



London
Borough of
Waltham
Forest

FOOD POVERTY ACTION PLAN



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Acknowledgements

This report is a product of joint working of the different stakeholders who attended the workshops and the different organisations working in the borough to alleviate hunger among our residents. Two workshops were held that brought together residents, community and voluntary organisations, councillors, and NHS and council departments.

We are particularly grateful to OrganicLea, a local food growing workers' cooperative that supported this work right from the beginning and helped us identify and engage stakeholders. Special thanks to Barbara Goldberg, a Public Health nutritionist and food poverty researcher who facilitated the workshops and helped collate insights from the group discussions.

Finally I would like to thank all the involved residents, community and voluntary organisations, third sector Government and non-governmental organisations and my colleagues at the Council for their wonderful collaboration.

A list of organisations represented at the Waltham Forest food poverty workshops in May and June 2018

Bags of Taste	OrganicLea
Community Waltham Forest	Peabody Housing Association
Crest Waltham Forest	PL8t4u
Environmental services, London Borough of Waltham Forest	Public Health Team
Felix Project	Revenue and Benefits team, London Borough of Waltham Forest
Food Cycle	Social Prescribing
Friday Hill Community	St Margaret's Church
HEET	Sustain
HENRY	Today Bakery
Hornbeam	Transformation London Borough of Waltham Forest
Kids Kitchen	Transition Leytonstone
Living well Age UK Waltham Forest	Waltham Forest Caterers
Lloyd Park	Waltham Forest Faith Forum
Lloyd Park Children Centre	Waste and Recycle, London Borough of Waltham

	Forest
Lloyd Park Children's Charity	YMCA
Local Area Coordinator, London Borough of Waltham Forest	Young Advisors
Magic Breakfast	Youth Engagement
NELFT Dietetic Service	Youth Independent Advisory Group

Executive summary

The Waltham Forest food poverty action plan has been developed with local partners with the aim of creating solutions to food poverty in the borough. The food poverty action plan is part of the Mayor of London's ambition to tackle food poverty in the capital and reduce Londoners' reliance on food banks. The programme is being delivered in partnership with 'Sustain's London Food Poverty Campaign.

The Beyond the Food Bank report¹ published by Sustain in 2017 identifies specific actions which local authorities are recommended to take to reduce food insecurity. These are:

1. Have a comprehensive plan to reduce food poverty which would include these subsequent recommendations.
2. Have a designated Healthy Start coordinator and an integrated programme of activities to reach a minimum local uptake for 80%.
3. Boost breastfeeding by working towards full UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation.
4. Harness the value of children's centres, using them to deliver concrete actions to tackle food poverty.
5. Ensure there is sufficient and good childcare provision.
6. Work with partners to tackle hunger among children throughout the year.
7. Lead on activities to improve physical access to good food by working with planners, retailers and caterers.
8. Reinvigorate provision of meals on wheels, developing a 'more than the meal' approach.
9. Become an accredited London Living Wage employer and contractor, champion the London Living Wage with local employers and become a Friendly Funder.
10. Minimise the burden of Council Tax payments for residents on low-income.

All these recommendations are acknowledged, however for the purposes of this report recommendations 1-7 are the primary focus. It must also be clear that all actions must be implemented within existing resources and as such will tend to focus on maximising the benefit of existing programmes.

Food poverty in this report refers to the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.

Findings from the data review and food poverty workshops held in the borough indicate high numbers of residents are living in food poverty and or are at increased risk of food poverty. There are many drivers of food poverty, for example a sudden illness or long-term illness, an unexpected bill, or the death of a parent or partner can tip a family into a food crisis. At the heart of food poverty is low income and economic insecurity which limit people's ability to have an adequate and nutritious diet. Rising food prices and increases in the broader cost of living have compounded this situation.

Key findings

Using national and local data, it is estimated that in Waltham Forest

- 36,500 people over 18 years have skipped a meal because they can't afford it.
- 18,000 have gone a whole day without eating.

¹ Sustain (2017). Beyond the Food Bank, London Food Poverty Profile
https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/beyond_the_food_bank_2017/#

- Household income is lower in Waltham forest than the London average, e.g. 36% of jobs in the borough are low paid compared to 19% in London, and 28% of residents are low paid compared to 21% in London.
- Unemployment in the borough is 5.1% compared to 4.9% in London.
- It is estimated 36% of children live in poverty which equates to 24,000 children (0-19 years) in the borough. There is variation across the borough, with some wards with 44% of children living in poverty.
- Waltham Forest has a higher percentage of families experiencing fuel poverty (13%) compared to London (10%) and England (11%).
- Waltham Forest is the 35th most deprived local authority nationally and, the 7th most deprived in London.
- Approximately two thirds of the borough's population is from a minority ethnic background.
- Family homelessness is higher in the borough compared to national average (8.9 vs. 1.9 per 1,000 households)
- Approximately 22% of reception year students are overweight/obese, which is not statistically significantly different from the national average of 23%. The proportion of Year 6 students that are overweight/obese is statistically significantly higher than the national average (39% vs 34%).
- Uptake of free school meals in the borough is 80% which is above the London and England average

Opportunities

1. Increase the current uptake (59%) of the national Healthy Start Vouchers a programme that provides vulnerable families with children under 4 with vouchers to spend on fruit, vegetables and milk to all eligible families.
2. Increase uptake of Free school meals to ensure all eligible children have access to the free school meals
3. Increase breakfast club provision by partnering with Magic breakfast who supports eligible schools to start and run free breakfast clubs. The majority of primary schools in the borough are eligible for the scheme but only 3 schools (out of 53) are currently in the scheme.
4. Leyton food hub is a new development in one of the most deprived wards. This will offer new opportunities to alleviate food poverty in the borough, e.g. by accepting Healthy Start vouchers to access fresh fruit and vegetables, hosting 'cooking on a budget' sessions, weight management classes, supplying food to tackle holiday hunger, and developing pathways to reduce food waste via redistributions to vulnerable people through 'community fridge' and other such schemes.
5. The 'Connecting Communities' project provides new opportunities to build communities through food by creating opportunities for people to cook and eat together. The benefits go beyond addressing food poverty to strengthening communities by creating friendships, tackling loneliness and reducing food waste.
6. Borough of Culture – As the first London Borough of Culture, this creates opportunities to explore the rich culture around food via sharing recipes and cooking skills, cooking together, having food festivals and looking at how we can create a sustainable food culture that reduces food poverty and food waste.
7. Food growing - Waltham Forest has a strong food growing culture and this provides opportunities to produce more food e.g. creating more growing spaces in residential areas to

support community food growing. Allotment association can agree pathways to support holiday clubs by supplying their surplus produce to holiday lunch clubs.

8. The council has pledged to reduce sugar consumption and promote healthy food in the borough and this provides opportunity to provide consistent messaging on healthy eating and promotion of its healthy catering commitment to ensure healthier offer in food outlets.
9. Neighbourhood teams provide opportunities to identify vulnerable people in the community, identify local initiatives addressing food poverty and signpost people to local services
10. Waltham Forest is a living wage accredited borough and this provides opportunities to work with other employers and contractors to pay the living wage, thus increasing household income levels.
11. Join national and London wide initiatives addressing food poverty and reducing food waste e.g. the Felix project and food cycle. The Felix project is already working with some charities in the borough like the YMCA to supply surplus food to those in need. There is an opportunity to use community assets like children and families centre, or religious buildings as food hubs where surplus food can be distributed.

Gaps

- Robust system to identify and support those at risk of food poverty
- Skills and knowledge around budgeting, cooking, risk factors
- Funding- no new resources attached to this work stream
- Monitoring- no agreed food poverty measures
- No single point of information on local initiatives tackling food poverty
- Partnership working- no agreed structure to coordinate local initiatives addressing food poverty
- Limited numbers of volunteers to support local initiatives e.g. community fridge
- Meals on wheel service or similar to cater for the needs of housebound residents

The Waltham Forest food poverty action plan cuts across the life course. At every life stage there are opportunities to help people eat well or improve their income so that they can afford to feed themselves well.

Recommendations

1. Prevention

- Promotion of healthy start vouchers.
- Increasing uptake of free school meals.
- Increasing breakfast clubs provision by linking with magic breakfast.
- Increase holiday hunger provision.
- Skill building in both cooking and budgeting.
- Raising awareness across a wide range of frontline service staff of food poverty risk indicators and options to mitigate it.

2. Crisis provision

- Development of a central repository of information to improve signposting and enhance information on local preventative support.
 - Ensuring support is delivered in a non-stigmatising and dignified way.
 - Develop a local food sharing app or promote established apps like 'Olio' to encourage food sharing, signposting those in need and to reduce food waste.
3. Wider approach
- Working with regeneration and planning teams in the council to improve the food offer, e.g. to support community food growing by establishing new food growing spaces, identifying 'food deserts' and increasing fruit and vegetable outlets, and limiting the spread of unhealthy fast food outlets (particularly within 400m of schools or other services accessed by children and young people).
 - Working with housing teams to identify people at risk of food poverty and sign posting them to local services, providing stable and affordable housing opportunities for individuals and reducing level of failed tenancies.
 - Embedding food poverty in the council's strategic approach e.g. 'connecting communities', 'creating futures', 'life chances'.
 - Measuring and monitoring food poverty in the borough by embedding food poverty questions in residents survey and regularly reviewing data on food poverty risk indicators.
 - Establish a food partnership that brings together stakeholders in food production all the way to getting it on the plate. Food partnership will own and drive work to ensure sustainable food offer in the borough addressing both food poverty and reducing food waste.

2.0 Background

Food poverty has many, interlinked causes. For example a sudden illness or injury, loss of income, a benefit sanction or the death of a parent or partner can tip a family into a food crisis. Low pay/insecure employment, inadequate welfare support or long-term illness, combined with high housing and travel costs, can condemn families to chronic hunger, poor nutrition and anxiety. There is no systematic evidence on the drivers of food insecurity or agreed measure of food poverty in the UK, but available information suggests that factors which have an impact on households' income and financial capacity are important.

This report is a product of the food poverty workshops held in Waltham Forest in May and June 2018 combined with findings from other organisations and charities which are spearheading work to improve our understanding of food poverty as well as addressing food poverty in UK. These workshops brought together a wide range of people and organisations interested in action to address food poverty. The development of this food poverty action plan has been funded by the Greater London Authority with Sustain after a successful bid by the London borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF).

2.1 Definition of Food Poverty

The Department of Health² defines food poverty as ***“The inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.”***

The internationally recognised definition of food security by the FAO³ (food and agricultural organisation of the United Nations) is ***“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”***

Household food poverty or food insecurity embodies issues around:

- affordability of food - can everyone afford to buy healthy food
- access - can everyone in the population obtain food
- availability within local communities- are there sufficient foods
- nutrition and quality – do people consume the right types of food in the right quantities
- sustainability – is there a reliable continuous access to food

The quality of food purchased and daily calorific intake is impacted in part by economic constraints, but also the local food environment, access to transport, cultural norms and traditions, food knowledge, food preparation and financial budgeting skills^{4,5}.

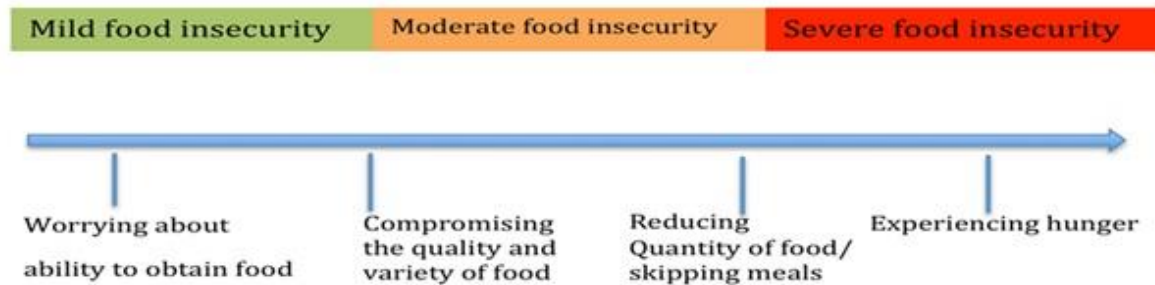
² Department of Health. 2005. Choosing a better diet: a food and health action plan. London: Department of Health

³ Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. Food security concept and measurement. Available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4671e/y4671e06.htm>

⁴ Tait, C. Hungry for Change. <https://fabians.org.uk/publication/hungry-for-change/>

Food poverty can take many forms and can be experienced in many ways and in varying degree. Figure 1 below demonstrates the varying degrees of food insecurity and Box 1 shows the experiences of food poverty.

Figure 1: Food poverty spectrum



Source: Greenwich food poverty report, 2017

Box 1: Experiences of food poverty

- Experiences of food poverty**
- Concern that food would run out
 - Inability to eat healthy, nutritious food
 - Diet constrained by lack of resources
 - Skipping meals
 - Restricting intake to preserve resources
 - Running out of food
 - Not eating, enough or at all, because of lack of resources

At risk groups

There are a wide range of populations at risk of food insecurity and, the drivers behind this may vary between populations and, geographical locations. At risk groups may include:

Low income families	Domestic abuse sufferers
People with learning disabilities	People living in temporary Accommodation
Families with young children	People in long term debt
People with substance abuse challenges	Homeless people
Single parents	People with mental health problems
Asylum seekers and refugees	People in temporary or insecure employment
Young adults	Older people
People with no recourse to public funds	

Waltham Forest food poverty workshop, 2018

⁵ Freedman DA et al: Developing a Multicomponent Model of Nutritious Food Access and Related implications for community and Policy Practice: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24563605>

2.2 Food Poverty in Waltham Forest

Local Picture

Waltham Forest is the 35th most deprived local authority nationally and, the 7th most deprived in London, with two thirds of the population from a minority ethnic background.

Childhood overweight and obesity rates, identified through the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) indicate a concern for child obesity in the borough. Prevalence of overweight/obesity amongst reception year children is statistically similar to the England average (22% vs 23%), whilst the prevalence in Year 6 is statistically significantly higher (39% vs 34%) the risk of being overweight or obese is associated with economic deprivation and, increases with age⁶.

Estimated population at risk

In the UK, there is no standardised measure of food poverty. The data presented below is taken from proxy measures that can be used to estimate levels of food poverty in the borough.

According to 'End hunger UK' data published in January 2018⁷, it is estimated that 1 in 6 adults have skipped a meal as they can't afford it - this would equate to 36,500 adults in Waltham Forest. The same source states that 1 in 7 adults worry about not having enough food, which equates to approximately 31,000 residents in Waltham Forest. Additionally, it estimated 1 in 12 adults have gone a whole day without food which equates to approximately 20,000 adults in the borough. See figure 2 below

Figure 2



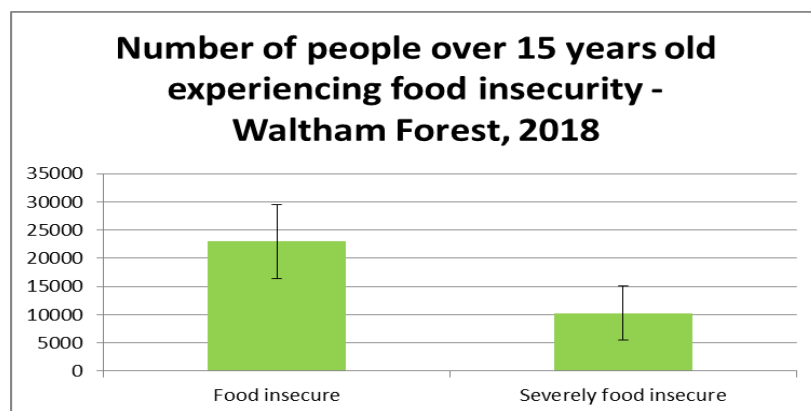
36500	People over 18 who have skipped a meal because they can't afford it
31000	Worry about not having enough food to eat
~ 20000	Have gone a whole day without eating
5400	Of 18-24 skip a meal
4600	Do not have enough food to eat

⁶ Gosis et al, 2015: <https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/26/1/7/2467515>

⁷ End Hunger UK, available at <http://endhungeruk.org/shocking-figures-showing-hidden-hunger-show-need-find/#more-274>

It is estimated that the number of residents older than 15 years experiencing food insecurity in the borough is 22,500 and 10,000 experience severe food insecurity (hunger). See figure 3 below

Figure 3



Source: Food Foundation 2016

Nationally, it is estimated that 23% of parents of children under 18 have a member of their household skip a meal due to lack of money and 27% of parents with primary school children have had a member of their household skip meals in the last year.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) carried out the survey as part of its biennial look at consumer attitudes to food. The survey showed that food insecurity was more highly concentrated among the unemployed, over a third of whom reported that they had either reduced the quality of their diet, or missed meals out altogether, because they had insufficient cash to buy food. The FSA survey showed that one in four low-income households' struggles to eat regularly or healthily because of a lack of money. Women (10%) were more likely than men (6%) to live in food-insecure households. While 16% of young people aged 16-24 and 11% of 25- 34-year-olds were food insecure, this shrank to just 1-2% for over 65s.

2.3 Drivers of food poverty

Income

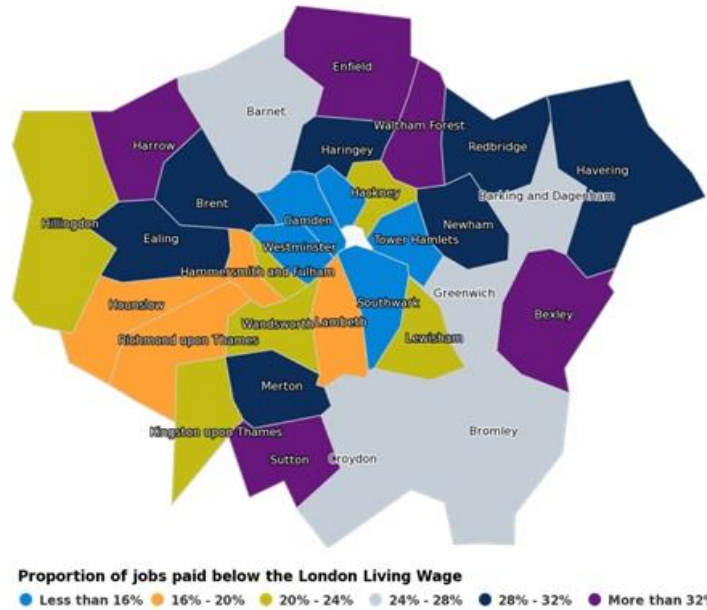
Waltham Forest data shows that household income is lower than London average; for example, 36% of jobs in the borough are low paid compared to 19% in London and 28% of residents are low paid compared to 21% in London. See Figure 4 and 5 below. With the changes in the benefits system, with the introduction of universal credit, there are concerns that changes might increase food poverty⁸. There is therefore a need to monitor how the roll out of universal credit may impact our residents.

Figure 4

⁸ The Trussell Trust report. Available at <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2018/04/24/benefit-levels-must-keep-pace-rising-cost-essentials-record-increase-foodbank-figures-revealed/>

36% of Waltham Forest jobs are low-paid compared to **19%** in London

Proportion of jobs paid below the London Living Wage

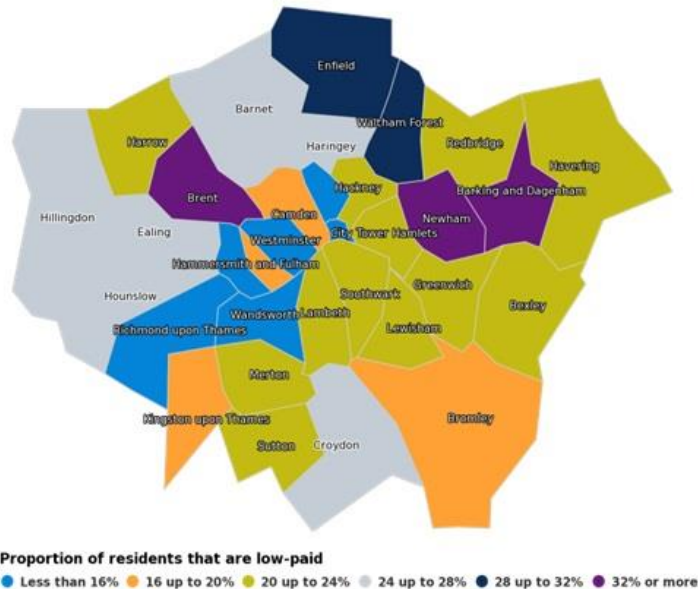


Source: London poverty profile 2017

Figure 5

28% of Waltham Forest residents are low-paid vs **21%** in London

Proportion of residents that are low-paid



Source: London poverty profile 2017

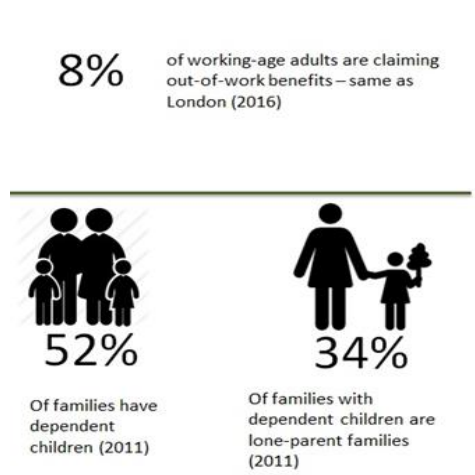
Other social drivers include employment. According to the London Poverty Profile, indicators include higher unemployment rates compared to London, about 14,736 residents (using 2015 population estimate) are claiming out of work benefits. See figure 6 and 7 below

Figure 6



Unemployment rate is **5.1%** vs **4.9%** in London
– London Poverty Profile, 2017

Figure 7



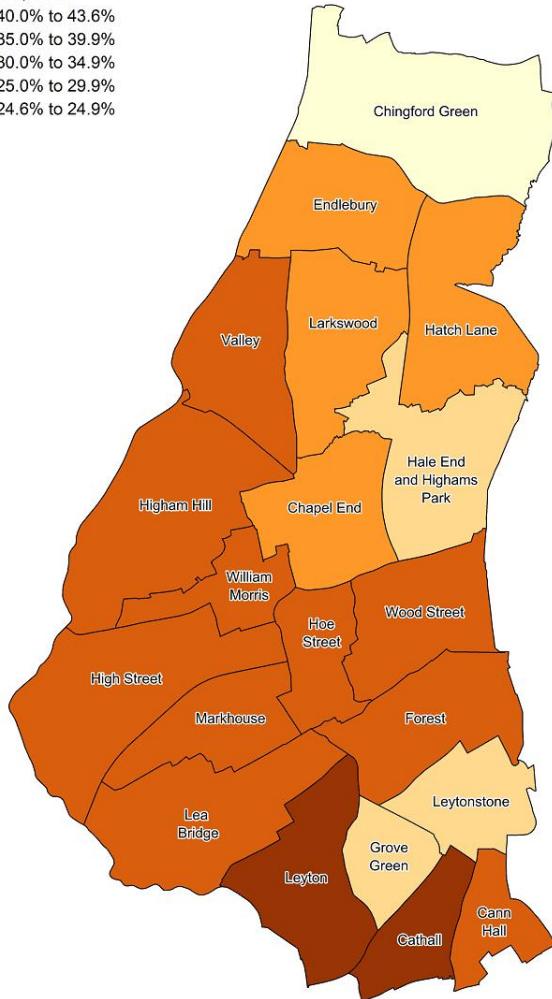
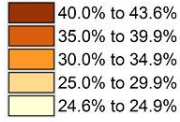
Children in Poverty

According to End Poverty data, on average 36% of children live in poverty - this equates to approximately 24,000 children (0-19 years) in the borough. The proportion of children in poverty varies across the borough, ranging from 24.6% to 43.6% = Leyton and Cathall wards have the highest percentage of children in poverty. See figure 8 to see percentage of child poverty by ward.



Figure 8: percentage of child poverty by ward

**% of children in poverty
by ward, 2017**

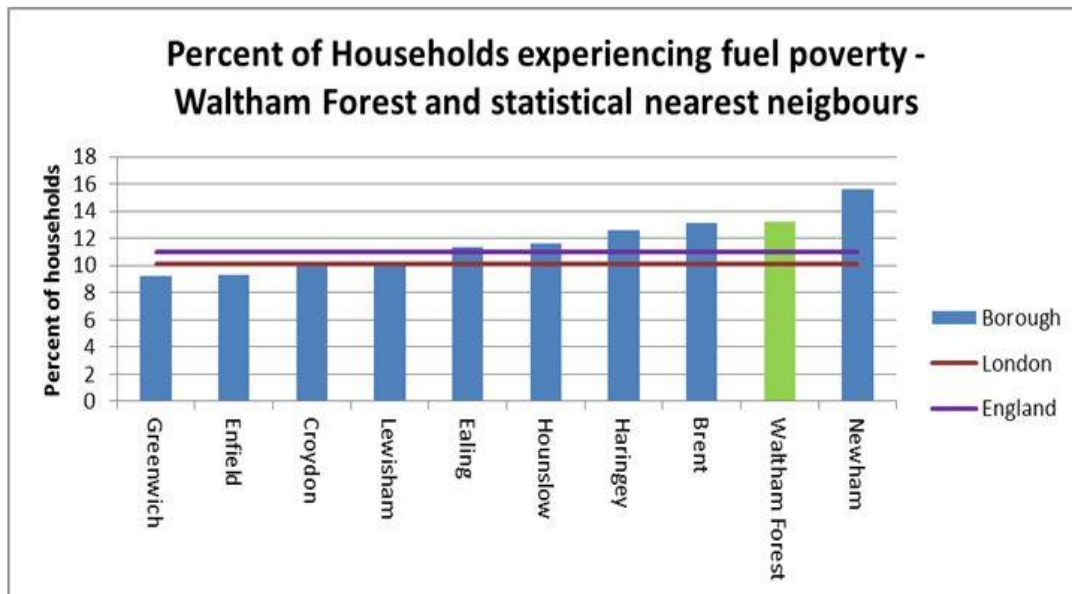


Data source: End Child Poverty, Jan 2018
Definition: Households are living in poverty if their household income (adjusted to account for household size) is less than 60% of the average (after housing costs).
Map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2017)

Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty goes hand in hand with food poverty, and is a good predictor of risk for food poverty. If someone has no money for food its most likely they do not have enough for fuel. Waltham Forest has a higher percentage of families experiencing fuel poverty compared to the London and England averages. And when compared to our statistical comparators Waltham Forest has the second highest percentage. See figure 9 below:

Figure 9



Food affordability

Poverty and economic insecurity limits people's ability to have an adequate and nutritious diet. Rising food prices and increases in the broader cost of living have compounded this situation, and meant that the affordability of food is a key limitation.

Access

Although food pricing differences influence food purchasing decisions, affordability of food is not the only issue making it difficult for people to achieve a healthy diet. Accessing nutritious foods can be impacted by the availability of fresh fruit and vegetables in local shops. Studies⁹ show there is limited availability of healthy food and fresh vegetables in convenience stores and often are priced higher compared to supermarkets. This was highlighted in the workshop as a problem in the borough especially in deprived areas which have high proportion of fast foods and convenience stores.

Limited cooking skills

Declining cooking skills, lack of suitable equipment, and pressure to abide by particular social rules are further potential contributing factors. Social exclusion (e.g. lack of supportive networks of family and friends) was also found to be both a potential cause (as well as a potential impact) of food poverty. The first workshops highlighted these issues as drivers of food poverty in the borough. See appendix 1 for the workshop summary findings.

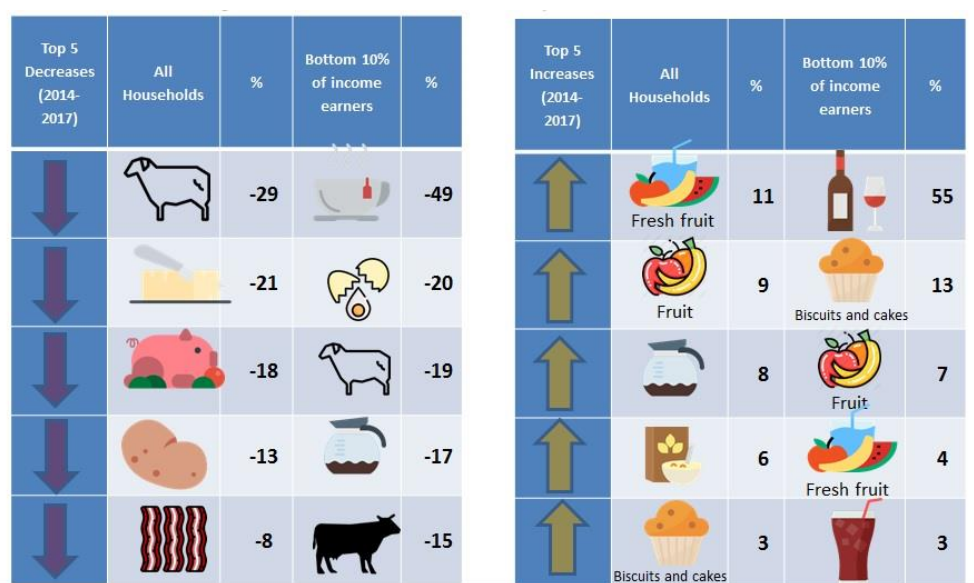
⁹ Caitlin E. capsil et.al . Pricing of Staple Foods at Supermarkets versus Small Food Stores. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5580618/>

Constrained choices

The Food Standard Agency report¹⁰ highlights that people in poverty or suffering economic hardship are not necessarily going hungry, but to make this money go further, many are buying cheaper and less nutritious foods that satisfy immediate needs.

Buying “calorie rich but nutritious poor” foods is just one of a range of (often complex) strategies to cope with constrained food choices. Other coping strategies include: skilful shopping; meal planning; and making best use of special offers, and buying and eating less food. Figure 10 below shows changes across the UK in food consumption in the last 3 years. There is an increase in the consumption of alcohol and biscuits and cakes and a decrease in the consumption of meats and eggs among the low income earners. See Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Changes in Food Consumption, 2014-2017 – UK



Source: Food Standard Agency

2.4 Impact of food poverty

Food poverty has the cross cutting impact on social economic and health outcomes of a population. Some of the widely known impacts include:

1. Obesity and other diet related health problems

Consistent purchasing of foods with lower nutritional (but higher calorific) content may stave off hunger, but may lead to other health issues. Over half of adults (55.6%)¹¹ in the borough are

¹⁰ Brooklyndhurst . Understanding Food in the Context of Poverty, Economic Insecurity and Social Exclusion A report for the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland. Available at <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/FS307008%20-%20Food%20Poverty%20Final%20Report.pdf>

overweight or obese and 22% of children aged 4-5 years and 39% of children aged 10-11 years are obese or overweight¹². Limited choices and the nutritionally poor diets that result contribute to obesity and tends to be more prevalent amongst the most deprived groups. Other diet related health problems include dental carries, diabetes, poor mental health, heart diseases, and some cancers.

2. Poor educational attainment

There is evidence¹³ to show the link of poor academic attainment to poor diet and hunger. Hungry children have reduced ability to concentrate in class which impact on their learning.

3. Social exclusion and poor mental wellbeing

Food provides a platform for socialising and people with limited access to food and limited financial resources find it difficult to invite people to their homes or go out to eat with friends. Food insecurity can cause anxiety, stress, and shame to people that are affected¹⁴.

4. Poor diet and hunger

As previously discussed, one coping strategy when people are faced with food poverty is to eat high calorific diet with low nutritional value. In dire situations, people may skip meals or go without food. At the Waltham Forest food poverty workshop one of the young people related that peers will eat 'crisp sandwiches' as an example of increased calorific intake with low nutritional value.

Figure 11 below from the FSA report⁴ shows a summary of food constraint and impact. The white boxes on the far left represent a few key drivers behind the constraints; and the blue boxes to the left of centre represent the key constraints. The right hand side shows the main impacts experienced by those in food poverty. The boxes in the middle ('constrained choices' and 'coping strategies') represent the experience of procuring and consuming food within – or despite - the situational constraints faced.

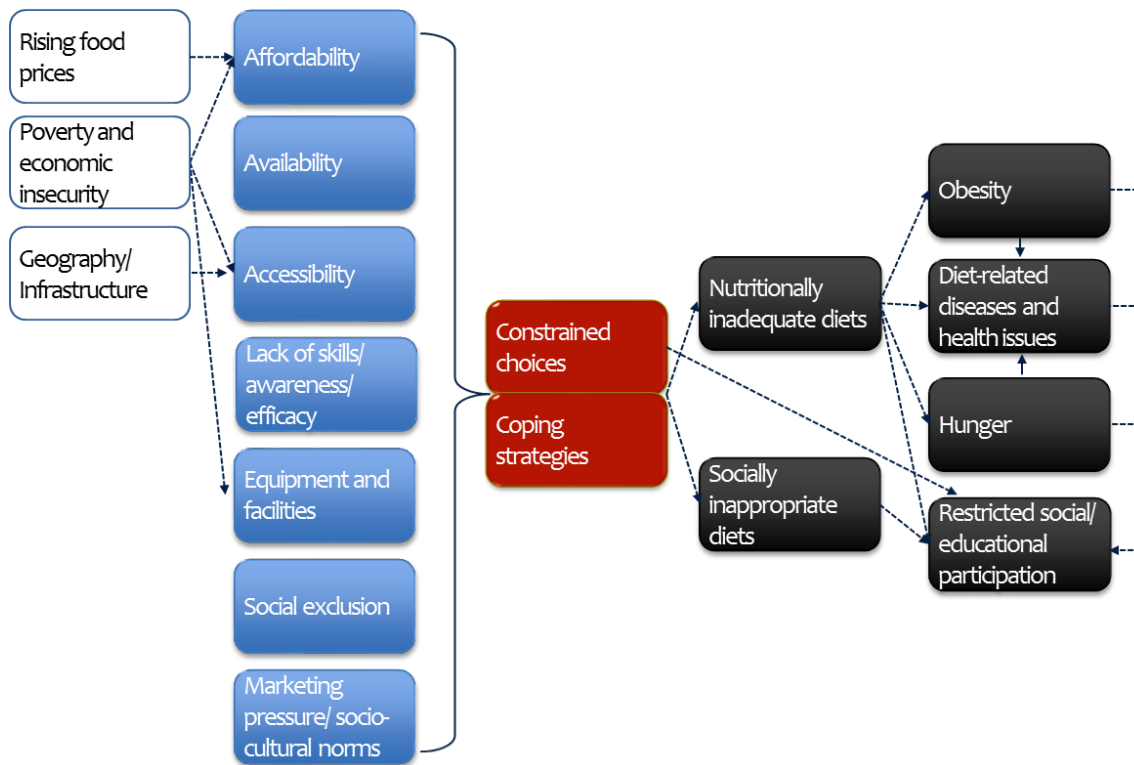
Figure 11 Summary of food poverty constraints and impact

¹¹ PHE Health profile available at <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938132701/pat/6/par/E12000007/ati/102/are/E09000031>

¹² NCMP data Waltham Forest

¹³ National Education Union. Edu facts- child poverty. Available on <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=8&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjFpObciPzcAhWrLMAKHTr-BIMQFjAHegQIBBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.teachers.org.uk%2Fedufacts%2Fchild-poverty&usg=AOvVaw2gVKrzb3bq8Vcx92KNdwi7>

¹⁴ Hungry for Change. Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty. 2015.



Source: Brooklyndhurst FSA report

3.0 Waltham Forest Food poverty workshops

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the workshops were to:

1. Understand levels of food poverty in the borough.
2. Identify local services addressing food poverty.
3. Identify community assets to develop a local food poverty action plan, adopting a partnership approach with public and third sector workforces and voluntary organisations.
4. Inform development of the food poverty action plan.

3.2 Methodology

Recruitment for the workshops was achieved through purposive sampling. During the first workshop, two breakout sessions were conducted using a topic guide, with participants split into life-course groups (0-11 years, 12-19 years, 20-33 years, 34-64 years, 65+ years). See Appendix 2 for further details. In the second workshop, presentations by national organisations whose functions included food distribution and meal provision were followed by a third breakout session (using the life-course approach as above) using a topic guide (Appendix 6).

3.3 Findings

Workshop 1

Workshop 1 was primarily focussed on mapping the level of need, identifying local provision, assets, and gaps.

Session 1

Participants were asked to consider:

- Population at risk
- Food insecurity manifestation
- Hidden hunger identification
- Drivers of food insecurity
- Indicators of food insecurity
- Barriers to accessing support
- Opportunities to alleviate food insecurity

The themes emerging from the first session highlighted the lack of homogeneity between the different age groups. Regular contact with statutory bodies may offer a more strategic approach to identifying those in need of support; however, the needs of people in the 20-64 age groups may be less apparent and more challenging to meet. Themes and findings from the first workshop can be seen in Appendices 1 and 3.

After the workshop, participants, together with those who had been unable to attend, were sent a document with the discussion questions (see Appendix 2) for further consideration and response however no responses were received.

Session 2

The second session of the first workshop adopted something of an appreciative enquiry approach, capturing insight as to local assets, gaps in service provision and, envisioning opportunities as yet unexplored.

The findings can be seen in Appendix 3 however what emerged predominantly was the extent of local knowledge. The nature of programmes supporting food security either directly or, indirectly, is that they can be sporadic. The organisations implementing the services are, for the most part, third sector and may rely on public donations and a volunteer workforce. The implication of this is that their sustainability may not be assured, their locations may be temporary or short-lived and, operationally, they may not adopt a strategic approach regardless of the goodwill behind their implementation.

The ability to signpost service users to services may be constrained by knowledge and awareness of specific individuals rather than the capacity of the service. The value of a strategy that raises awareness of the services operating, both to service providers and potential beneficiaries, was repeated throughout the session and identified as a real opportunity. Suggestions included the development of an interactive electronic map.

Workshop 2

Workshop 2 was primarily focussed on developing the action plan in view of local needs, available assets, and learning from national and regional programmes.

After presentations from 'The Felix Project', 'Magic Breakfast', 'Foodcycle', and 'Bags of taste', participants were again split into life-course groups to consider actions and goals under the below themes;

- The projects they would like to see implemented locally.
- How gaps, not overcome by individual programmes, might be incorporated into future plans.
- Identification of goals for any future programme of activity.
- What success would look like and, how it might be measured.

For the benefit of those who had not attended the first workshop and, to act as a prompt to overcome the time limitations, each table was provided with:

- A report from the first workshop (see Appendix 1).
- A summary list of gaps identified from the first workshop (see Appendix 4).
- A summary list of opportunities identified during the first workshop (see Appendix 5).

Each table was supplied with a set of discussion questions to direct the round table activity (see Appendix 6).

The findings from Workshop 2 are set out in Appendix 7.

As the circumstances contributing to accessing healthy food differed between the different age groups, so did the proposed solutions. There were, however, some proposals common to all age groups, see the below 4 common themes:

1. Conducting regular networking events

One significant benefit of the insight gathering workshops was to facilitate communication between different organisations, increasing the potential for awareness raising and collaboration. As the attendees represented some of the most engaged and informed people and organisations in the borough, the opportunity for information exchange and sharing was apparent.

2. Mapping of Services and single point of communication

The lack, and potential benefit, of a single repository of information was noted. The sporadic nature of service provision suggests that it is a challenge to keep abreast of location, availability and eligibility of food poverty reduction activities.

3. Embedding food security in wider services

There are numerous organisations and members of different workforces who have the potential to identify those at risk of food insecurity. This extends beyond statutory agencies to: workforces providing utility support within the home, emergency service personnel, and the primary care workforce (including administrative staff). Training in the identification of those at risk, pathways mapping and, in the ability to signpost or refer, has the potential to reduce barriers to access.

4. Re-framing of food aid

It was suggested that re-framing food aid as food waste reduction might serve to reduce the barrier of stigma to accessing support. Participation as a benefactor of a service, rather than a beneficiary holds the potential to increase service access (and, indeed, to reduce food waste).

One of the challenges of the sessions was that despite the clear questions the different tables were asked, interpretation of them differed. For example, in some cases indicators were taken, as intended, to provide a means of enumerating baseline and progress (e.g. Healthy Start uptake) and others took this to mean manifestation of the problem (e.g. weight loss).

Following completion of the workshops, participants of both were sent feedback forms (see Appendix 8). The responses were, for the most part positive, however there was some frustration that the final outcome did not immediately include the production of a food poverty action plan, nor that it had, led directly to the production of a directory of local service provision. The opportunity for networking was reported by almost all respondents, and the activity has already resulted in collaborations between organisations and, increased signposting to activities.

Although intended as insight gathering to inform the development of the local food poverty action plan, the workshops resulted in greater understanding of food security as an issue and, how it manifests locally. This can be seen one of the survey responses:

“I learned that food insecurity affects different strata of society in different ways, and that there should be different solutions to suit the specific needs of certain groups”.

4.0 Discussion

In view of the data discussed above and findings from the workshops it is clear that Waltham Forest has many of the risk factors that are driving food poverty. There are also a lot of initiatives and goodwill in the borough to address food poverty. The next section of the report will look at opportunities and gaps.

4.1 Opportunities

- Waltham Forest is part of the national Healthy Start Vouchers a programme that provides vulnerable families with children under 4 with vouchers to spend on fruit, vegetables and milk. The scheme also provides coupons for free vitamins. The current uptake in the borough is 59% therefore there is an opportunity to increase access to all eligible families.
- Free school meals- Waltham Forest caterers have a gold mark for primary schools and silver mark for secondary schools. 14% of state school pupils are eligible for free school meals and of those 84% are accessing the meals¹⁵. There are opportunities to increase uptake and ensure all eligible children have access to the free school meals
- Magic breakfast supports eligible schools to start and run free breakfast clubs. The majority of primary schools in the borough are eligible for the scheme but only 3 schools (out of 53) are currently in the scheme. There is opportunity to engage the rest of the schools
- Leyton food hub is a new development in one of the most deprived wards. This will offer new opportunities to alleviate food poverty in the borough, e.g. by accepting healthy start vouchers (healthy start is a national scheme to assist families on benefits) to access fresh fruit and vegetables, hosting 'cooking on a budget' sessions, weight management classes, supplying food to tackle holiday hunger, and developing pathways to reduce food waste via redistributions to vulnerable people through 'community fridge' and other such schemes.
- The 'Connecting Communities' project provides new opportunities to build communities through food by creating opportunities for people to cook and eat together. The benefits go beyond addressing food poverty to strengthening communities by creating friendships, tackling loneliness and reducing food waste.
- Borough of culture - As the first Borough of Culture in London, this creates opportunities to explore the rich culture around food via sharing recipes and cooking skills, cooking together, having food festivals and looking at how we can create a sustainable food culture that reduces food poverty and food waste.
- Food growing - Waltham Forest has a strong food growing culture and this provides opportunities to produce more food e.g. creating more growing spaces in residential areas to support community food growing. Allotment association can agree pathways to support holiday clubs by supplying their surplus produce to holiday lunch clubs.

¹⁵ Department for Education (2018). Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2018.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2018>

- The council has pledged to reduce sugar consumption and promote healthy food in the borough and this provides opportunity to provide consistent messaging on healthy eating and promotion of its healthy catering commitment to ensure healthier offer in food outlets.
- Neighbourhood teams provide opportunities to identify vulnerable people in the community, identify local initiatives addressing food poverty and signpost people to local services
- Waltham Forest is a living wage accredited borough and this provides opportunities to work with other employers and contractors to pay the living wage, thus increasing household income levels.
- Join national and London wide initiatives addressing food poverty and reducing food waste e.g. the Felix project and food cycle. The Felix project is already working with some charities in the borough like the YMCA to supply surplus food to those in need. There is an opportunity to use community assets like children and families centre, or religious buildings as food hubs where surplus food can be distributed.

4.2 Gaps

Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children/families at risk • People bordering on risk • hidden hunger • hard to reach (home-schooled, not in education, asylum seekers) • people not recognising their eligibility to services
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition education • Budgeting • Cooking • Work skills • Front line staff training on food security
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food poverty strategy • continued delivery of projects/pilots • projects to overcome holiday hunger • to provide sufficient capacity for statutory agencies • to provide Meals on Wheels
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food insecurity prevalence
Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service provision including local initiatives by communities
Partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between organisations offering support • between departments in organisations • Single point of information
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to run community initiatives like community fridge, food stalls, collect and redistribute surplus food
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost food access options • Improved access to and use of community assets
Meals on wheels service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals on wheel service or similar to cater for the needs of housebound residents

Recommendations

The recommendations are in 3 broad categories

Prevention

- Promotion of healthy start vouchers.
- Increasing uptake of free school meals.
- Increasing breakfast clubs provision by linking with magic breakfast.
- Increase holiday hunger provision.
- Skill building in both cooking and budgeting.
- Raising awareness across a wide range of frontline service staff of food poverty risk indicators and options to mitigate it.

Crisis provision

- Development of a central repository of information to improve signposting and enhance information on local preventative support.
- Ensuring support is delivered in a non-stigmatising and dignified way.
- Develop a local food sharing app or promote established apps like 'Olio' to encourage food sharing, signposting those in need and to reduce food waste.

Wider approach

- Working with regeneration and planning teams in the council to improve the food offer, e.g. to support community food growing by establishing new food growing spaces, identifying 'food deserts' and increasing fruit and vegetable outlets, and limiting the spread of unhealthy fast food outlets (particularly within 400m of schools or other services accessed by children and young people).
- Working with housing teams to identify people at risk of food poverty and sign posting them to local services, providing stable and affordable housing opportunities for individuals and reducing level of failed tenancies.
- Embedding food poverty in the council's strategic approach e.g. 'connecting communities', 'creating futures', 'life chances'.
- Measuring and monitoring food poverty in the borough by embedding food poverty questions in residents survey and regularly reviewing data on food poverty risk indicators.
- Establish a food partnership that brings together stakeholders in food production all the way to getting it on the plate. Food partnership will own and drive work to ensure sustainable food offer in the borough addressing both food poverty and reducing food waste.

Conclusion

There is a significant amount of food security activity being conducted within the London Borough of Waltham Forest already, for the most part by third sector and voluntary organisations. In capturing this activity and increasing opportunities for networking and awareness raising, both in the identification of those in need and, of the activities available, establishing a local food partnership and strategy is the next step in developing a strategic approach to addressing food poverty and ensuring sustainable food provision.

5.0 Action plan

The Waltham Forest food poverty action plan has been informed by the workshop findings and looks to exploit identified opportunities and plugs gaps that have been identified with the budget constraints. It also aligns with the recommended actions in the 'Beyond The Food Bank' report published in 2017. These are:

1. Have a comprehensive plan to reduce food poverty which would include these subsequent recommendations.
2. Have a designated Healthy Start coordinator and an integrated programme of activities to reach a minimum local uptake for 80%.
3. Boost breastfeeding by working towards full UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation.
4. Harness the value of children's centres, using them to deliver concrete actions to tackle food poverty.
5. Ensure there is sufficient and good childcare provision.
6. Work with partners to tackle hunger among children throughout the year.
7. Lead on activities to improve physical access to good food by working with planners, retailers and caterers.
8. Reinvigorate provision of meals on wheels, developing a 'more than the meal' approach.
9. Become an accredited London Living Wage employer and contractor, champion the London Living Wage with local employers and become a Friendly Funder.
10. Minimise the burden of Council Tax payments for residents on low-income.

Food Poverty Action Plan

Action	Key partners	Activities		
		Foundation	Medium Term	Long term
Develop a food poverty action plan	Residents Community organisations	Run 2 food poverty workshops to engage with local stakeholders Identify local partners addressing food poverty Establish estimated level of food poverty in the borough Develop an initial food poverty plan in line with sustain recommended actions	Map existing provision and opportunities and share with partners Establish a steering group and a forum for partners to meet, share learning and review progress	Establish a food partnership in the borough to oversee work to address food poverty and reduce food waste
Have a designated Healthy Start coordinator and an integrated programme of activities to reach a minimum local uptake for 80%.	Children centre Health visitors Midwives CAB	Promote healthy start vouchers via MECC council website and other relevant settings Map local retailers accepting healthy start vouchers and share the information with partners and council website Increase awareness of retailers currently accepting the vouchers.	Recruit more retailers in the borough to accept Healthy Start vouchers Train relevant staff to support families to apply for the scheme	Over 80% of eligible families use healthy start vouchers Embed training to ensure workers and volunteers are sufficiently trained to support families apply for the scheme

Action	Key partners	Activities		
		Foundation	Medium Term	Long term
Boost breastfeeding by working towards full UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation		Achieve UNICEF Baby Friendly level 1 accreditation Join the National Infant Feeding Network for London	Achieve full UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation in all eligible services	
Ensure parents can access sufficient good quality childcare	Family and Children centres	Ongoing assessment to ensure childcare provision is adequate and equitably distributed across the borough. Train staff to support healthy eating.	All children cared for over a mealtime should be provided with a healthy meal, healthy snacks and drinks should be available at other times	
Harness the full value of children's centres in activities to reduce food insecurity		Ongoing support to ensure children centres are well publicised as a resource centre for families	Embed other services in children centres like debt and employment advice, Healthy Start vouchers, healthy cooking on a budget etc. link with benefit services to help families access the benefits which they are entitled to and support them to complete forms	
Work with partners to reduce the risk of childhood hunger		Promote free school meals (FSM) and ensure eligible children are registered Promote and increase uptake of magic	Increase provision to ensure holiday hunger provision is available across the borough	Establish food redistribution pathways with schools and allotments e.g. hosting a healthy tuc shop after school

Action	Key partners	Activities		
		Foundation	Medium Term	Long term
throughout the year		breakfast clubs to eligible schools Provide meals to children at risk of holiday hunger Map out current levels of uptake FSM	Work with housing and benefit teams to identify at risk families and ensure children in this families are registered for FSM using an opt-out system	or community fridge near schools Work with allotment associations to supply produce for use in holiday clubs meals
Improve physical access to healthy food		Promote healthier catering commitment to local food outlets Encourage businesses to accept healthy start vouchers	Increase access to free drinking water Map access to healthy food providers and identify food deserts e.g. distribution of super markets, street markets fast food shops etc. Work with planners to ensure food access is considered in new development	Establish food coops especially in the most deprived wards
Reinvigorate the provision of meals on wheels (adopting an approach beyond meal provision alone)		Review current provision.	Make recommendations on future provision.	Works towards implementation of recommendations on sustainable provision for those who are housebound.
Become a London Living Wage employer and	Commissioning	Council is already accredited living wage employer	Embed living wage into all council contract as part of social value	

Action	Key partners	Activities		
		Foundation	Medium Term	Long term
champion the same approach with local employers				
Minimise the burden of council tax for low-income families	Revenue and benefits	<p>Review current minimum payments of council tax and explore options for achieving 10% or lower for low-income families.</p> <p>Review current use of bailiffs to recover debt from Council Tax support claimants and explore options for future practice.</p>		

