

Redbridge Food Poverty Action Plan: Access to sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food in Redbridge

October, 2017



Executive Summary

Food insecurity

Food insecurity can be across a spectrum from acute to chronic, and may even be both at times. Acute food insecurity is usually a 'crisis like' situation, where an unexpected shock has impacted upon finances and made someone unable to purchase food until that situation is rectified. Chronic food insecurity is a lack of ability to access sufficient, safe and nutritious food over a longer period of time.

Many possible solutions to the spectrum of food insecurity exist, including preventative steps to address the wider (often structural) issues which contribute to individuals and families experiencing either short- or long-term food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity usually requires more sustainable solutions to prevent that person from becoming food insecure again.

Key Food Security facts for Redbridge

- In 2015 Redbridge was ranked 138th most deprived in England out of 326 local authorities;
- The population of Redbridge continues to grow with an estimated 296,800 residents in 2015, projected to increase to 327,800 by 2021;
- 12,290 children under 16 (19.8%) live in low incomes families (2014);
- 30% of children in Redbridge are living in poverty (after housing costs). There is variation across the borough, with some wards having up to 43% of children living in poverty (2015);
- 45% of eligible families are not receiving Healthy Start vouchers;
- 80% of primary school children known to be eligible for free school meals are claiming them;
- The Trussell Trust Redbridge Foodbank distributed 3,138 emergency food parcels in 2015/16 (1,738 adults & 1,400 children);
- 30% of jobs in Redbridge pay below the London Living Wage and are therefore classed as 'low paid'; and 19% of Redbridge residents earn below the London Living wage;
- Unemployment is 6% (9,400 people) (2016);
- 21% of over 60s are classed as income deprived (2015);
- 10,599 (10.6%) households are in fuel poverty (2014);
- 2,205 households are living in temporary accommodation (statutory homelessness);
- Redbridge is one of the most ethnically diverse London boroughs, with 63% of residents belonging to Black and Minority Ethnic groups (projected to increase to 70% by 2026).

Plan Development Activities

In order to improve, extend and co-ordinate actions to improve food security in Redbridge, the London Borough of Redbridge has developed a Food Poverty Action Plan. This followed a successful application to the Greater London Authority who provided a grant to undertake food poverty action planning during 2017.

A Redbridge Food Poverty Action Plan Steering Group was set up to develop the plan, with representatives from the London Borough of Redbridge's public health team, children's centres, revenues and benefits service, and housing team; alongside RedbridgeCVS (Redbridge Council for Voluntary Service), Redbridge Trussell Trust Foodbank, and Sustain. There was also input from other partners including ISS (school meals provider), the Healthy Start Alliance, and the Greater London Authority Mayor's Fund London Holiday Provision Programme.

Information gathering and community consultation were undertaken to inform the actions included in the plan. The London Borough of Redbridge's public health team produced a Redbridge Food Security Profile; and RedbridgeCVS carried out engagement activities with local residents and businesses, using a range of qualitative research methods including interviews, focus groups and surveys. A Food Poverty Action Plan was then drafted.

Key Findings of the Food Security Profile

In 2016, Redbridge was ranked 12th of the 33 London boroughs in 'Beyond the Food Bank' report, with a score of 46% (Lambeth were ranked 1st, as the borough doing most to tackle food poverty, with a score of 79%). Areas where Redbridge performed well included baby friendly initiatives and meals on wheels. Areas where Redbridge scored less well included Healthy Start, free school meals, holiday food provision, and living wage accreditation. Redbridge also lacked a food poverty action plan, which brought the score down.

Building on these findings, Redbridge Public Health team gathered additional information on these areas and produced a detailed food security profile for the borough. Key findings included:

- Redbridge has a low uptake of the healthy start vouchers scheme – there is significant potential to increase this with minimal additional costs;
- Redbridge has providers accredited at level 3 for the UNICEF Baby Friendly initiative;
- Children's Centres are very active in activities to prevent food poverty;
- The borough has sufficient childcare places for low income families;
- The school meals provider is active in promoting free school meals and uptake is currently good. More could potentially be done to increase uptake;
- There is very limited food provision in school holidays for low income families.

- Redbridge is pursuing accreditation as a London Living Wage employer: the submission will be made in 2017;
- Redbridge no longer provides a community meals service, but assesses all social care service users for needs relating to food and ensures that they are safe and supported where necessary to meet these needs.
- Community and Voluntary services are invited to a quarterly Debt and Money advice group by LBR;
- Council tax support is available for vulnerable groups, but not at the level recommended by the Child Poverty Action Group;
- Redbridge does not currently have a food poverty action plan, but was awarded funds to develop one.

Key findings of Community Consultation

Engagement with local residents, community groups and local businesses was led by RedbridgeCVS, who recruited a Peer Researcher to undertake interviews, focus groups and surveys.

The peer researcher visited community groups, children's centres, housing estates and libraries to interview and/or conduct focus groups with the service users, conducting interviews with 65 residents at community groups and centres:

- Redbridge Foodbank
- Citizen's Advice Redbridge
- Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL)
- Children's Centres – Loxford, Hainault, Orchard Estate
- Hainault Library
- Shpresa Programme
- People's Platform (a forum for adults with learning difficulties at Daffodil Advocacy Project)

An online survey for local residents and community groups was also conducted; publicised via RedbridgeCVS' eNews bulletin, other voluntary sector networks, and the local GP surgeries' Patient Participation Groups.

The most common issues that local residents reported facing in accessing affordable healthy food were reported as unemployment and lack of money.

Of the consultees, those that were experiencing food poverty more commonly:

- Lived in private rented accommodation.
- Bought their food from large or small supermarkets, and compared prices before buying food.
- Walked or used a bus to shop for food.
- Were able to cook a complete meal from scratch, with lack of cooking skills not reported as an issue. It is not clear whether these were healthy meals.
- Had inadequate storage and cooking equipment creating a barrier to accessing affordable healthy food.

There are parts of the Borough that could be described as “food deserts”, where residents have a very limited choice of affordable fresh/frozen fruit and vegetables. Businesses selling fresh/frozen fruit and vegetables and milk did not find it profitable due to the short shelf-life of fresh products and low profit-margins. In addition, the majority of local businesses we spoke to were not aware of the Healthy Start scheme.

Residents interviewed felt that there was insufficient help for residents facing food poverty which could help them to escape the crisis situation of needing free food in the future. This showed a lack of awareness about the full range of services available in the Borough, which, alongside linguistic and IT barriers, brings extra challenges for residents facing food poverty. Most residents that RedbridgeCVS spoke to were not aware of the Healthy Start scheme and only some were aware of free school meals.

The food provided by organisations like Redbridge Foodbank, RAMFEL and other faith and community groups was seen as a lifeline for residents who are in crisis situations.

Recommendations from research

- Partners to agree a set of shared outcomes for Redbridge.
- Develop an action plan to address the gaps identified in the research and achieves the outcomes.
- Ensure the plan is owned and monitored by the Redbridge Obesity Steering Group and ultimately the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Redbridge's Food Poverty Action Plan

This plan was developed by the Redbridge Food Poverty Action Plan Steering Group, which comprised of representatives from the London Borough of Redbridge's public health team, children's centres team, revenues and benefits service, and housing team; alongside RedbridgeCVS (Redbridge Council for Voluntary Service), Redbridge Trussell Trust Foodbank, and Sustain. There was also input from other partners including ISS (school meals provider), the Healthy Start Alliance, and the Greater London Authority Mayor's Fund London Holiday Provision Programme.

Shared vision and outcomes

All partners commit to working together to realise the vision '*to reduce the number of Redbridge residents at risk of, or already experiencing, food poverty*'.

All partners commit to the following shared outcomes in order to achieve this vision:

- Ensure that children who need free school meals are accessing them.
- Increase the number of eligible families accessing health start vouchers.
- Consider the impact of proposed council plans on food poverty.
- Improve the availability of healthy food and drink for disadvantaged groups in the borough.

Short / medium term actions

Action	Key Partners Involved	Activity	Timeframe	How we will measure success	Outputs
1. Increase the uptake of Healthy Start	Public Health Redbridge	1.1 - Investigate and map current uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers.	Year 1 – 2017-18	Completion of review.	Report on mapping exercise.
	Public Health Redbridge, Children's Centres, NELFT 0-19 team, BHR midwifery team, Redbridge Foodbank	1.2 – Work in partnership to develop and implement a plan to increase uptake of Healthy Start vouchers and increase awareness of retailers currently accepting the vouchers.	Year 1 – 2017-18	Key partners meeting organised by Public Health Redbridge. Official Healthy Start figures: Year 1 – increase uptake to >60%.	Notes of partner meeting. Plan for increasing healthy start uptake. Monitoring reports on plan implementation
	Children's Centres, NELFT 0-19 team, BHR midwifery team, Redbridge Foodbank	1.3 – Regular promotion of Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins, including ensuring staff and volunteers are aware of the scheme.	Ongoing	Increased staff & volunteer awareness of the scheme Increased parental awareness.	Staff and volunteers trained on healthy start.
2. Promote breastfeeding to boost the health of infants and mothers	Public Health Redbridge, Children's Centres, NELFT 0-19 team, BHR – midwifery team	2.1 – Progress actions in the Obesity Action Plan and delivery of the 0-19 Healthy Child service, including maintaining Stage 3 UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation.	Year 1 – 2017-18	Increased rates of breastfeeding initiation and continuation.	Public Health Outcomes Framework.

3. Harness the value of Children's Centres	Children's Centres, NELFT – 0-19 team, Public Health Redbridge	3.1 - Increase parent awareness of provision, via staff and parent champions. Children's centre staff to continue to offer help and guidance on completion of Healthy Start paper applications.	Ongoing	Increased awareness of the Healthy Start scheme.	Progress report.
	Children's Centres, ISS	3.2 - Explore potential to increase number of families benefitting from the classes on healthy cooking on a budget in Children's Centres.	Ongoing	Good attendance at classes and positive feedback from attendees.	Number of classes/ attendees. Class summary report.
	Children's Centres, Revenues, Benefits and Transactions Centre, Voluntary Sector	3.3 – Children Centres to build on the links with benefit services to help people access the benefits which they are entitled to and support them to complete forms.	Ongoing	Work with Children's Centres to provide advice to parents.	Amount of money accessed for individuals.
4. Ensuring low income families have adequate access to childcare	LBR	4.1 - Continue to provide enough childcare places for low income families in the borough.	Ongoing	Continuation of sufficient childcare places.	Childcare sufficiency audit.
5. Ensure children's access to food 365 days a year	ISS LBR	5.1 - Increase the uptake of free school meals by promoting information via a range of stakeholders.	2017-18	Increase in uptake from current level (primary years uptake = 80.3%).	Figures produced quarterly.

	Public Health Redbridge RCVS	5.2 - Explore options for introducing the Mayor's Fund for London Kitchen Social scheme in Redbridge.	2017-18	Summary of options produced and considered.	Summary report.
	Public Health Redbridge in consultation with stakeholders	5.3 - Choose top five schools for free school meals eligibility / deprivation as key focus areas and, working closely with key partners, explore the potential for further out-of-school food provision (e.g. breakfast clubs and holiday clubs).	2017-18	5 schools identified and engaged. Key partners engaged Current provision identified Opportunities for further provision identified.	Report.
	Public Health Redbridge in consultation with stakeholders. ISS	5.4 - Explore the potential to promote National School Food Standards to breakfast clubs and other food provision for children. School meals already conform to this standard – this should be continued.	2017-18 Ongoing	Schools with breakfast clubs approached. School meals continue to meet National School Food Standards.	ISS regular updates.
6. Become a London living wage employer and promote the London living wage	LBR	6.1 – Submit to the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) in October for accreditation. Roll out more widely to council contracts over the next 2-3 years, in line with LWF accreditation conditions.	Submission – October 2017 All council contracts by end 2020	Redbridge achieving accreditation in 2017. All council contracts having London Living Wage by end 2020.	LBR updates on this process Response from Living Wage Foundation.
7. Ensure all residents have physical access to good food	Public Health Redbridge	7.1 - Identify gaps in healthy food provision in the borough and explore options to stimulate new healthier food/ fruit and vegetable businesses.	2017-18	Awareness of gaps and opportunities in the borough.	Report on gaps and opportunities.
	Public Health Redbridge	7.2 - Research good practice examples of mobile vans/stalls selling fresh fruits and vegetables and explore ways of making them available to parts of the borough that have low access to healthy food.	2017-18	Awareness of options for increasing access to healthy food in areas of low availability.	Summary of the research.
	Public Health Redbridge	7.3 – Make a 'Veg city' pledge as part of the Food Foundation's 'Peas Please' project.	2017-18	Pledge at October event. Deliver on this pledge by 2020.	Yearly reviews.

	Housing Team, LBR	7.4 – Encourage food growing projects on Council estates.	Ongoing	Access to information and space for food growing on Council estates.	
8. Support access to food for vulnerable adults	Public Health Redbridge	8.1 – Support the needs of new and existing social care service users, to ensure that they have access to the meals that they require, including a support package where required.	2017 - 18	Continue to include food provision needs in social care 'Wellbeing assessments' carried out.	Updates form social care team.
	Voluntary and community sectors	8.2 – Explore opportunities to enhance the local offer from existing luncheon clubs and other community resources identified through the asset mapping process to help reduce social isolation and increase community cohesion.	2017 - 19	Increasing numbers of local organisations asking to be included as part of the local offer.	Additional content in signposting booklet.
	All partners	8.3 – Promote the signposting booklet and increase promotion of this resource more widely.	Ongoing	All people with a need for this type of service are aware of what is available.	Additional promotion of the booklet.
9. Support financial advice services	Revenues, Benefits and Transactional Centre, LBR	9.1 - Continue to invite community and voluntary groups that provide information and advice to the quarterly Debt and Money Advice group.	Ongoing – once a quarter	Quarterly group meetings are attended by community and voluntary groups.	Meeting invites / notes / reports.
	Public Health Redbridge Redbridge FIND directory Communications Team Revenues, Benefits and Transactional Centre, LBR	9.2 - Prepare fact sheet on services available for people experiencing food poverty (e.g. free school meals, Food Bank, Healthy Start vouchers). Ensure the services available are promoted to both staff working in the community and residents, through a variety of communication avenues, including staff briefings; the One Stop Shop; community display boards; and on the Redbridge FIND website directory. Explore opportunities to promote benefits available to families accessing free school meals.	Ongoing	Increased uptake of services.	Fact sheet produced.

	All partners to provide information	9.3 – Keep abreast of evidence from early roll out of Universal Credit in other boroughs to assess potential impacts in Redbridge, what the risks may be, and identify any mitigation measures which could be implemented. Monitor the impact of Universal Credit roll out in Redbridge on food poverty.	2017 - 18 Ongoing. Full roll out in April 2018	Aware of possible impacts of UC roll out via anecdotal, qualitative and quantitative information. Mitigation measures considered & implemented where possible, minimising Universal credit roll out impact on food poverty.	Updates on UC roll out to Obesity Steering Group.
	LBR	9.4 – Ensure support for council tax continues to be provided for vulnerable adults.	Ongoing	LBR continues to provide support for vulnerable people to pay council tax.	Published council tax support levels.
10. Develop an action plan to tackle food poverty	Public Health Redbridge (lead), RCVS, Children's Centres, Housing (LBR), Benefits centre (LBR), Sustain, Redbridge Foodbank Other partners as identified	10.1 – Plan has been developed, it will be monitored and updated by the Redbridge Obesity Steering group.	Ongoing	Plan is monitored and updated regularly.	Food Poverty Action Plan. Plan as an agenda item for the Obesity Steering group meetings.
	Public Health Redbridge RCVS	10.2 – Explore potential to obtain match funding for funds already committed by LBR.	2017-18	Additional funds secured.	Funding sources identified and applications submitted.

Long-term actions (resource dependent)

Action	Key Partners Involved	Activity
LT1. Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers	LBR	LT1.1 - Develop a plan to promote Healthy Start vouchers amongst businesses and an extended group of stakeholders (e.g. CCG, GPs, childcare providers, CAB, voluntary sector). This could involve trying to increase the number of businesses signed up to accept healthy start vouchers.
LT4. Ensuring low income families have adequate access to childcare	LBR	LT4.1 - Explore the potential to update the LBR service specification to include healthy food provision for all free childcare places (or for those in certain circumstances).
LT6. Become a London Living Wage employer and promote the London Living Wage	London Borough of Redbridge	LT6.1 - Promote the London Living Wage across the borough.
LT7. Ensure all residents have physical access to good food	Public Health Redbridge Housing	LT7.1 - Identify ways to prevent food poverty in those living in temporary housing.
	Redbridge Foodbank Voluntary sector Public Health Redbridge	LT7.2 – Explore potential for local businesses to provide donations of fresh fruit and vegetables to food banks.
	Public Health Redbridge	LT7.3 - Map current fruit and vegetable businesses in targeted areas of deprivation/ lower income.
	Public Health Redbridge Voluntary sector London Borough of Redbridge	LT7.4 - Explore whether there is any potential to further promote lunch clubs and other opportunities that offer food and other benefits in Redbridge. Explore the potential to update the sign-posting booklet on lunch clubs produced by LBR. Explore encouraging local lunch clubs and affordable restaurants to increase the healthy food offer made, for example by pledging two portions of vegetables in all main meals.



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