

# Lewisham Food Justice Action Plan

Draft October 2022

# Context

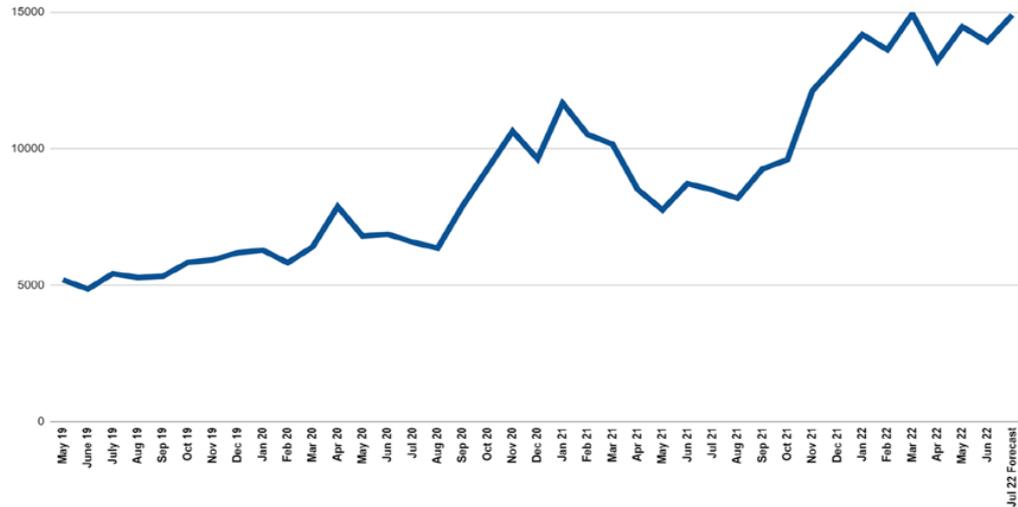
Food injustice is one of the biggest challenges facing Lewisham.

Local food banks and other crisis food provision groups are reporting a steep rise in demand post-COVID, combined with a decrease in food and financial contributions as the cost of living crisis intensifies.

Despite having an extensive network of emergency food providers, some organisations in Lewisham will not be able to meet demand.

Some of our most vulnerable residents may go hungry this winter.

Number of people coming to Citizens Advice Lewisham for food bank referrals (2019-2022)



Graph provided by Fiona Derbyshire, Citizens Advice Lewisham, June 2022

# Context

- There is not one single factor that causes food injustice.
- It is the result of interactions between a complex range of factors including; low income, rising food, housing and fuel costs, lack of time, skills and equipment to store and prepare food and decreased access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods.
- Those experiencing food injustice will also often be experiencing other forms of disadvantage including; fuel poverty, social deprivation, discrimination, housing insecurity or poor physical or mental health.
- Action to reduce food injustice must include advocacy for system-wide effort to address the wider structural issues identified above whilst acknowledging the existing local and national policies and strategies in place to address these.
- Action must also be taken to promote food resilience and provide access to emergency food provision that promotes dignity and choice

# Who is experiencing Food Injustice in Lewisham?

- Food injustice disproportionately affects different groups of the population, many of these groups vulnerable are over-represented in the Lewisham population

## Ethnicity

- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British households are more likely to be experiencing food injustice.
- Lewisham is a highly diverse borough with a much greater percentage of people from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnicity

## Income

- Households with low income are most likely to be food insecure.
- 35% of people in Lewisham are living in poverty
- Lewisham Foodbank are seeing an increase in new referrals of people who have never used the Foodbank before and are in full-time work.

# Who is experiencing Food Injustice in Lewisham?

## Household Composition

- The composition of the household also plays an important role.
- Households with children are less likely to be food secure than households with no children.
- According to DWP in 2021 there were over 13,000 children in Lewisham living in relative low income families.

## Disability

- Households with one or more disabled people are more likely to be food insecure.
- Differences in Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy in Lewisham suggest that Lewisham residents can expect to be either disabled or in poor health for around 20% of their life.

# The Impacts of Food Injustice

Food injustice has significant and broad detrimental impacts on people at all life stages.

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## Infant and maternal health



- Babies are more likely to be lower in birthweight. This can increase the risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and obesity later in life.
- Food insecure mothers are less likely to persevere with breastfeeding due to the stress and social isolation of their situation.
- Food insecure parents who rely on formula may resort to unsafe practices such as skipping feeds, watering down the formula, adding cereal or introducing unmodified cow's milk too early.
- Growth and development could be impaired with inadequate nutrition.

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## Children and young people



- Children in food insecure households are more likely to become obese and develop asthma, depression and other chronic conditions.
- Growth and development can be impaired.
- There is an increased likelihood of tooth decay and cavities.
- Learning is poorer, which can affect educational attainment and impact life chances.

# The Impacts of Food Injustice

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## Adults



- Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and obesity are associated with food insecurity
- Poor diet is related to 30% of life years lost to early death and disability.
- One in three cancer deaths and one in two heart disease deaths are caused by poor diet.

## Older adults



- A poorly nourished older adult is less able to fend off infection and ill health.
- Wounds will take longer to heal.
- Recovery from illness and surgery is impaired. Clinical outcomes are poorer.
- Hospital stays are longer and more frequent.
- Muscle strength is reduced.
- Increased frailty. Greater risk of falls and fractures.
- It is three times more costly to treat a malnourished older person than an adequately nourished one.

# The Impacts of Food Injustice

Along with the physical effects, food injustice causes significant impacts on mental health and social wellbeing.

## Impact on mental and social wellbeing



- A severely food insecure person is five times more likely to experience anxiety disorders and major depressive episodes than someone who has access to adequate food.
- Mothers who are food insecure are over twice as likely to report mental health problems. This can affect the mother infant bonding
- Odds of depression or suicide ideation among children age 14–25 in households experiencing hunger were 2.3 times higher.
- Poor sleep quality due to anxiety worry and hunger
- Social impact on young people especially as they are often unable to invite friends over and participate in treats or social activities that involve spending money on food.

*'I eat half a meal and keep rest in fridge for later'*

*'My health and wellbeing suffers a lot. Tiredness and exhaustion'*

*'I feel like an undesirable member of London at 61 half years old after working my whole life'*

*'Failing as a mother'*

# Our Vision for Lewisham

- **ALL Lewisham residents** can enjoy reliable and fair access to food that is sufficiently nutritious, sustainable, culturally appropriate and affordable.
- **ALL Lewisham residents** have the knowledge, skills, resources and opportunity to grow, prepare, cook, eat and share food with their families and communities.
- **ALL Lewisham stakeholders** support collective action to end chronic hunger, promote food resilience and reduce the need for emergency food aid.
- **ALL Members of the Lewisham Food Justice Alliance** and other key stakeholders have access to data to monitor the scale of the issue of food injustice and to determine whether the actions taken are having a positive impact on lived experience, health and wellbeing.

We will achieve this vision through the implementation of a cross-organisational Food Justice Action Plan for Lewisham, developed and delivered in partnership with local communities.

# Recent Achievements

Lewisham has been addressing poverty and Food Injustice for some years through a range of initiatives and policies across the borough both pre-COVID-19 as well as actions taken in response to the pandemic.

Lewisham was one of the first areas to agree to develop IFAN's cash first leaflet. Over 6000 leaflets have been distributed throughout the borough. The leaflet is being updated and Lewisham Local is working closely with the council to increase distribution.

Lewisham council together with the South East London Integrated Care System have committed to the universal free vitamin D scheme for pregnant women and children under 4 years

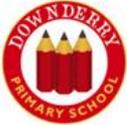
Recognition by the GLA of Lewisham's rapid response to the pandemic and setting up a food hub

Awarded DfE funding for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme to provide activities and food for children aged 4-16

Commitment from Lewisham Council to be a "Right to Food" borough

Lewisham Food Poverty Summit (2022)

# How we developed the Food Justice Action Plan



- Lewisham Food Poverty Summit
- Early Engagement with Stakeholders
- Food Justice Action Plan Workshops

# Agreement on the term food justice and definition

- **Language Matters – SUSTAIN Food Power Programme**
- **The term Food Justice is considered the most empowering and least stigmatising term**
- **What do we mean by Food Justice in Lewisham?**

*Reliable and fair access to food that is sufficiently nutritious, sustainable, culturally appropriate and affordable.*

# Key priority Areas

1. Take preventative action to reduce the risk of Lewisham residents experiencing food injustice
2. Ensure babies, children and young people have access to nutritious, sustainable and culturally appropriate sources of food throughout the year
3. Co-ordinate resources, capacity and expertise to maximise the support available to those in crisis
4. Promote and develop “Money First” approaches to crisis prevention and support

# A Phased Action Plan

- Achieving the four priority aims may not be sufficient to completely fulfil our vision for Food Justice for Lewisham
- We may identify additional gaps or issues that require attention and agree to additional focus areas and related actions that should be integrated into future iterations of the plan.
- This plan is intended to be a live, continuously evolving document that will adapt and grow as the issues relating to food injustice that our population experience also change.

# Focus Area 1: Take preventative action to reduce the risk of Lewisham residents experiencing food injustice

- Promote and develop opportunities for community food growing
- Ensure residents have the skills, space, appliances, equipment and fuel to store and cook their own food
- Ensure food growing, cooking or sharing programmes provide opportunities for skills sharing and promote community cohesion
- Create a strategic framework to oversee and promote preventative action that builds on existing structures and creates new structures where there are gaps
- Taking action to confirm Lewisham's status as a "Right to Food Borough"
- Action on the wider determinants of Food Injustice
- Tackle inequalities in groups more vulnerable to Food Injustice in Lewisham

## **Focus Area 2: Ensure babies, children and young people have access to nutritious and sustainable sources of food throughout the year**

- Increase the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers in the eligible population
- Increase the sustainability, availability and uptake of free food for CYP incl; free school meals, free food at school breakfast clubs and sustainable provision of the Holiday Activity Scheme

## **Focus Area 3: Co-ordinate resources, capacity and expertise to maximise the support available to those in crisis**

- Increase effective collection and distribution of surplus food across the borough
- Improve the identification and co-ordination of physical community assets to promote food justice and provide crisis support where needed
- Improve the co-location of holistic advice and support services at places where people in crisis present
- Streamline the referral pathways between services to support residents, approaching or in crisis, to access the range of support they may require in an integrated way
- Improve the visibility and accessibility of crisis prevention and support services

# Focus Area 4: Developing Money First approaches to crisis prevention and support

- *Maximising family income through cash-first approaches and affordable food schemes is the most effective way to provide dignified, culturally appropriate and connected support for those who need it.*
- *Community Food Retail projects can play a medium-term, intermediary role by helping to prevent people reaching an emergency situation and/or supporting them to recover from a crisis*

- Support the successful and sustainable delivery of existing Community Food Retail projects in Lewisham
- Advocate for the adoption of cash first approaches in other aspects of public and voluntary sector support for those experiencing poverty

# Areas for Early Action:

**Take preventative action to reduce the risk of Lewisham residents experiencing food injustice:**

- Provide support and advice on what and how to grow food at home and in the community (Task 1c)
- Collaborate with the "warm spaces" initiative to include spaces with cooking facilities (Task 1f)
- Establish a Food Justice Alliance for Lewisham, to oversee the implementation of this action plan, ensuring it doesn't duplicate existing structures and that it has appropriate membership and reach (Task 1l)
- Promote Lewisham's status as a "Right to Food" borough, to residents, employees and partners (Task 1r)

# Areas for Early Action:

**Ensure babies, children and young people have access to nutritious and sustainable sources of food throughout the year:**

- Review and reinvigorate the promotion and achievement of the Healthy Early Years award in Lewisham (Task 2c)
- Identify the eligible population groups with the lowest uptake of healthy start vouchers (Task 2f)
- Identify the eligible population groups with the lowest uptake of free school meals, including families with no recourse to public funds (Task 2i)

# Areas for Early Action:

**Co-ordinate resources, capacity and expertise to maximise the support available to those in crisis:**

- Audit local activity regarding the donation and distribution of surplus food across organisations and businesses in Lewisham to identify opportunities to improve links between supply and demand (Task 3b)
- Identify opportunities to use the compost created as a by-product of anaerobic digestion of Lewisham's Food Waste for distribution to local community food growing projects, allotments or schools. (Task 3d)
- - Explore how council owned advertising assets could be used to share information on crisis prevention and support services (Task 3m)

# How you can support Lewisham's Food Justice Action Plan :

Citizens and communities can



- Donate home/allotment grown fruit and vegetables to a food aid organisation in the borough
- Volunteer with a food project. Visit [Lewisham Local's volunteering web pages](#) for more details
- Sign up to buy surplus from food stores and restaurants at a fraction of the cost. [www.toogoodtogo.co.uk](http://www.toogoodtogo.co.uk)
- Share food for free or sign up to claim someone else's unwanted food and stop surplus from going to waste using Olio [www.olioex.com](http://www.olioex.com)

# How you can support Lewisham's Food Justice Action Plan :

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## Businesses can



- Become a member of the [Good Food Lewisham network](#)
- Become a [London Living Wage employer](#) and use contractors who pay the London Living Wage
- Sign up to accept [Healthy Start vouchers](#)
- Use an app or food rescue organisation, such as Olio, Food Cloud, Too Good To Go or Plan Zheroes, to stop your surplus food from going to waste
- Sign up to the [Lewisham Sugar Smart campaign](#)
- Achieve the Healthier Catering Commitment Award to increase the range of healthier options available [www.healthiercateringcommitment.co.uk](http://www.healthiercateringcommitment.co.uk)
- Raise awareness of what services and support are available for those experiencing or in danger of food insecurity. [www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living)  
<https://www.lewishamlocal.com/lewisham-community-meals-and-foodbank-provision/>
- Offer rooms or kitchen to projects for meetings and food preparation

# How you can support Lewisham's Food Justice Action Plan :

Lewisham based organisations including: public sector, third sector and community organisations can



- Support the aims and actions of Lewisham's Food Justice Action Plan. Contact [Lakhvinder.Matharu@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Lakhvinder.Matharu@lewisham.gov.uk) or [Helen.Buttivant@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Buttivant@lewisham.gov.uk) for information on how to get involved
- Become a member of the Good Food Lewisham network
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- Work with other organisations across the borough to provide coordinated support to beneficiaries, and reduce duplication of provision . Consider joining the Food Network hosted by Lewisham Local e-mail [hello@lewishamlocal.com](mailto:hello@lewishamlocal.com) for more information
- Raise awareness of what services and support are available for those experiencing or in danger of food insecurity.  
[www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living)  
<https://www.lewishamlocal.com/lewisham-community-meals-and-foodbank-provision/>
- Offer spaces within venues for meetings and food preparation
- Commit to paying the [London Living Wage](#) and use contractors who pay the London Living Wage
- Get involved with Lewisham council on making Lewisham a carbon neutral borough. [Sign up to the climate emergency mailing list.](#)
- Give local businesses priority in bidding for certain contracts. For example, refer to Lewisham Council's [Sustainable procurement Strategy](#)

# How you can support Lewisham's Food Justice Action Plan :

Schools and early year's settings can



- Support the aims and actions of Lewisham's Food Justice Action Plan. Contact [Lakhvinder.Matharu@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Lakhvinder.Matharu@lewisham.gov.uk) or [Helen.Buttivant@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Buttivant@lewisham.gov.uk) for information on how to get involved
- Become a member of the [Good Food Lewisham network](#)
- Promote take up of [free school meals](#) by pupils who are eligible and/or entitled to free school meals, and pupils with no recourse to public funds
- Promote the [Healthy Start Scheme](#) and support families to apply for the benefit
- Achieve [Healthy Early Years London](#) / [Healthy Schools London](#) Bronze award
- Sign up to the [Lewisham Sugar Smart campaign](#)

Raise awareness of what services and support are available for those experiencing or in danger of food insecurity. [www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living) <https://www.lewishamlocal.com/lewisham-community-meals-and-foodbank-provision/>

Support provision of food outside of lunch at school, for example breakfast clubs (such as [Magic Breakfast](#)), hosting holiday time meals, family kitchen cooking clubs or family meal sharing opportunities

Consider allowing local projects to use school kitchens/rooms to produce community meals and store ingredients

# Monitoring & Governance:

- **Food Justice Alliance**
  - **Delivery Plan**
  - **Output and Outcome Measures**

# Useful Links:

- **Local**
- Citizens Advice Lewisham - [www.citizensadvicelewisham.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicelewisham.org.uk)
- Community connections Lewisham – [www.communityconnectionslewisham.org](http://www.communityconnectionslewisham.org)
- Lewisham Council- Get support with your living costs [www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/cost-of-living)
- Lewisham Local - [www.lewishamlocal.com](http://www.lewishamlocal.com)
- Lewisham Free Vitamin D Scheme – [www.lewisham.gov.uk/freed](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/freed)
- **Regional**
- GLA, Help with the cost of living - [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/help-cost-living](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/help-cost-living)
- **National**
- Independent Food Aid Network - [www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk](http://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk)
- Sustain - [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)
- The Food Foundation – [www.foodfoundation.org.uk](http://www.foodfoundation.org.uk)
- Step Change - [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)
- Healthy Start Scheme - [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)