

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD			
Report Title	Food Poverty In Lewisham		
Contributors	Director of Public Health	Item No.	11
Class	Part 1	Date:	3 July 2014
Strategic Context	Promoting Healthy Weight is one of the Health and Wellbeing Board's Priorities.		

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the attached briefing paper is to provide information on the causes, scale consequences and current interventions relating to food poverty in Lewisham and to seek endorsement to implement the next steps outlined in the report.

2. Recommendations

Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:

- Note the content of the report and
- Endorse the next steps outlined in the report.

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1. Achieving a healthy weight in children and adults is a priority in Lewisham's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Children and Young People's plan. Additionally Lewisham's Health & Wellbeing Strategy recognises healthy eating as a key determinant of health and wellbeing, whilst the JSNA articulates the complex interaction of social exclusion, unemployment and poverty that can lead to vicious circles of isolation, exclusion and inequality that impact on mental health and wellbeing – also a key priority for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.2 Reducing inequality – narrowing the gap in outcomes for citizens, is one of the overarching principles of the Sustainable Community Strategy. In addition one of the strategy's priorities is Healthy, active and enjoyable - where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and well-being.

4. Background

- 4.1. Definitions of food poverty focus on issues of access, affordability and healthy food. The London Assembly defines food poverty as, 'the inability to afford or access healthy food'.
- 4.2. Some people are 'squeezed' into food poverty over a prolonged period of time, others are 'shocked' by an unexpected event or change. Food is a flexible expense and is therefore often compromised.
- 4.3. A recent report *A Zero Hunger City, Tackling Food Poverty in London (March 2013)*, by the London Assembly states:
 - There is a correlation between food poverty and income poverty, but it is not entirely caused by a low income; careful budgeting, cooking skills – and chance – can keep a low-income family from food poverty.
 - The determinants of food poverty are complex, ranging from global trends in food prices, national levels of poverty driven in part by policies on benefits and the minimum wage, local availability of healthy, reasonably priced food and individual income, skills and knowledge.
 - A poor diet has many serious consequences. These include increased risk of illnesses such as: cancer and heart disease, poor infant health, antisocial behaviour in children, loss of independence and increased falls in older people. Counter intuitively, a poor diet can also cause obesity (a phenomenon known as modern malnutrition) which contributes to diabetes and heart disease.

5. Describing Food Poverty in Lewisham

- 5.1. The precise extent of food poverty in Lewisham is currently not known since borough level data on its extent is not currently collected. A variety of methods to attempt to describe the scale of the issue have been used: a recent report on child hunger in London; a Welfare Reform update from the Council's Benefit Service; London Living Wage data; information on food banks in Lewisham; mapping supermarkets and deprivation in Lewisham; a recent survey of older people and food poverty in London; qualitative data from Lewisham agencies. Although each method has its limitations and assumptions, a consistent picture of great need emerges. It is estimated that:
- 5.2. The Greater London Authority report, *Child Hunger in London* reported that 21% of parents surveyed reported skipping meals so that their children could eat and 9% of children in London said they sometime or often go to bed hungry. If these figures were applied to Lewisham it is estimated that 19,000 parents in Lewisham skip meals so their children can eat and 6,000 children in Lewisham sometimes or often go to bed hungry.³

- 5.3. 24,000 people in Lewisham earn less than the London Living Wage, placing them at risk of food poverty. 4,000 earn less than the *minimum wage*, placing them severely at risk.
- 5.4. Food banks report providing food to approximately 1,000 individual clients between October 2012 and May 2013, with both the number of distributions centres and those accessing them rising in recent months.
- 5.5. Key charitable organisations have stated that welfare reforms have increased the risk of (food) poverty. 9,301 households have been issued with a summons as a result of lack of payment of new council tax liabilities. Changes to the social fund mean that fewer people are eligible for help. 400 households are affected by the benefit cap, with 120 losing more than £100/week.
- 5.6. As of 18 September, there were 2,788 tenants in social housing across Lewisham affected by the 'bedroom tax'. The most recent briefing does not indicate the projected cost to each household, although approximately 60% of households provided with accommodation by Lewisham Homes and Phoenix housing are in arrears. The number of people affected by the 'bedroom tax' is falling.
- 5.7. Six Lewisham wards do not have a supermarket. Three (Evelyn, Whitefoot and Grove Park) are highly deprived or have super output areas of high deprivation. Brockley and Ladywell, while more affluent, have some of the most deprived populations of older people. 500m is an accepted definition of access to a food source; under this definition, parts of these wards have poor access. Further work to better understand access to food in Lewisham is warranted.
- 5.8. A range of service providers and third sector organisations working in Lewisham report an increase in the incidence of food poverty.

6. Initiatives to Combat Food Poverty in Lewisham

- 6.1 Work is already being done to combat food poverty in Lewisham. Healthy Start, Free School Meals and Breakfast Clubs are all interventions targeted at children. Free porridge is now available in all schools covered by the catering contract and all 5-7year olds will have free school meals from September 2014. Food banks with varying models of provision are increasing. Housing associations are starting to develop policies for tackling food poverty. The extent of provision by community and faith groups for elderly people is currently unknown.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 To use the findings of the report as the foundations for the future development of action plans based on the Greater London Authority report on Child Hunger and London Assembly report on food poverty.

This will become part of the overall strategy for food and nutrition in the borough.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Legal implications

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9.2 Members of the Board are reminded that under Section 195 Health and Social Care Act 2012, health and wellbeing boards are under a duty to encourage integrated working between the persons who arrange for health and social care services in the area.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

11. Equalities Implications

11.1 Food poverty and income poverty are related.

11.2 An Equality Analysis Assessment (EAA) will be undertaken on the action plans that are to be developed.

12. Environmental Implications

12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

13. Conclusion

13.1 The briefing paper highlights that a consistent picture of great need emerges on the scale of food poverty in Lewisham. To seek endorsement from the Health and Wellbeing Board to implement the next steps highlighted in the report; to develop costed and detailed action plans based on the Greater London Authority report on Child Hunger and London Assembly report on food poverty. It is proposed that these action plans will then be presented to the board at a future meeting.

If you have any difficulty in opening the links above or those within the body of the report, please contact Kalyan DasGupta (kalyan.dasgupta@lewisham.gov.uk; 020 8314 8378), who will assist.

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