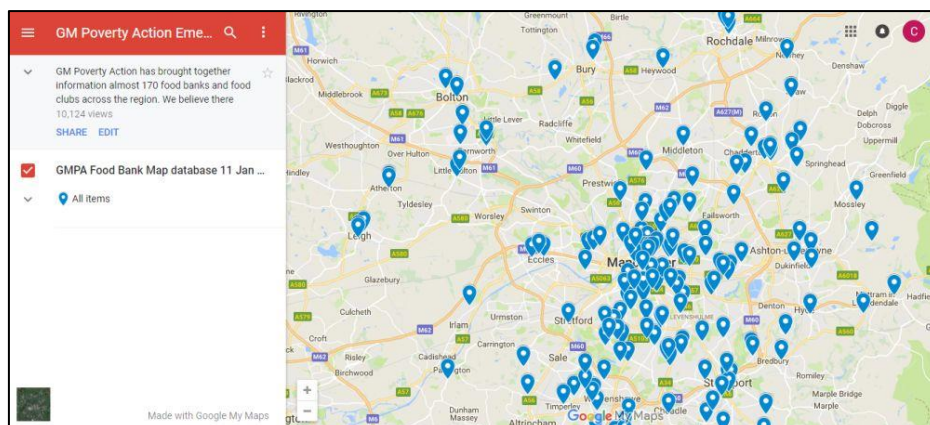
While food bank use presents only a partial picture of the local response to food poverty, it can provide a helpful starting point. The [Trussell Trust](#) has a map of all the food banks in its network. The [Independent Food Aid Network \(IFAN\)](#) maps independent food banks and food bank style projects across the UK (although some food parcel distributors prefer not to be mapped). [Mapping the growth of the Welsh Food Bank Landscape 1998-2015](#) is an academic study of the growth of Trussell Trust food banks in Wales.

A number of local maps go beyond only mapping food banks to include a wider range of organisations. [Feeding Lancashire Together](#) map all food-related projects in the county. The [Food Access Services in Oxford](#) map and database list services providing free or subsidised food. The [Pilton Community Food Map](#) presents community food projects in the local area – an idea which came out of the north Edinburgh Food for Thought Forum. There are a number of filters allowing users to focus their search and they can then print off a list of the projects they have selected from the map.



Pilton Community Food Map (Food For Thought Forum and Pilton Community Health Project)

Cambridge Sustainable Food's [Community Food Map](#) categorises different community food projects. The [Greater Manchester Poverty Action Food Providers Map](#) includes food banks, pantries and pay-as-you feel cafes. The [Blackpool Food Partnership](#) maps projects in the town and results can be filtered by different categories. The [Lambeth Larder Community Map](#) and new [Emergency Food Finder](#) helps people find good, cheap food, save money and reduce waste. Importantly, the community map also helps people find local help and advice, plus groups and activities they can get involved in. The [Brighton & Hove Food Partnership Directory Map](#) lists a number of different food outlets including lunch clubs, food banks and community cafes and users can filter by days of the week. The partnership also [lists](#) where people can access low cost meals or buy from food buying groups and coops.



Food Providers Map (Greater Manchester Poverty Action)

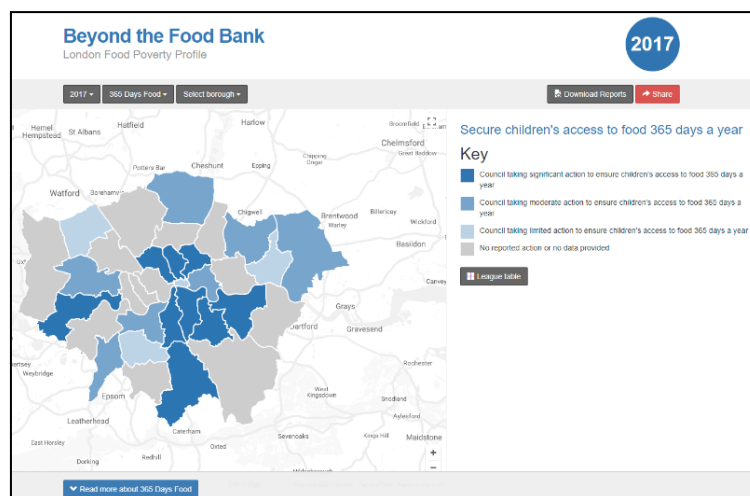


The majority of maps listed above use [Google Maps](#), which uploads data that has been collected into a spreadsheet. Other software has also been used, for example the Pilton Community Food map uses the Grappelli Django content management system and interface. How the map is updated very much depends on capacity and it is important to consider this from the start. For some maps, projects email a central contact to be added to a map or to amend their entry. In other cases, projects can register, enter and amend details themselves. For example, in Oxford a [Google Form](#) updates the database, which then still has to be uploaded manually to update the map. Some maps use SurveyMonkey to gather information into a database. Alongside ad hoc updates, some organisations post a static map, and then review and update it accordingly on a regular basis. Maps include variable levels of detail on each project, with some deciding to include very limited details, but including a link to the project's own page to find out more information.

It is important to remember that some food banks or other food aid projects may have decided that they do not want to be featured on maps; this is usually related to ensuring that people are referred by referee agencies rather than presenting at food banks without being referred. In some areas this concern has reduced over time and these organisations have been happy to be featured on a map. In general, maps have significant numbers of people clicking through to them, running into at least 4 figures in many cases and some heading towards having more than 10,000 visits, and in most cases over a relatively short time.

Using mapping to prompt further action

Maps can also be used to prompt action to address food poverty. London Food Link (part of Sustain) produces an annual *Beyond the Food Bank* [report](#) and [online profile](#) to assess London councils' actions to reduce food poverty across ten measures. Councils are surveyed annually and scored according to their responses. This has increased councils' awareness of their response to food poverty and take action to address gaps in the local response. Other regions in the UK are now considering adopting a similar approach.



Beyond the Food Bank: London Food Poverty Profile 2017 (London Food Link/ Sustain)



Conclusion and key lessons

Measurement and mapping can assist local areas to assess the current situation, coordinate action and build support for an enhanced response to reduce food poverty in their area. Local areas have shared several lessons from their work in this area:

- Be realistic about your capacity to create and maintain measurement/ mapping, including when considering the type of software or programmes used
- Prioritise the information you think it would be most important to gather to inform and support local needs and/or address the gaps in knowledge of the situation in your area
- Reflect from the start on the best way to present information to the audiences you want to reach
- Consider how measurement and mapping could also influence policy and practice, alongside the more immediate operational benefits

