

Scrutiny Panel

All Members of the Scrutiny Panel are requested to attend the meeting of the group to be held as follows

Monday 8 March 2021

7.00 pm

Until further notice, all Council meetings will be held remotely

Contact:

Tracey Anderson

☎ 0208 3563312

✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Tim Shields

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Margaret Gordon (Chair), Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr Sophie Conway, Cllr Polly Billington and Cllr Peter Snell

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Agenda Papers | (Pages 5 - 142) |
| 2 | Minutes of the Meeting | (Pages 143 - 160) |

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Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-health-in-hackney.htm>



Public Involvement and Recording

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Overview & Scrutiny

Scrutiny Panel

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Monday, 8th March 2021


7.00 pm

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<https://youtu.be/bH0HIA1c8>

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Tim Shields

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: **Cllr Margaret Gordon** **Cllr Ben Hayhurst** **Cllr Peter Snell**
 (Chair)
 Cllr Sharon Patrick **Cllr Sophie Conway** **Cllr Polly Billington**

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1	Apologies for Absence	7.00pm
2	Urgent Items / Order of Business	7.03pm
3	Declarations of Interest	7.04pm
4	National Food Poverty Landscape	7.05pm (30 mins)

Scrutiny Panel will hear overviews of the national landscape of food poverty & the future of food poverty from two large organisations, Trussell Trust & Sustain. This will be prefaced with an overview of Hackney's Food Poverty Action Plan from Head of Policy, Sonia Khan.

The following documents are attached for Scrutiny Panel's consideration:

1. Food Poverty Action Plan (LBH)
2. Lockdown, Lifelines and the Long Haul Ahead (Trussell Trust)
3. Response, Resilience and Recovery: London's Food Response to Covid19 (Sustain)

5	<p>Hackney Food Justice Alliance & Hackney Food Network</p> <p>Scrutiny Panel will hear an introduction and overview of the Food Justice Alliance & Food Network before hearing about the work of local organisations working as part of the Hackney Food Network.</p> <p>There will be an update about the strategic direction and future work of the Food Justice Alliance, and an update following the implementation of the advice services review. Following the presentations there will be a Q&A session.</p>	<p>7.36pm (60 mins + 40 for Q&A)</p>
6	<p>Scrutiny Panel Work Programme</p> <p>To agree or amend the work programme for the remainder of municipal year 2020/2021</p>	<p>9.22pm (5 mins)</p>
7	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>To agree the minutes of the meeting held of 1st February 2021</p>	<p>9.28pm (5 mins)</p>
8	<p>Any Other Business</p>	<p>9.34pm (5 mins)</p>

To access the meeting please click in the link <https://youtu.be/bH0HlAla1c8>

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Scrutiny Panel 8th March 2021 Item 4 – National Food Poverty Landscape	Item No 4
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Outline

Scrutiny Panel will hear overviews of the national landscape of food poverty & the future of food poverty from two large organisations, Trussell Trust & Sustain. This will be prefaced with an overview of Hackney's Food Poverty Action Plan from Head of Policy, Sonia Khan.

The following documents are attached for Scrutiny Panel's consideration:

1. Food Poverty Action Plan (LBH)
2. Lockdown, Lifelines and the Long Haul Ahead (Trussell Trust)
3. Response, Resilience and Recovery: London's Food Response to Covid-19 (Sustain)

Invited guests

- **Sonia Khan**, Head of Policy & Strategic Development, London Borough of Hackney
- **Tanya Whitfield**, Project Manager, Hackney Foodbank, Trussell Trust
- **Morven Oliver-Larkin**, London Food Poverty Campaign Coordinator, Sustain

Action

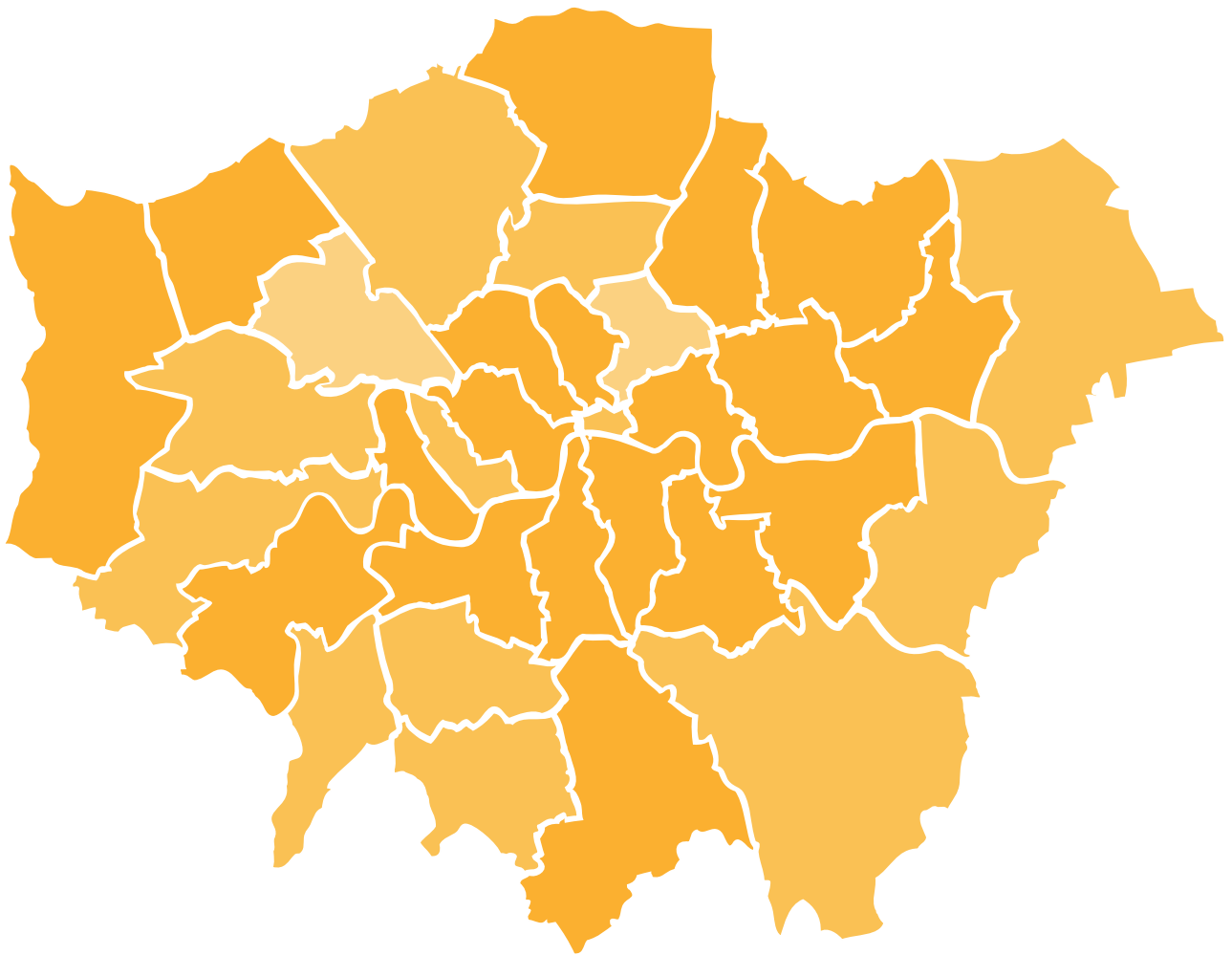
Scrutiny Panel is asked to note the presentations.

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Response, Resilience and Recovery:

London's Food Response to Covid-19

November 2020



Foreword



Debbie Weekes-Bernard

Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement

Covid-19 has exposed pre-existing structural inequalities and a lack of resilience in London's food system. It has exacerbated challenges many Londoners face accessing healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate diets; placed unsustainable demands on the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS); exposed over-reliance on complex, 'just-in-time' supply chains which may be further compromised by Brexit; and increased health inequalities. But we know these flaws existed long before the pandemic.

In 2019, the Mayor commissioned the UK's first regional measure of food insecurity, showing 1.5 million adults and 400,000 children in London regularly struggled to afford or access food.ⁱ The pandemic has pushed millions more Londoners into financial hardship and made life more precarious for those already struggling.

One million London households with children experienced food insecurity after one month of lockdown, and 100,000 children skipped meals because their family couldn't access sufficient food. Nationally, the Trussell Trust reported an 81% increase in people supported by emergency food parcels between April-June 2020 compared to the previous year,ⁱⁱ and the Independent Food Aid Network reported a 177% rise.ⁱⁱⁱ Although demand levelled out as the job retention scheme and other support became available, the pandemic's ongoing impact on income means the Trussell Trust forecasts 670,000 more people nationally will be classed as destitute by the end of 2020, meaning a 61% increase in need compared to last winter.^{iv}

The strong local government response was inspirational, protecting residents from financial hardship and food insecurity; delivered in partnership with the VCS. It needs to be adequately funded by the Government.

Since 2015, 'Beyond the Food Bank' has measured ways London boroughs have tackled food insecurity. It has explored ways councils can increase Healthy Start uptake, help children access food in term time and school holidays, improve good food access for older Londoners, ensure Londoners can access community food growing spaces and protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

This year's report shows how impressively London boroughs have responded to Covid-19's impact on our food system, especially given the financial pressures they face as a result of the pandemic's impact and the cumulative effect of cuts to core grants. I want to be absolutely clear that I acknowledge that boroughs are being forced to make unenviable choices about which vital services should be prioritised – and not all will be in a position to adopt the recommendations of this report. In setting out the differing approaches that boroughs have taken we hope to enable understanding and learning from the differing approaches taken to coordinating local emergency responses, and building greater food resilience for the future.

This report also demonstrates the importance of partnership working. Every local authority worked with the London Food Alliance, local VCS partners and the Mayor to establish Community Food Hubs to distribute food supplies. It also reveals how councils benefitted from having existing food and anti-poverty strategies, enabling them to respond rapidly to support residents, businesses and communities. Where councils had local food partnerships, food poverty alliances or strong links with the VCS, they coordinated extremely effective emergency responses. Where councils had 'cash-first' approaches to maximise household incomes alongside 'wraparound services' to address the causes of financial hardship, they amplified support to reach those most in need.

The pandemic has enabled many councils to increase their focus on food. New food partnerships and support for vulnerable residents shows the importance of a multidisciplinary, cross-cutting approach to food insecurity and resilience.

To support these partnerships, the extraordinary response of local authorities and VCS partners must be matched by commitment from the Government to restore funding for Local Welfare Assistance and continue funding the other support needed to tackle poverty as the driver of food insecurity.

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Acknowledgements

Report written by **Morven Oliver-Larkin**, London Food Poverty Campaign Coordinator for Sustain, and by **Amy Luck**, London Food Link Policy, Research and Communications Officer for Sustain. We are grateful to all of the London boroughs councils that responded to our survey and to the Living Wage Foundation and Unicef UK for sharing their data on Living Wage accreditation and Baby Friendly accreditation amongst London borough councils.

Assistance in developing our research questions was also generously given by Stephanie Slater of School Food Matters, Helen Crawley of First Steps Nutrition, Elizabeth Mahoney and Nichola MacAndrews of the Greater London Authority, as well as Sustain colleagues.

We are particularly grateful to Trust for London and the Mayor of London for funding this work.

Executive summary

Sustain's food network in the capital, London Food Link, has published two annual reports since 2011 and 2015 measuring progress by London's local authorities on key areas of food and farming policy – *Beyond the Food Bank* and *Good Food for London*. Past reports assessed specific action that councils can take to support children to access food during and outside of term time, older people to access food safely in their homes, and all Londoners to access affordable, sustainable and healthy produce locally, amongst other areas of work. Such actions help local authorities meet the objectives of the Mayor of London's Food Strategy.

This year the reports have been merged to examine London councils' food response to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Using data provided by councils, the *Response Resilience and Recovery* report assesses action taken by London's local authorities to address food poverty and enhance a good food environment and economy locally. The report looks holistically at the foundations that councils had in place before the pandemic, how councils built on these to coordinate the local emergency response, and whether councils are ensuring greater food resilience as part of their recovery plan. As well as specific findings contained within the body of the report, our analysis resulted in these overall findings:

Where councils had strong foundations prior to Covid-19, they were able to build on these to quickly develop sound emergency responses. In particular, where councils had any of the following in place, they were able to build on these quickly and 'slot in' new support:

- existing relationships with the local voluntary and community sector (VCS)
- food poverty action plans or other planning work relating to addressing long-term food poverty
- cash-first approaches that prioritised maximising household incomes amongst poorer residents.

Many councils forged new ways of working during Covid-19, and this is informing the recovery phase. As a result of the emergency situation, many councils started working intensively with the local VCS for the first time to deliver food and support, and some even started new forms of direct financial support to residents. In these cases, councils are building this new work into the recovery phase, for example by working collaboratively with partners to decide next steps, funding new partners, or in some cases establishing new alliances or partnerships as the framework for future local action on food.

Some councils are so stretched that they are having to rely too much on the voluntary and community sector, which is itself under severe strain. Local voluntary and community sector groups have done brilliant and essential work throughout this crisis. Whilst this is vital in an immediate sense, in some cases it enables local government to roll back direct provision where what is needed is publicly funded, consistent support. For example, several meals on wheels services have recently closed, in part because similar services are being run by voluntary groups at lower cost. This VCS provision is often difficult to sustain and sometimes lacks the capacity to meet the scale of need and may also struggle with vital risk management or quality control.

Councils have realised the importance of a diverse and resilient food supply. From local food growing, through to smaller shops, catering services, markets and other food enterprises, all have played their part in ensuring that food got to those in need. Many were already starting to recognise the role of neighbourhood shops and markets in providing access to healthy and affordable food, but during the crisis this has become more pertinent. Community food growing, while not always seen as a part of food production, has also shown its value in reaching those in need. More action is needed to ensure food is integrated in green recovery plans, which would also have co-benefits for climate and nature, which are vital considerations for all of us.

Survey and approach

The survey and approach was designed by the team at Sustain, based on our previous work and engagement with councils on food issues. Data and information for the report was collected through a survey to councils who self-reported on action taken and future plans. Questions were grouped into seven themes, each of which included sub-sections on a specific topic. For instance, in Children's Health, there are sub-sections on Healthy Start, free school meals, and holiday provision with food.

The maps in each section represent action taken by London councils across all of the areas of work that we asked questions about within that theme. 'Leadership', meaning concerted action on a number of points in each topic or theme, has been highlighted. We have endeavoured to be thorough, and to highlight good practice that demonstrates what is possible. However, we also recognise that Covid-19 has been a very challenging time, with many

people and organisations working at pace to respond to an alarming and large-scale food emergency. Any omissions are unintentional, and we will be happy to highlight additional good practice in future.

Within each of the sections in our survey we asked multiple choice questions on:

- What food-related support councils had in place before Covid-19
- What councils did on food in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- What councils are doing on food to recover from Covid-19

We have grouped councils under 'leadership', 'good practice', or 'some action', depending on the level and range of actions taken. We recorded councils that did not report any action or did not respond to the survey as 'not reporting any action or data'.

Theme	Council activities or work
Partnerships and collaborative approaches to action on food	Having a food poverty action plan Having a food poverty alliance or sustainable food partnership locally Having strong working relationships with the local food voluntary and community sector, for example through commissioning
'Cash-first' approaches	Investing in local welfare assistance, Discretionary Housing Payment or equivalent local schemes Having a low minimum Council Tax payment Being an accredited London Living Wage employer
Food access	Investing in meals on wheels services and other food support for older adults and disabled people Ensuring all residents have physical access to good food
Children's access to food	Investing in the Healthy Start Voucher scheme Supporting access to free school meals Supporting holiday provision with food Promoting breastfeeding through the Unicef UK Baby Friendly scheme
Food growing and production	Supporting food growing, including allotments, community gardens, orchards and larger scale farming Increasing access to land Ensuring food growing is supported and protected in local plans Working in partnership with external organisations to initiate and support food growing
Good food economy	Supporting smaller food retailers, enterprises and markets to supply healthy and sustainable food Creating a Good Food Retail Plan across public health and economic development Helping reduce climate impact of small food businesses including markets
Climate and nature emergency	Including a focus on food in climate strategies or action plans or in any 'green recovery' work
Healthier Catering Commitment	Supporting the Healthier Catering Commitment or equivalent schemes

Recommendations for action

1

Support and invest in a **food poverty alliance or food partnership locally**, ensuring that local voluntary and community sector groups are included as equal partners, whilst the council invests staff time in coordination and oversight of the group. Ensure **new relationships formed during the crisis are continued** and strengthened.

2

Jointly write a **food poverty action plan** that focuses on building more resilient local food systems and emergency support in the aftermath of Covid-19, and ensure the plan's aims are carried out collaboratively with partners. Where a plan is in place, **collaboratively update this in light of Covid-19** and its aftermath.

3

Centre a '**cash-first**' **approach to tackling food poverty** by drawing on any mechanisms available to the local authority which maximise household incomes for poorer residents. This should include **welfare assistance funds, low Council Tax payments** and the integration of **wraparound services** with emergency financial and food support.

4

Map and invest in access to healthy food for residents, including encouraging existing or new retailers to sell fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate and local produce in areas that lack physical access to food.

5

Fund and support food services for older and disabled people, including **meals on wheels** services.

6

Promote the Healthy Start scheme, free school meals, breakfast clubs and holiday provision with food for all potentially eligible families. Allocate staff time and funding to the coordination and promotion of these.

7

Set targets to increase capacity of **local food production** and distribution and related skills, utilising community interest.

8

Target additional business and **economic support to smaller retailers and fresh-produce markets** and stalls to increase sales and access of healthy, sustainable food, helping to boost the local economy and improve health.

9

Include **action on food waste**, healthy and sustainable **food procurement** and **land use and planning** in **climate and nature action plans**. Engage citizens, businesses and council partners in these processes.

10

Join the **Healthier Catering Commitment scheme** or initiate independent efforts to encourage caterers and food businesses to make simple, healthy improvements to their food.

Council leadership in food across London

In previous years, the *Good Food for London* and *Beyond the Food Bank* reports provided league tables of the 33 London boroughs, comparing their performance against well-established criteria. This has proved a helpful way to encourage friendly competition and to recognise and stimulate progress over the time that these reports have been produced. This work has supported the step-by-step implementation of the Mayor of London's Healthy and Sustainable Food Strategy, with impressive results.

In this extraordinary year of 2020, we recognise that many councils are undertaking significant new work on food, and that councils and the organisations and communities they work with are under immense strain – they have been responding to the Covid-19 coronavirus and food emergencies with vigour but often limited resources. Consequently, we do not think it appropriate this year to produce a league table. However, we would like to highlight leadership and good practice, demonstrating what is possible, with the factors that contribute to this explored in more depth throughout the report. We hope this will serve as an inspiration and guide to catalyse a healthy, sustainable and resilient recovery for London's food system, and also in a way that will help us to tackle inequalities, climate change and the restoration of nature – for the benefit of everyone.

The following London councils have show cross-cutting leadership across their action on food: Tower Hamlets, Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Waltham Forest, Greenwich, Croydon, and Lewisham. There is much to learn from the joined-up approaches to food in these boroughs, where numerous and impressive initiatives have been supported.

All other councils have shown varying degrees of activity across their action on food. Some have shown good practice in particular areas, as shown by our maps throughout the report.



London's food in numbers

- **1.9 million Londoners** regularly struggled to afford or access food before the Covid-19 pandemic^v
- **210,006 emergency food parcels** were distributed by 115 Trussell Trust food bank centres across London between April and September 2020^{vi} while at least 148 London-based independent food banks, Salvation Army centres and schools distributed emergency food parcels on top of other types of food aid provision^{vii}
- **People identifying as Black or Black British were significantly overrepresented** in those that need to use Trussell Trust food banks (9% vs. 3% of the UK population)^{viii}
- In London, **32% of families are registered for Free School Meals**, which is higher than the UK average of 29%^{ix}
- Emissions associated with food account for an estimated **13% of total consumption-based emissions** in major world cities like London - food is therefore a bigger source of consumption-based emissions than transport, clothing and aviation^x
- **Half of families with the immigration status 'no recourse to public funds'** in the UK say they have had at least one day when their children went without a hot meal because they could not afford it^{xi}
- Roughly **one in ten** (8% of) **economically deprived areas** in England & Wales **are "food deserts"** – areas that lack access to affordable, healthy food retailers. And in London and the South of England essential food items are on average more expensive than other parts of the country^{xii}
- An estimated **200,000 older Londoners** are at risk of household food insecurity^{xiii}
- Roughly **30,000 people** are on a waiting list for an allotment in London^{xiv}

How are councils taking action?

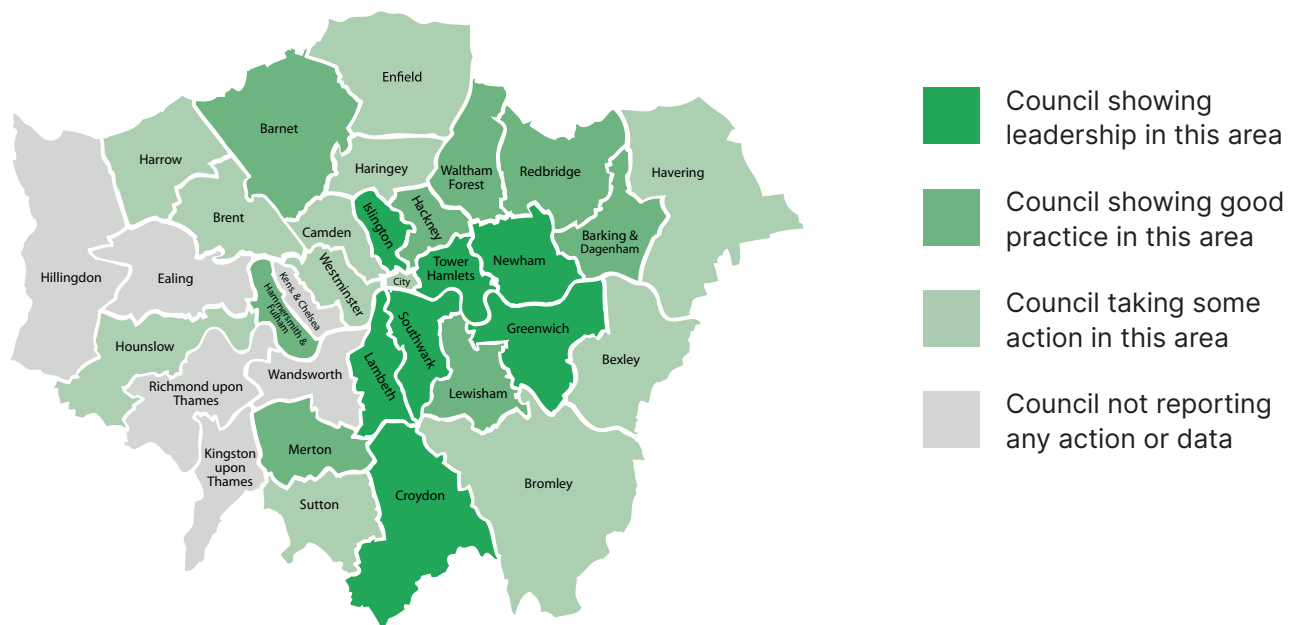
- 22 London councils had **Local Welfare Assistance Schemes** in place before Covid-19, with 18 of these increasing funding to these schemes in response to the pandemic
- Only 9 London councils now invest in a **meals on wheels service** for their borough
- 16 London councils had a **food poverty action plan** in place prior to the pandemic, with 13 of these having a multi-sector **group responsible for implementing the plan** and its recommendations
- All 33 London councils **worked collaboratively with the voluntary and community sector** to a significant degree in response to Covid-19 to distribute food aid and alleviate financial hardship
- 6 councils are now formalising relationships with the voluntary and community sector into **new food poverty alliances or food partnerships**. This is on top of the existing 15 partnerships and alliances in London
- 20 London councils have declared a **climate and nature emergency plan that includes** action on reducing the **environmental impact of food**
- 22 London councils have **policies that promote access to healthy food** retail or limit density of unhealthy food retailers, with 9 of these being a Good Food Retail Plan
- 18 London councils provided resources including small **grants for community growing projects** before the Covid-19 pandemic
- 15 councils actively **supported community gardens to stay open** during the pandemic

Partnerships and collaborative approaches to action on food

At the local level, action on food poverty, sustainability, or access to land for community or commercial food production can often be done in disparate, piecemeal ways. There can consequently be large gaps in terms of what is needed and missed opportunities to build resilience. When local actors share knowledge, experience and information and work together as part of a joint plan to address food or related issues, this builds a more resilient, diverse and sustainable place-based food system.

Addressing the lack of equity, sustainability, and health in our food system can be done at the local level through food partnerships, food poverty alliances, or less formalised joint work between the council, VCS, and business. To combat food poverty specifically, these groups can work together towards shared goals, formalised most effectively through a food poverty action plan. Councils can and should take coordination and leadership roles in this work, through convening meetings, sharing information, and coordinating - sometimes funding - concerted action.

Foundational work before Covid-19



Case study: Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets council is a key member of the Tower Hamlets Food Partnership, a multi-sector partnership committed to improving the local food system and reducing food poverty. The partnership was established by the council and the *Women's Environmental Network (Wen)* and is now coordinated by Wen. Before the pandemic, the council collaborated with partners to develop a food poverty joint strategic needs assessment. In response to the pandemic, with support from partners and volunteers, the council set up the VCS Food Hub to support roughly 27 voluntary sector organisations providing food and cooked meals. These groups were well-placed to reach people likely to struggle to afford and access food during Covid-19, thanks to their existing links with seldom-reached families, older people, refugees and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Case study: Croydon Council

Croydon Council's Community Connect/Food Stop takes the council's Gateway approach out into the community. It is a partnership of over 50 voluntary, community, faith, public and private sector organisations working together to support residents. In response to Covid-19, Community Connect Local Collection Points were scaled up to enable more organisations to access FareShare food at no cost, and a Covid-19 Emergency Fund was created for groups to apply to.

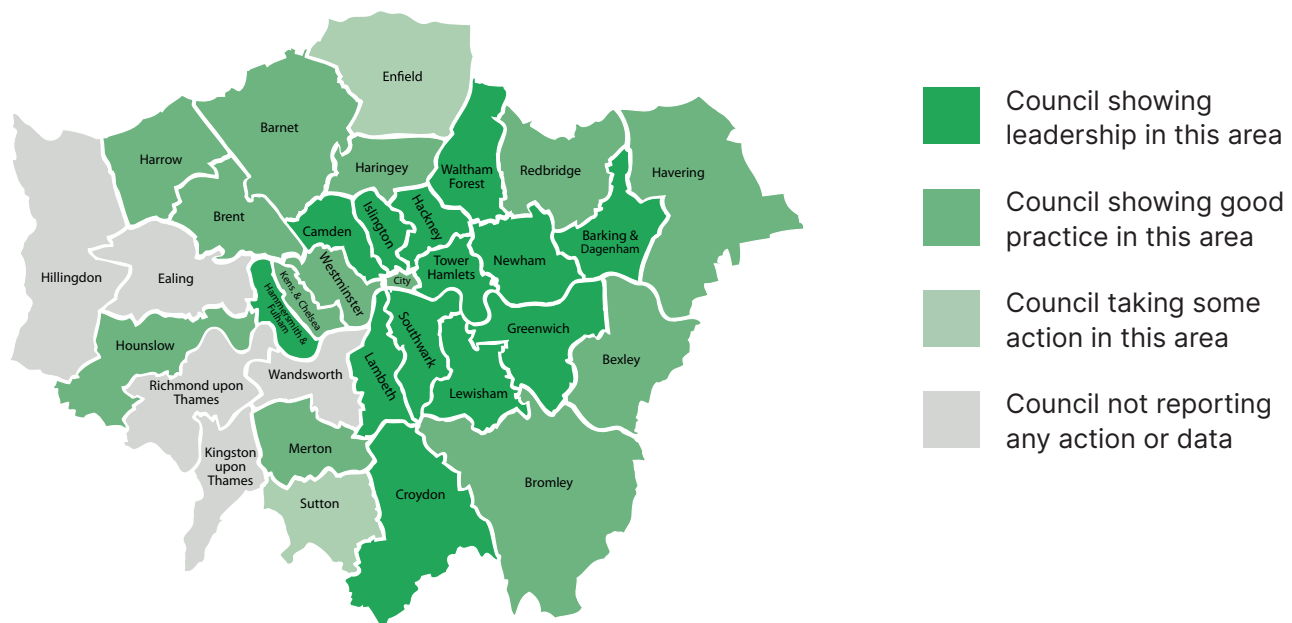
As part of the recovery phase, the council's Food Transition Plan summarises Croydon's arrangements for addressing food insecurity and demand for food aid. The Transition Plan outlines how underlying drivers of food insecurity will be addressed and what support is needed for residents affected by the social, health and economic impacts of Covid-19.

Council action on food partnerships and alliances

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, all London councils that responded to our survey worked with the local VCS in some way to coordinate food aid. Where joint work was already in place however, a collaborative approach that maximises local resources was easier to enact quickly. For example, of the 13 local authorities with a group responsible for implementation of their food poverty action plan, 10 drew on this group to plan the emergency response, with 10 also directly using the recommendations in their action plan to formulate their crisis response.

Where seeds of a partnership model existed prior to the crisis, these quickly blossomed into well-functioning partnerships or alliances during initial lockdown and for many councils this model is key to their recovery planning. For example, in Newham, a latent food poverty alliance pre-dated Covid-19. The necessity to work at pace and communicate regularly during lockdown accelerated the full formation of an alliance. Several councils including, Bexley and Hounslow, are building on systems set up during Covid-19 and formalising these into an alliance as part of their recovery work.

Responses to the Covid-19 crisis



What can councils do?

- Invest in the establishment of a food poverty alliance or food partnership.** The council should be a significant partner within the group, staff time should be allocated to it, and ideally funding provided to enable action. The alliance should work collaboratively with partners as equals. Where joint work has emerged organically as a result of activities undertaken during Covid-19, councils should help to formalise this into a more established alliance or partnership.
- Jointly write a food poverty action plan with local partners** who are invested in the plan and who work together to ensure that the ideas and actions within it are implemented. Fund staff time to coordinate this multi-sectoral action group. Councils with existing plans should update these to include a focus on food system resilience and recovery post Covid-19.

**Chris Walker, Network Coordinator
Sustainable Food Places**

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The London Boroughs Food Group: joining up work on food during Covid-19

The London Boroughs Food Group is a well-established way for councils to share good practice and connect with VCS groups, expert practitioners, funders and food policy specialists. It is a sub-group of the Mayor's London Food Board, supported by the Greater London Authority (GLA) Food Team. The group has representatives from every London borough, ranging from public health and economic fairness teams to environmental health officers and infant feeding leads. Its membership also includes local food partnerships and community organisations, the Mayor's Fund for London, as well as national bodies such as Public Health England, and policy groups including Sustain and the Food Foundation.

Over 100 attendees regularly join the meetings, and an open-door approach means any interested party can join as an observer. The group has heard from VCS organisations at the forefront of the Covid-19 food response, providing data on food insecurity, emergency food aid, free school meal provision and actions related to food growing, markets and homelessness.

The value of partnership working has been reinforced throughout. Collaborative responses led by local authorities and VCS organisations, supported by the GLA, exemplified this in the early stages of lockdown, with the formation of 53 community food hubs across London for distributing emergency food supplies. Between 23 March and 31 August, the hubs enabled

the London Food Alliance and local VCS organisations to distribute 7,850 tonnes of food (equivalent to more than 18 million meals).

The GLA team supports this work with dissemination of helpful summaries of data, research and good practice on topics ranging from food insecurity data; food handling guidance; emergency infant feeding; and funding opportunities. The London Community Response Fund, for example, allocated over £5m to civil society organisations providing food and other essentials in its first two waves of funding between March and August, alongside funding for wraparound support advice services.

The London Boroughs Food Group has demonstrated the importance of a cross-cutting, sustainable approach to food policy, with professionals, experts and advocates as members, all committed to improving London's food system. This work has paved the way for transition and recovery plans that address some of the greatest challenges facing marginalised and excluded Londoners, including food insecurity and health inequalities.

If you or colleagues would like to join meetings or receive updates, resources and meeting summaries, please email the GLA food policy team's Liam Weeks to join the group's mailing list: liam.weeks@london.gov.uk.



Food to be redistributed by a social enterprise in Hammersmith and Fulham
Photo credit: Zoe Warde-Aldam

Case studies

Supporting women to become market traders in Tower Hamlets

In Tower Hamlets roughly 90% of market traders are men, and numbers of occupied market pitches have been declining in recent years. Recognising this, the council started a project to revitalise street markets and address this gender imbalance. This began with a leaflet campaign asking local residents, particularly women, if they wished to be traders. This had limited success, so, with the help of housing association outreach teams, the council hosted a meeting to scope support that women would want to consider trading. Word then spread, and the number of women interested grew to roughly 100, of which 30 committed to attending business advice training sessions. Most women expressing interest were from Black or Asian backgrounds. Many said they would not set up a market stall by themselves, but with support from other women they felt more confident. Participants undertook training, including on food hygiene, before starting trading on a stall on 'Lady Lane Market' on Wentworth Street from December 2019. Whilst most of the traders were not food traders, plans are in place for another cohort to begin food trading. In the lead up to this getting started, the group started the [Lady Lane Catering company](#) which catered for private events and children's holiday programmes before the initial lockdown.

The women reported that this overall experience was challenging and helped them to see themselves in a different light. During the initial lockdown, participants kept in touch and in October 2020 took part in a council run online business advice refresher session. They are planning some market trading days before Christmas.

Older people's food during Covid-19 in Hackney

Before Covid-19, Hackney Council commissioned Hackney CVS to coordinate a network of 14 lunch clubs across the borough. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that members were unable to attend lunch clubs, thus facing the loss of regular social contact and nutritious food. Following feedback from the network, the council agreed that in the short-term funding for lunch clubs could be used in more flexible ways. This included for meals and shopping to be delivered to members and to others within the community needing support. Hackney Adult Social Care were also able to offer hot meals at the

Tomlinson Centre for people who were in self-isolation following discharge from hospital, whilst Age East London provided shopping assistance to this group.

Joint work between Hammersmith & Fulham and Harrow Council to provide meals on wheels

Harrow Council runs an in-house meals on wheels service for residents of the borough, and Hammersmith & Fulham Council contract them to provide meals to their residents. This helps the two boroughs achieve an economy of scale and ensures that older residents across both boroughs can access the food that they need to stay safe and well in their own homes. In both boroughs, when Covid-19 lockdown began, demand for the service increased dramatically. The service was able to scale up provision with Hammersmith & Fulham reporting a one third increase in meals delivered. Increased demand has continued even as restrictions eased, and was caused not just by new referrals, but also existing customers requiring more meals weekly due for example to care arrangements not being able to operate as before.

“When the pandemic started, Hammersmith and Fulham had a funded meals on wheels service in place, that we could rely on and offer to more residents. I cannot stress how beneficial this was.”

Procurement Officer, Hammersmith and Fulham Council



A meal is delivered during lockdown. Photo credit: Peter Cziborra / HILLS

Council action to centre 'cash-first' approaches

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of councils included some form of 'cash-first' approach within their anti-poverty work. For example, of 29 councils that responded to our survey, 22 had a local welfare assistance scheme and 12 had low minimum Council Tax payment for poorer residents of 8.5% or less. In response to the immediate Covid-19 crisis, these councils were then able to 'slot in' new funding, support or services quickly and efficiently. For example, Hackney Council increased its existing Council Tax Reduction scheme during Covid-19, with funds automatically going to poorer households.

As part of their recovery work, some councils plan to continue new support that they have put in place as part of their crisis response. For example, Barking

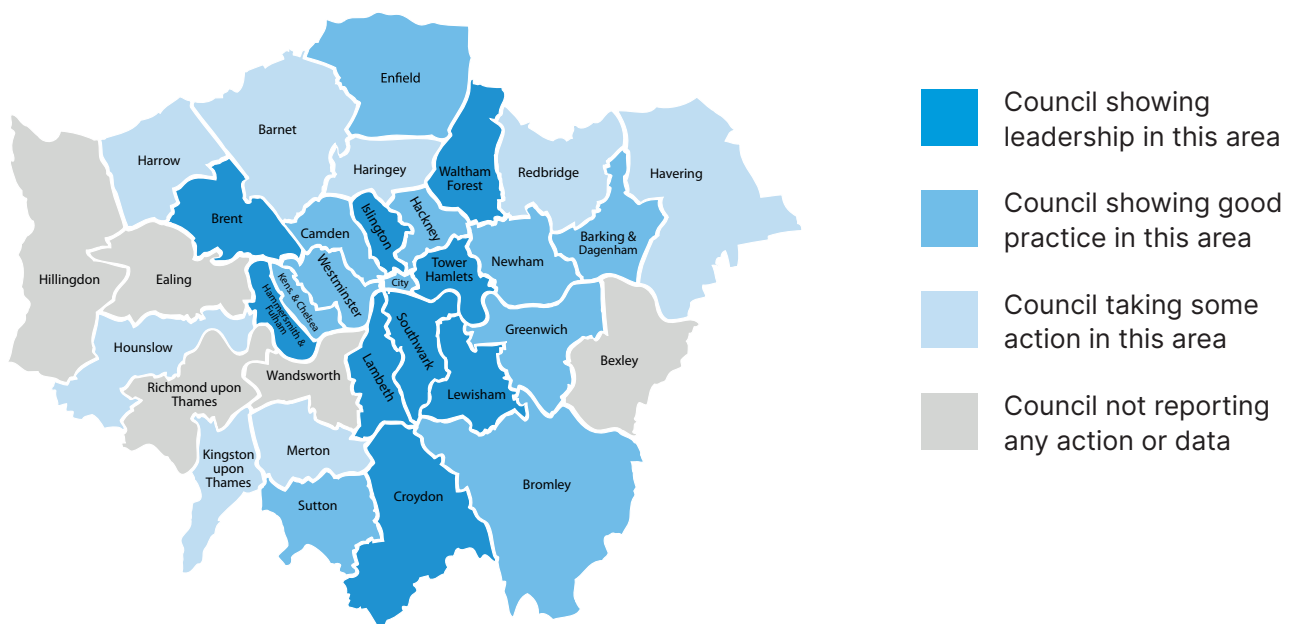
and Dagenham Council did not have a local welfare assistance scheme before Covid-19, so in response to the crisis they set one up. The council added this to sit alongside their Discretionary Housing Payment scheme and advice services. Staff who administer the scheme have noted the value of having a financial safety net for residents. Consequently, the council plans to expand and continue the scheme as part of their post-Covid recovery work.

Living Wage Foundation

accreditation@livingwage.org.uk

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Responses to the Covid-19 crisis



What can councils do?

1. Establish and fully fund a **local welfare assistance scheme**.
2. Have a **low Council Tax minimum payment** of below 8.5%, preferably set at 0%, for low-income residents.
3. Have a direct referral route from the local welfare assistance scheme into **preventative or support services** such as debt or benefits advice, children's services, homelessness services, or employment support programmes. Also work with local food banks to integrate or make referrals to such wraparound services.
4. Have a **Discretionary Housing Payment scheme** in place for residents in economic hardship, and ensure this fund is fully spent by proactively promoting it.
5. Acquire **London Living Wage and Living Hours accreditation**, and ensure all commissioned and council-funded programmes are accredited Living Wage employers too.

Food access

Many areas within London lack access to affordable and healthy food, and economic deprivation often coincides with this. These ‘food deserts’ compound food insecurity caused by financial hardship,^{xvii} as those already struggling financially have to pay more for food, spend more on transport, or have to buy cheaper but less healthy food. Furthermore, these areas often have high densities of unhealthy food takeaways which also often cluster around schools.

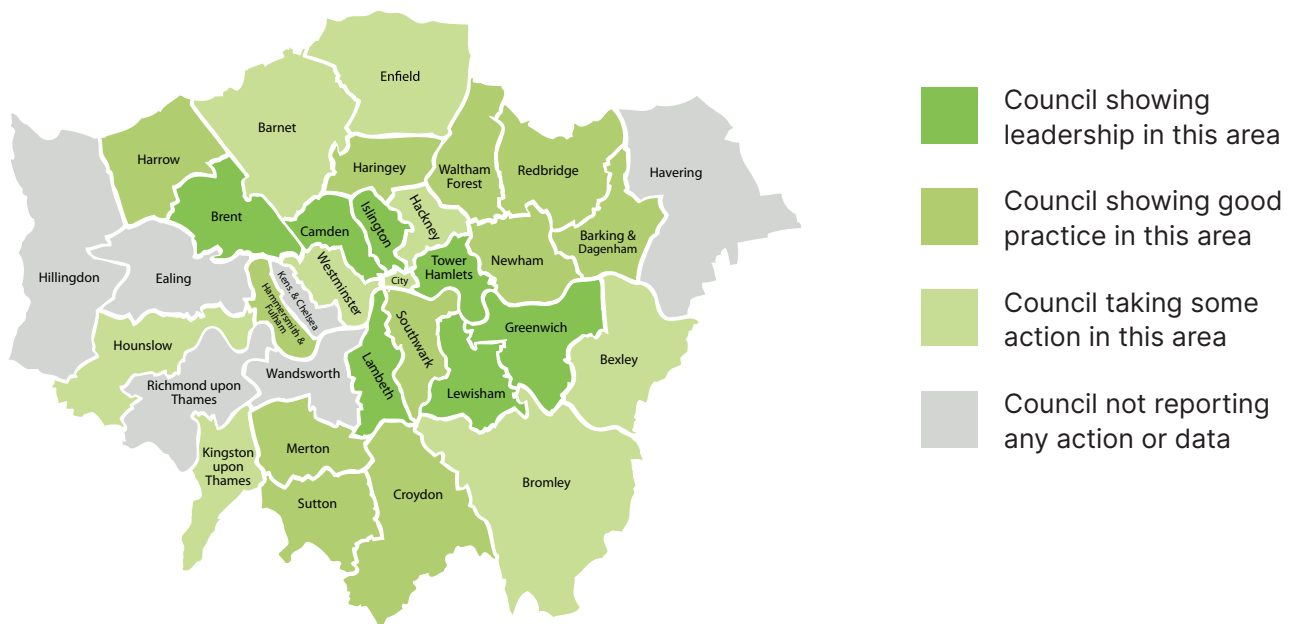
Older and disabled Londoners are at particularly high risk of malnutrition; this is caused by multiple factors including loss of mobility or dexterity, and decreased motivation to cook when living alone.

Where services are not available, many older adults resort to coping mechanisms like cutting out cooked meals. Preventative, holistic services such as meals on wheels significantly reduce these risks and bring a range of benefits including social contact and regular welfare checks.

Councils can play an important part in addressing these issues by doing the following:

- Fund meals on wheels and related food services for older adults and disabled people
- Map access to healthy, affordable food and incentivise good food retail in underserved wards

Foundational work before Covid-19



Case study: Southwark Council

In 2019 Southwark Council mapped ‘food deserts’ in Southwark before undertaking a ‘healthy basket’ study in which residents chose food comprising a week’s healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food shop for a family of four. Volunteers tried to buy the ‘healthy basket’ in food retailers close to Southwark’s ‘food deserts’. The research recommended that the council should take action to encourage healthy food retailers to trade in ‘food deserts’. Southwark Council has also limited the proximity to schools of hot food takeaways and has a council-wide objective to improve foodscapes.

During lockdown, this ethos ensured Southwark Council maintained a focus on the availability of good, affordable food in poorer areas. The council worked with fresh food stalls to ensure they maintained support for families on low incomes through Alexander Rose vouchers, and ran training sessions for professionals on maximising uptake of Healthy Start vouchers. As part of their recovery work, Southwark Council is delivering their Good Food Retail Plan and has a dedicated Healthy Food and Business Officer to increase availability of fresh, affordable fruit and vegetables at convenience stores.

Council action on food access

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, several London councils were addressing the prevalence of 'food deserts'. Sixteen councils mapped the link between economic deprivation and access to good food, whilst 22 had plans to improve healthy food access. These foundations enabled councils to support resilient local food systems during lockdown: of the 12 councils that supported affordable fruit and vegetable retailers to stay open in 'food deserts', 10 had policies on healthy food access prior to the pandemic.

Before Covid-19, only eight councils had meals on wheels services, most of which expanded capacity to meet increased need during lockdown. Hammersmith and Fulham Council expanded their service by one third, whilst Croydon Council's expansion was integral

to their Covid-19 transmission prevention strategy – the council recognises that this service enabled older people to stay nourished in their homes.

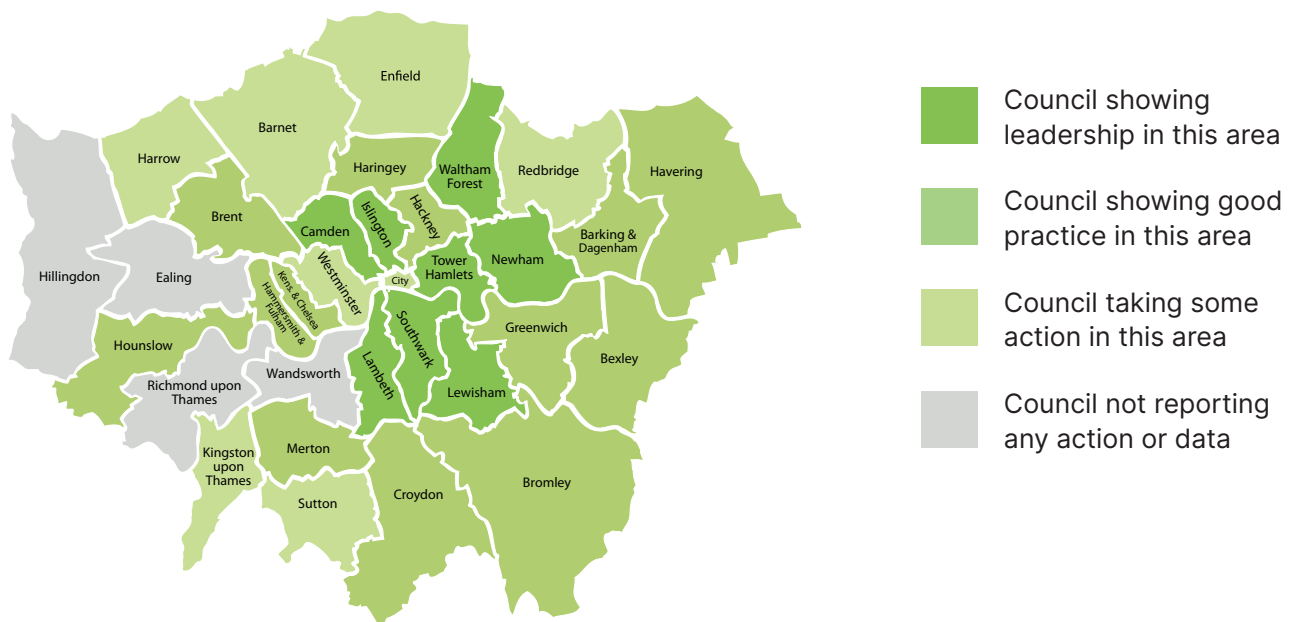
Councils are returning to existing plans to support access to fresh, affordable food as part of their recovery work, but are also investing in new schemes. All nine councils that are centering food access in their recovery work had comparable policies prior to the pandemic, whilst at least 22 councils are providing new funding or council premises for groups running community fridges or similar schemes.

London Food Link

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Responses to the Covid-19 crisis



What can councils do?

- Map food retail, especially affordable fresh fruit and vegetables**, together with some of the following factors: transport routes; income levels; proximity to schools; and ethnicity data.
- Adopt policies to improve access to affordable healthy food and/or to limit unhealthy food retail**, such as Healthier Food Advertising Strategies or Good Food Retail Plans.
- Support food retailers offering fresh fruit and vegetables** including local shops, street markets, and box schemes to set up or continue operating in economically deprived areas.
- Fund meals on wheels services.** This funding should include costings for time spent on welfare checks, plating up meals, and other complementary services.
- Support meals on wheels services' referral pathways** through integrating them with adult social care and hospital discharge teams.
- Fund and support related food services for older adults including **lunch clubs, shopping services or nutrition services.**

The Covid-19 emergency food response across London

The Covid-19 pandemic and its associated economic fallout has compounded and deepened household food insecurity and hunger across the UK, including in London.^{xviii} London local authorities played a vital role in coordinating the emergency food response. Our survey shows high levels of engagement across the board, with all councils showing 'leadership' or 'good practice'. Our research also found some especially outstanding examples of local work from which we were able to identify key factors that enabled a good response,^{xix} as well as some concerning trends.

Core principles for a good emergency food response

1. **Dignity:** whilst 'emergency food aid' is necessary, it should be delivered in a way that recognises food as a right and upholds the dignity of everyone involved.
2. **Community wealth building:** any food related work should be done sustainably and ethically and should maximise gains for the local area. **Community wealth building** is about designing policies that keep money within a local area and provide good jobs for local people.
3. **Collaboration, coordination and leadership:** Councils should work collaboratively with the local VCS, faith-groups, business and others.

Practical elements of a good emergency food response

Broadly, local authorities whose emergency response was well-coordinated and effective:

- **Worked collaboratively, but with clarity around roles and responsibilities.** Councils that had food partnerships, alliances, or strong relationships with the local VCS were able to respond well and quickly. Lines of communication were open, with clear responsibility for areas of work
- **Applied flexibility around areas of responsibility.** Alongside clarity on who is responsible for an area of work, there was an openness to share ownership of work-streams
- **Took a longer-term, holistic view.** Supported local food markets, neighbourhood shops, catering and meals on wheels services and good food traders; funded and prioritised cash-first approaches
- **Had clear and effective external communications.** This included an accessible and well-promoted helpline, alongside clear instructions about available support and how to access it
- **Had an effective triage system.** This integrated both financial and food-based solutions and avoided directing more people to charitable food aid where this could be avoided^{xx}

Case study: Merton Council

In Merton, during the first few weeks of lockdown there was a significant response from the council and from voluntary sector and mutual aid groups in helping ensure emergency food was reaching those in need. The council set up a food hub to distribute surplus, and through this engaged with and supported local VCS groups to deliver food aid. As a result, Merton's food poverty alliance is more integrated into the local community and has more groups engaging as part of the alliance. This activity in response to lockdown has produced what is now Merton's 'Community Fridge Network'. The network is supported by the council and integrated into the food poverty alliance. It is a network of organisations delivering food aid that is dignified and community owned.

As part of its recovery work, the council is planning to:

- maintain the 'Community Fridge Network' over the longer term
- work with its communities that have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 including Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, older people, young people, residents with a disability and carers
- review and update the council's food poverty action plan.

Issues with the emergency response

The Covid-19 lockdown triggered a dramatic increase in food insecurity, leading local authorities to collaborate with food aid providers to coordinate food distribution and support communities.

Unhealthy food donations flood local authorities' food aid

However, local authorities and public services across the UK have encountered donations of questionable nutritional quality. Many report being approached by big food and drink companies providing products high in fat, salt and/or sugar (HFSS) such as chocolate and sugary drinks. In some cases, the volume of HFSS food donations has been high. One London local authority was offered 97,000 Easter eggs which they turned down to protect residents' health and to focus emergency efforts on more important fresh and nutritious foodstuffs. Taking into account the relationship between coronavirus and obesity, as well as the disproportionate prevalence of coronavirus in low-income communities, HFSS food donations should be minimised. In Greenwich, the council has collaborated with Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GCDA) to redirect unhealthy food. GCDA has been responsible for ensuring adherence to the good food standards and for avoiding partnerships that could be harmful to health. Similar measures could be taken by other local authorities.

Food access and Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups

In London, income inequality and a lack of access to fresh affordable food are both disproportionately experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners. Alongside this, Black and Asian people are at particularly high risk from Covid-19, as well as from diet related illnesses including diabetes and obesity which further increases risk level from Covid-19. To overcome these structural barriers to health equality, much needs to be done, and councils can play a vital role in this.

Our survey found that a significant number of councils are taking some action in this regard, but that more could be done. Fifteen councils are taking action to ensure residents can access fresh, affordable food locally that is culturally appropriate, whilst nine councils are comprehensively mapping the availability of such food. During lockdown, Bromley Council

sourced specific cultural foods to add to the food parcels distributed by their food hubs to people who were shielding, whilst Hounslow Council worked closely with a range of hot food providers including faith groups that provided culturally appropriate food options for Hounslow's diverse communities.

Predating Covid-19, Lewisham Council had an action plan that focused on health inequalities amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents. As part of the plan the council is commissioning community organisations to deliver insights work with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, the results of which will feed into Lewisham's healthy weight services.

What can councils do:

1. Ensure that culturally appropriate foods are available in affordable local retailers and in any emergency food provision.
2. Implement planning policies and projects that enable Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents to access allotments, community gardens and green space.
3. Work with and support local Black-led VCS groups involved in community food provision.
4. Ensure as much financial and food support as possible does not exclude people who need it most, in particular those with the immigration condition 'no recourse to public funds'.



A young person boxes up surplus vegetables for Bubble and Squeak. Photo credit: Zoe Warde-Aldam

Cross-cutting case studies

Barking and Dagenham

In recent years Barking and Dagenham Council have given increasing resource and thought to action on food. In 2018, the council set up five Food Clubs, each of which are run jointly with a local VCS partner and which provide members access to healthy, affordable food alongside support services. Members pay a weekly fee of £3.50 and can access £20 worth of groceries. Membership is available to residents who are in financial difficulty or on a low income. In 2019 the council set up a complimentary programme called **Seed to Plate** which encourage members to grow, pick and cook nutritious meals through experiential learning.

In response to Covid-19, three of the five Food Clubs temporarily closed, but two were able to stay open and adapted to the new challenging circumstances by temporarily suspending the membership fee and loosening eligibility criteria.

“ Me and my children love the weekly cooking sessions with Natalie, we also come along to the gardening club, Seed to Plate, to pick fresh fruit and veg from the garden. My kids love it.

Mother of three and regular Seed to Plate attendee

Barking & Dagenham's Covid-19 response also included the formation of a community driven food poverty alliance called BDCAN. BDCAN began when key VCS groups came together with the council to plan the borough's emergency food response. Following this, the council allocated small funding pots to local VCS partners to deliver the work and nine locality hubs were set up. These hubs were run by community organisations that coordinated the support offer in their area by working with other local VCS groups. Requests for support came in via the council, who signposted people to appropriate hubs.

Barking & Dagenham's recovery planning builds on the systems and relationships established through the Covid-19 crisis response and has a strong focus on food. Working together as a system, the borough plans to:

- Streamline work across food banks by sharing guidance, operating procedures and learning.
- Improve the food bank pathway and ensure residents have access to wider support.
- Trial a number of behavioural science-led approaches to debt relief and debt collection. These focus on the overall experience being positive and supportive for each individual, and give alternatives when that person is unable to pay.
- Continue and extend their new 'cash-first' approach through ongoing funding for their new Local Welfare Assistance Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payment scheme.
- Grow credit union presence in the borough to provide residents with greater access to fair and affordable financial services.
- Reintroduce Seed to Plate, which was temporarily suspended during lockdown.
- Continue and formalise the new food poverty alliance as a structure to fit this work within.

Camden

The Camden Food Poverty Alliance, which is a collaboration between the council and local VCS groups, has a strong focus on the 'cash-first' principle. Within the group there is consensus that this principle should be central to anti-poverty work and action on food poverty, which in turn is influencing the development of the Alliance's Action Plan. The plan includes strategies that foreground this principle, for example through significant funding to voluntary and community sector groups that provide financial advice services, alongside in-house council run services of this kind. This example shows how cash-first approaches, partnership working, and food poverty action plans can come together to form a joined up and holistic approach to tackling food poverty.

Greenwich

Greenwich council has for several years taken significant action on food locally. This has ranged from their work supporting the local good food economy through Good Food Retail work, to strong action to ensure residents can access culturally appropriate foods by ensuring messaging about food, health and food growing is conveyed in ways that resonate with various communities. They have also worked to support allotments, orchards and infant nutrition.

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, the council already had a strong commissioning relationship with Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency (GCDA), a local VCS organisation with significant reach, community trust and ties, and specialist understanding of localised food systems and food issues. Due to the existence of these strong foundations, in response to Covid-19 the council established a well-functioning triage and food support system to ensure all residents in need were able to access the particular support that they needed as quickly and seamlessly as possible. Greenwich's emergency food response system quickly became an inspiring case study for others.



Healthy food boxes for non-shielding residents in need in Greenwich during the first lockdown, prepared by GCDA. Photo credit: Claire Pritchard.

Food access for older, disabled and medically vulnerable people

When Covid-19 hit, it exacerbated the risk of hunger and malnutrition amongst older, disabled and medically vulnerable people, due to their risk from the virus and the need to self-isolate or shield. Alongside the government-run food box scheme for those shielding, and established meals on wheels services, numerous volunteer run community groups stepped up to meet this new need.^{xvi} Existing voluntary and community groups changed their activities, and new mutual aid groups worked hard to get meals to isolated residents. Whilst these volunteer run ad-hoc services played a vital role in ensuring older, disabled and medically vulnerable people could eat in the short term, many did not last long, or are now facing difficult decisions about how to continue. Reliance on volunteer labour and free or low-cost surplus food to provide this essential social service makes these models difficult to sustain when volunteer numbers reduce and free food supplies are not so readily available. These types of services can also find it challenging to offer choice and nutritional value for residents within their limited resources. This may leave increasing numbers of older or disabled residents at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition in the near future.

For example, three years ago the London Independent Living Service was established in Camden and Haringey. Dialogue between the two councils and Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS), an established provider, led to the establishment of a similar service in London. Funding from HILS, Apetito and corporate funders, as well as support from One Housing Group to use their kitchen, helped to seed the service and Camden and Haringey Councils provided some development funding. However, the limitations of investment in the service and the lower than hoped for number of referrals meant that LILS did not reach the required economies of scale for long-term sustainability. It is feasible that with increased investment during this critical early stage and higher referral numbers the service might have reached a sustainable long-term footing.

The two councils are now focusing on supporting new, smaller, volunteer run services to grow their local neighbourhood offer, many of which engage with food surplus organisations, and utilise income from meals on wheels to supplement their support, in the hope that these services are both cost effective and sustainable. In light of the risks identified above, it is vital that in cases like this councils and their partners proactively ensure that these services are able to run a robust and well-integrated service to establish a sustainable long-term footing.

Children’s food access

London has one of the highest levels of child poverty in the UK, with 37 per cent of London’s children living in relative poverty after housing costs are taken into account.^{xxii} Ensuring that all children can access enough good food to grow and learn is vital to securing equal life chances for all of London’s children.

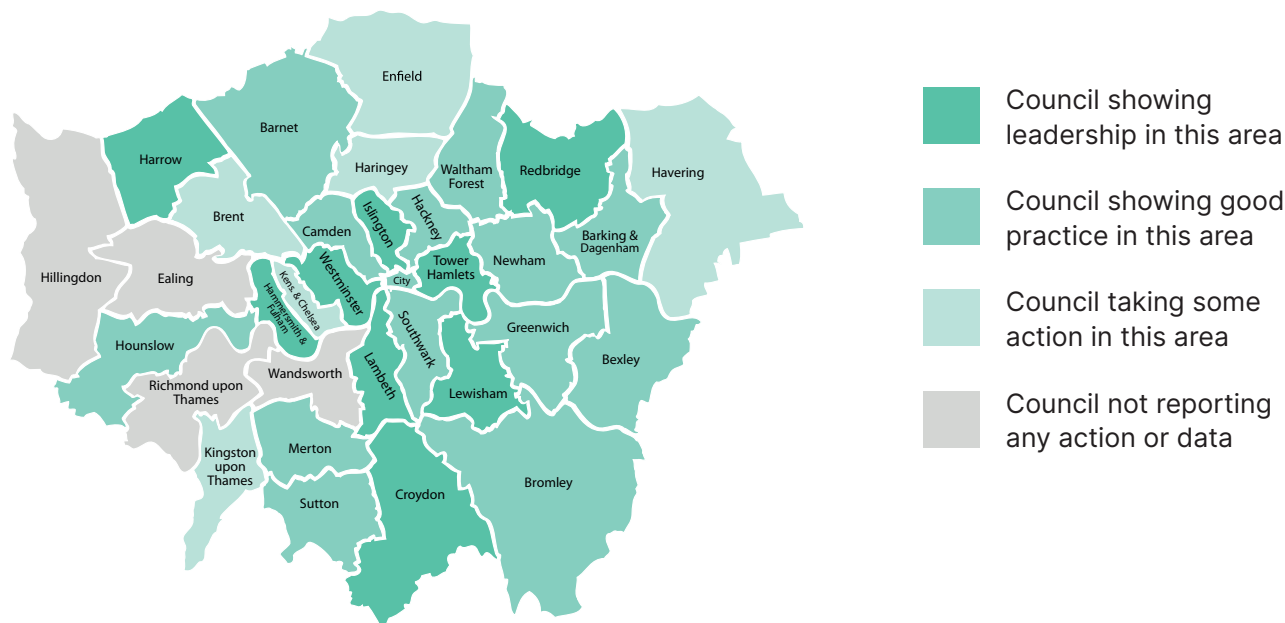
Local authorities can support children’s access to good food through:

- Supporting the uptake of free school meals
- Supporting and promoting breakfast clubs
- Promoting the Healthy Start voucher scheme to retailers and parents

- Securing children’s access to food during the school holidays
- Protecting and promoting breastfeeding.

Whilst these measures do not tackle the root causes of children’s food poverty, they do provide a vital lifeline to struggling families and help ensure that children are not doubly disadvantaged by a lack of adequate nutrition. Furthermore, some of the above programmes can be integrated within a holistic approach; breakfast clubs and holiday clubs that serve food can include social, cultural and educational learning that puts food at the centre of children’s health and wellbeing.

Foundational work before Covid-19



Case study: Camden Council

Before Covid-19, Camden Council had a strategy for coordinating its Healthy Start voucher scheme. When lockdown happened, the council included Healthy Start registration forms in food parcels and at food banks and food hubs. Helpline call handlers were trained to identify and refer families eligible for the scheme, and a pathway was developed for Healthy Start that linked callers with health visitors and children’s centres.

Relatedly, in the initial weeks of lockdown, Camden Council took action to maintain free school meals. Hampers containing ten days’ food were provided fortnightly to schools and over 12,000 hampers were

provided to families between March and July 2020. The council sent free school meal (FSM) registration information to schools via the headteachers’ network and social media along with information on ensuring families with ‘no recourse to public funds’ were aware of their FSM eligibility.

This work will be continued into the recovery planning stage via Camden Council’s pathway for families in hardship: families are offered an assessment via the duty health visitor and referred to appropriate support including free school meals registration and the Healthy Start scheme.

Council action on children's food

In response to the immediate Covid-19 crisis, most London councils supported free school meals (FSM) eligible families, either by working with schools to provide meal packs or by providing payments. Thirteen boroughs worked to improve the national voucher system, for example by ensuring retailers accepted the vouchers. Many councils also took steps to support infant feeding. These responses were made easier where strong foundations were in place.

For example, Islington Council had teams dedicated to holiday provision with food and FSM. These teams worked closely with their respective partners as soon as Covid-19 hit. The FSM team supported schools to initially offer lunch packs and later fortnightly food parcels where families preferred these to vouchers.

The holiday provision team liaised with [Magic Breakfast](#) who also offered home delivery food packs.

Councils that took positive action on FSM before Covid-19 are more likely to include a focus on this in the recovery phase. Of the 16 councils that are planning to proactively maximise the uptake of free school meals, all but one was mapping this uptake prior to the pandemic.

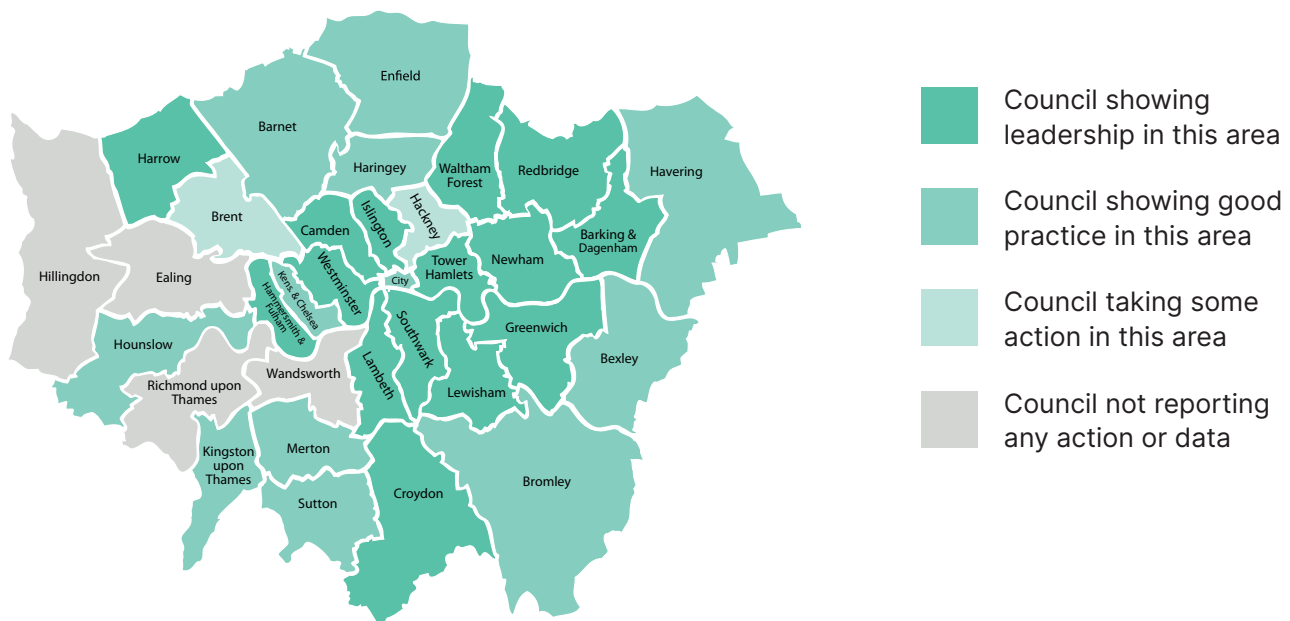
Unicef Baby Friendly

Smita Hanciles, National Infant Feeding Network Lead

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<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/>

Responses to the Covid-19 crisis



What can councils do?

- Healthy Start:** Have a designated officer working on Healthy Start and a strategy for coordinating and promoting the Healthy Start scheme locally.
- Food in schools:** Have a mechanism in place to measure FSM uptake and promote FSM.
- Food in schools:** Fund universal free school meals for primary school children, including children with the immigration condition 'no recourse to public funds'.
- Food in schools:** Fund the fruit and veg in schools scheme beyond government-funded levels.
- Fund **breakfast clubs** and/or engage partners to provide support for breakfast clubs.
- Have a designated person who acts as the central point of contact for information and questions about **holiday provision including food**.
- Fund **holiday provision with food** and/or engage businesses and other community partners to support holiday provision with food.
- Holiday provision with food:** Track the location and number of holiday activity schemes that include food provision.
- Breastfeeding:** Work towards full Unicef UK Baby Friendly accreditation in all eligible services, including ensuring access to the required training.

Food growing and production

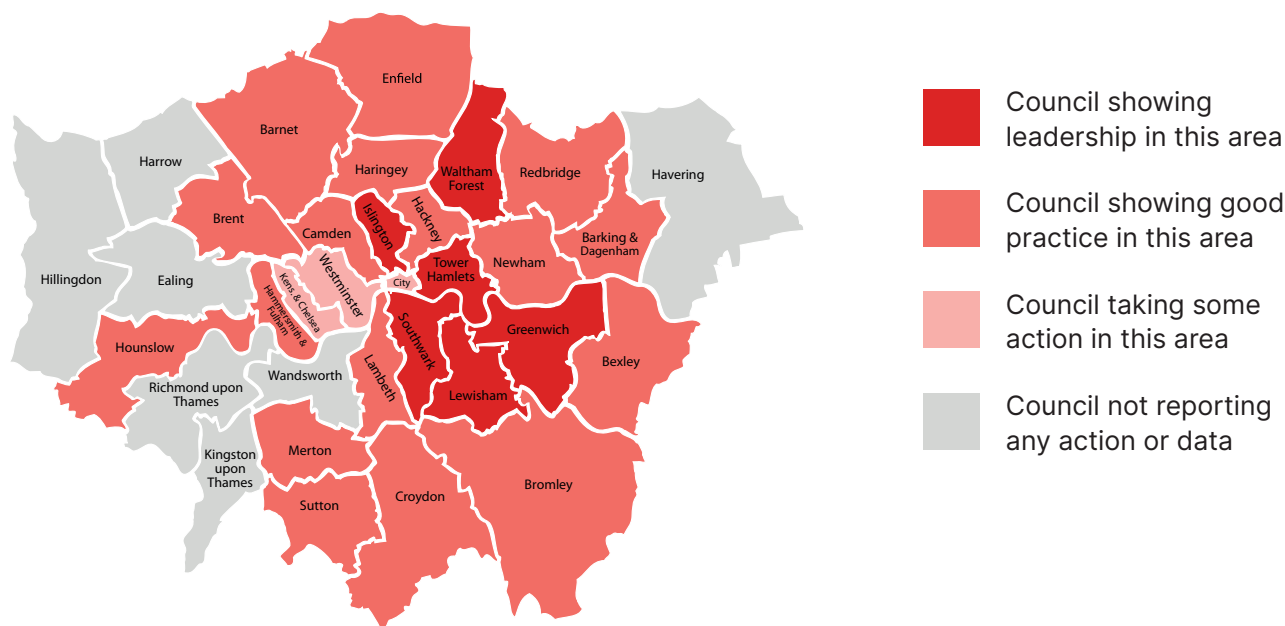
Increasing opportunities to grow food, as well as the amount of land used for food production, has several recognised benefits, all of which are important outcomes for councils. These include improving health, access to nature and fresh food, creating skills and jobs and the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of food.

In London, 59% of the green belt is agricultural land, which amounts to 20,756 hectares with potential to be farmed for local markets and communities, but most is not used for this purpose.^{xxiii} Outer London boroughs have the potential to grow much more food for local supply chains at a community and productive scale, cultivating local jobs and food resilience.

During 2020, demand for spaces to grow food surged,^{xxiv} as people looked for opportunities to access fresh healthy food for themselves and others, as well as to improve their wellbeing. To help meet the immediate and longer term need, councils can support food growing across three main areas:

- capacity building and practical support for food growing
- access to land and land use including supportive local planning policies
- partnerships and support for growing within other council plans and strategies.

Foundational work before Covid-19



Case study: Waltham Forest Council

Waltham Forest Council included food growing in their approach to improving public health through their Health and Wellbeing strategy and a new Food Growing Strategy. As part of this they are mapping land and assets across the borough to increase local food production and at the time of writing this report the Council had identified 29 potential new growing sites in schools, housing, streets parks and allotments. The council actively encourage and enable the use of publicly owned land for community food growing and have 72 existing community food growing sites across the borough.

Waltham Forest Council had strong partnerships with external organisations to support food growing projects, who they worked with during the pandemic. A key partnership is with **Organiclea**, who leases the old council plant nursery to grow organic food at scale. During the pandemic Organiclea ran online courses funded by the council for community food growing sites. Through the council's partnership with Groundwork London, who coordinated the volunteer response and supported communities in need during lockdown, the council was able to encourage community food growers to join the volunteer scheme to participate in a range of roles from food packing to food distribution.

Council actions on food growing

The majority of councils supported initiatives including orchards, community gardens or school gardens. Of the 26 councils responding to the questions on this area, 16 encouraged and enabled use of publicly owned land, including park land and housing estates for community food growing, and nine councils proactively increased the amount of land for food growing in the last year.

Councils who showed leadership before lockdown were also able to take positive steps and show further leadership during their emergency response, particularly those working with external partner organisations. For example, Islington commissioned a community partner ([Octopus Community network](#))

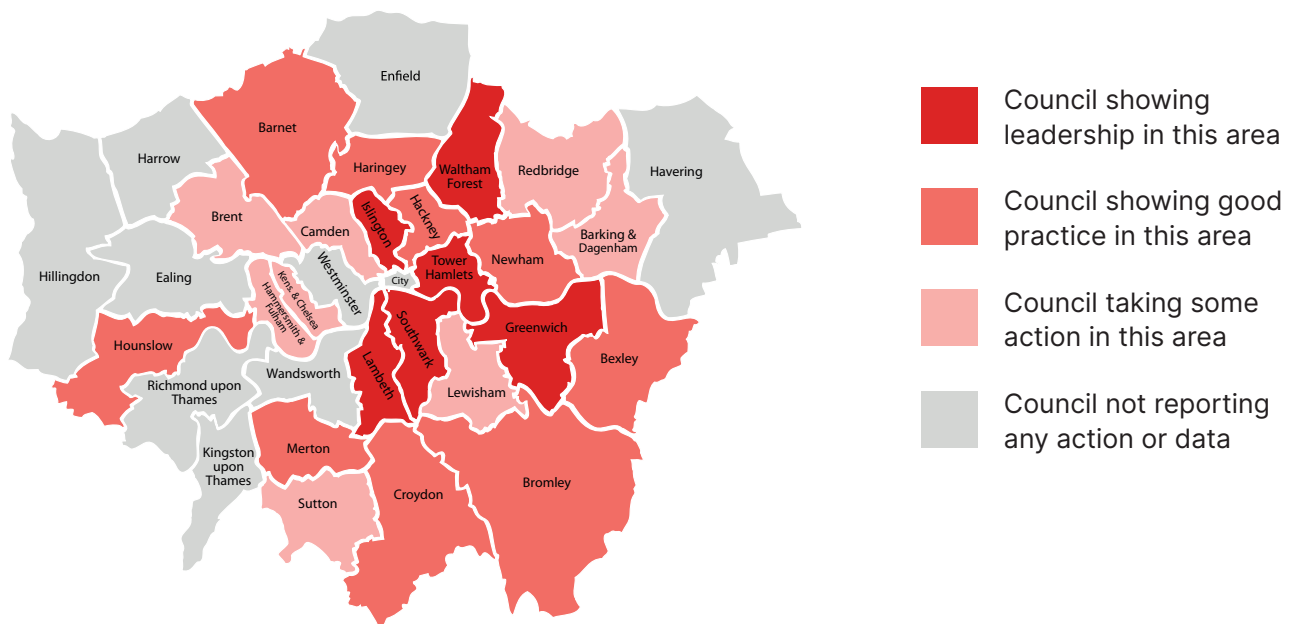
to help develop a Community Food Growing Strategy which will map all existing food growing opportunities in the borough and look at opportunities for developing new ones across the public realm.

Although many food growing spaces were forced to close or adapt during the pandemic, 15 councils supported community gardens to continue to grow food and 11 went further to connect growers with local food providers including foodbanks. For example, Bexley Council connected local allotment holders to their community fridge network.

Capital Growth, Sustain

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Responses to the Covid-19 crisis



What can councils do?

- Include food growing in public health strategies, food strategies, local plans, and climate and nature strategies.** This is especially important for councils as community food growing meets many council objectives and crosses the work of many departments.
- Appoint a designated officer to champion food growing** and create clearer pathways for accessing land, as well as links with local networks or key VCS organisations.
- Proactively identify land for food growing**, make access to land easier including mapping land and assets to increase local food production.
- Support for community food growing should be including in local planning policies** and frameworks, to ensure that existing land for growing food is protected and new land is secured, including in new developments.
- Connect with Sustain's Capital Growth team** who can help councils to encourage and support food growing.

Supporting a good food economy

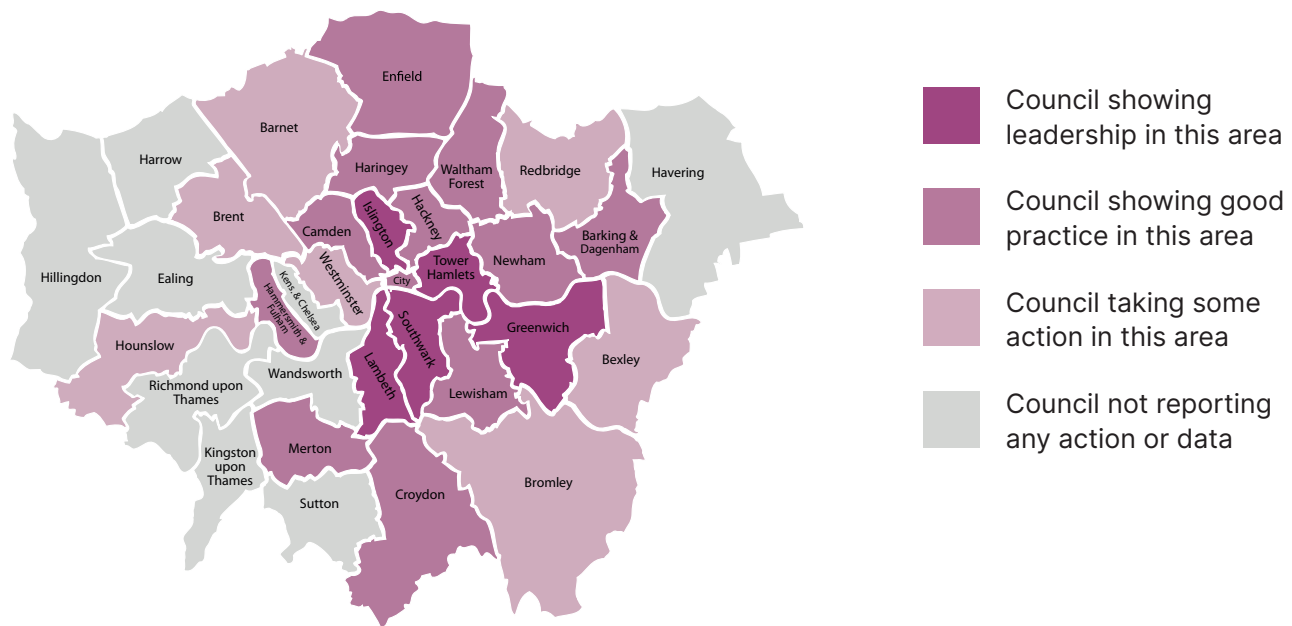
Locally the food economy consists of a mixture of food businesses and enterprises, including many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) such as convenience stores, markets, caterers and foodservice outlets, box schemes and community shops, all of which are vital to a resilient and sustainable food supply. A good food economy is diverse, provides access to healthy and sustainable food, represents local and cultural food choices and can adapt to change.

Putting good food entrepreneurs and enterprises at the heart of local development and promoting them to consumers also creates jobs, local prosperity and can create vibrant, healthy high streets, all vital to creating good food neighbourhoods.

Councils can play an important role in helping the good food economy, including retail, via the work of teams across Public Health and Economic Development. Councils were assessed by their actions across three areas:

- Plans and strategies to support local food enterprises, including Good Food Retail plans and consideration to food businesses in climate change action plans
- Practical resources and support to food SMEs and food markets, especially to increase sales of healthy and sustainable food
- A focus on developing a good food economy as part of recovery planning.

Foundational work before Covid-19



Case study: Soutwark’s support for food SMEs

One of the ambitions of Soutwark Council’s Economic Wellbeing Strategy is for every Soutwark resident to have access to quality, affordable and healthy food and produce from their local high street or market. The council employs a full-time Healthy Food and Business Officer to support food SMEs from a business perspective, while also engaging them to sell healthier food. This has included working with markets to increase the use of Alexander Rose fruit and veg vouchers, which increase the value of Healthy Start vouchers for those on a low income.

Soutwark were also, with support from Guy’s and St Thomas’ Charity, part of the Good Food Retail initiative looking at how to improve access to healthy, affordable food in convenience stores. The learning from the pilot has been applied to support businesses to adapt their model so that they could continue to operate during lockdown. Food businesses suffering as a result of Covid-19 have also been supported through a free consultation with the Healthy Food and Business Officer. During the pandemic, the council worked to match food enterprises who had offered empty kitchens or cooked meals to local hubs.

Council action on supporting good food economies

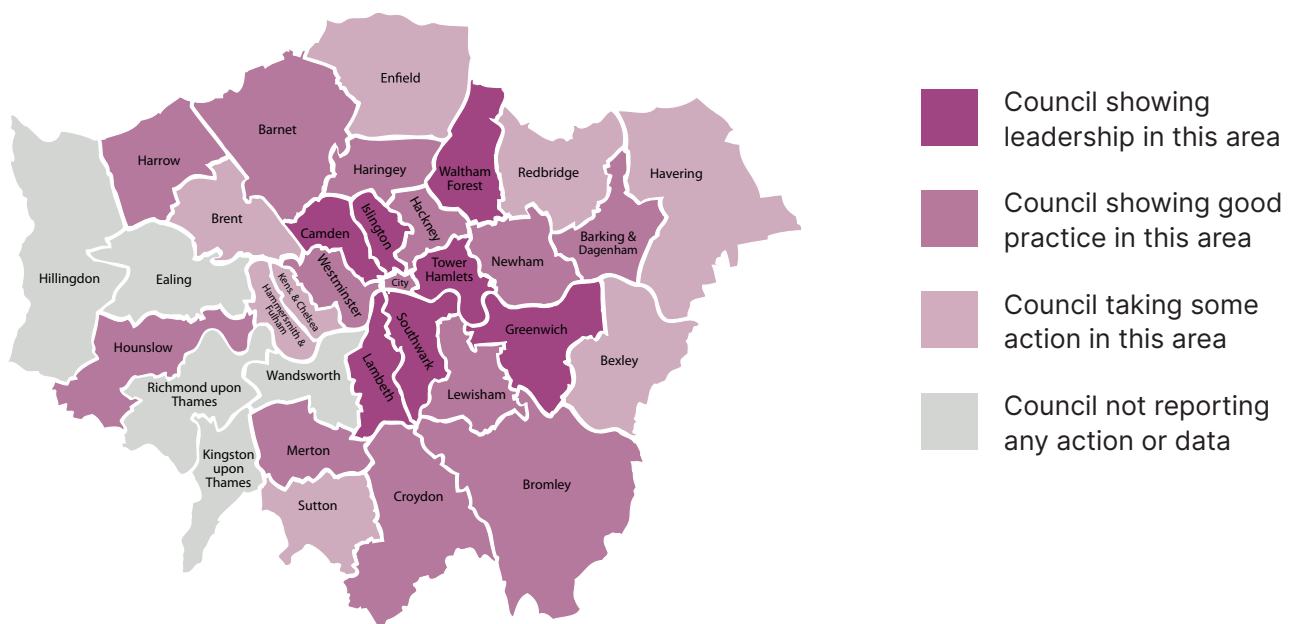
Whilst most councils supported local food businesses prior to the pandemic, only some had a targeted approach to increasing the health or sustainability of their local food economy. For example, Greenwich's Good Food Retail plan focuses on supporting local convenience stores to develop a healthy shopping basket at a competitive price to the local supermarket.

Most councils responded to support local food retail during the crisis, recognising the vital role of diverse food supply during this time. Fifteen councils engaged local SMEs in emergency food provision for people in need and almost all councils worked to support food enterprises and markets to stay open or re-open.

Several councils, including Islington and Tower Hamlets, created an online directory of traders selling essential food, to maintain the supply chain from SMEs to customers during lockdown.

Whilst many councils made impressive responses involving their local food economy during the pandemic, a subset of councils are building a recovery plan with extra support for enterprises and markets providing healthy and sustainable food moving forward. Notably, many of these councils were already taking progressive actions towards building a long-term approach to a good food economy, therefore supporting healthier and more resilient communities.

Responses to the Covid-19 crisis and recovery plans



What can councils do?

- Develop Good Food Retail Plans** and projects that aim to increase access to healthy and sustainable food.
- Produce a food strategy that includes the local food economy and food retail**, with an action plan to help smaller local shops, markets and enterprises create better access to healthy and sustainable food and be sustainable as businesses in the long-term.
- Ensure that the economic development team are engaged in business and strategic opportunities related to healthy and sustainable food** and join up opportunities with public health.
- Target financial and business support to food enterprises and retailers, especially those that already sell fresh, healthy food** with reduced climate and nature impact or to move towards increasing sales of this food and identify ways to procure food through local businesses.
- Support food enterprises, food markets, kitchens, chefs and cooks to participate in healthy, fresh, emergency food provision for people in need.**

The climate and nature emergency and food

In the UK, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions come from the food system and a shocking third of the food we produce goes to waste.^{xxv} Intensive farming and fishing practices are the main drivers of devastating biodiversity loss.^{xxvi} Fixing the food, farming and fishing system is therefore one of the most important large-scale ways to help avert climate change and restore nature, which should now be urgent priorities for everyone.

An impressive 22 London councils have declared a climate and nature emergency, many with bold targets to become carbon neutral (for example 2030 for both Croydon and Lambeth). Twenty councils have released an action plan for putting their declaration into practice that includes food.

What are London councils doing on food and climate change?

Food waste

Council actions can keep a colossal amount of food out of landfill. Following the principles of the Food Waste Hierarchy,^{xxvii} reducing the amount of food wasted should be the top priority both in the supply chain and by businesses and households, whilst ensuring that as much of the edible food produced gets eaten rather than being thrown away. Facilitating separation of food waste and other recyclable materials is important. Community composting or municipal composting are among the better solutions for unavoidable food waste.

Food waste was the area in which most London councils are taking action. Of the 27 councils responding to our climate and nature questions, 21 councils offer a food waste collection service to households, 14 to schools, and 8 to food businesses.

Procurement and citizen diets

Fifteen councils are taking steps to serve more environmentally-friendly food in council catering. The biggest climate and nature benefits come from serving less but better meat,^{xxviii} and Camden and Havering are leading the way by reducing meat in schools. Enfield are the first local authority to commit to only vegetarian and vegan food at onsite Council events.

Land use and planning

Two thirds of London councils have tree-planting plans but only about half of these 22 councils currently intend to include fruit and/or nut trees. Enfield are looking at larger scale growing projects, joining boroughs such as Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham and Haringey who have already made significant areas of land available for growing at scale.

Climate change and Covid-19 responses

Many councils considered the climate in their emergency food response, including Newham who offered vegetarian food parcels and prioritised seasonal European and British vegetables. As part of a Green Recovery, Southwark Council is planning to support a resilient local food system by investing in food markets and considering a Green Levy for businesses that are disproportionately polluting.

Recommendations: 'Quick Wins' for councils, climate and food

- **Procurement:** Council catering could easily serve vegetarian food as default for council meetings and events, and serve less but better meat across all settings.
- **Tree planting:** Funding is available to help the UK meet ambitious tree-planting targets. Fruit and nut trees deliver a raft of benefits for people and nature, and mini-orchards can be achieved in a surprisingly small amount of space.
- **Council powers as a licence granter:** Only a few councils are currently using licensing and business rates to influence business behaviour, even simple event licence conditions like banning single-use plastic at festivals could have a huge benefit.
- **Engage citizens:** raise awareness of sustainable diets and engage citizens in other measures that the council takes to tackle the climate and nature emergency.

Ruth Westcott

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Healthier Catering Commitment

London has more than 8,000 fast food takeaways, which often serve less healthy food.^{xxix} Furthermore, areas with high densities of hot food takeaways often coincide with areas of economic deprivation and with areas with little or no access to affordable fresh food,^{xxx} thus meaning local people have very limited healthy food options. One quarter of takeaways in the UK are located within a 5-minute walk of a school and 20% of adults and children eat takeaway meals at home once a week. In London, 38% of children are overweight or obese, which is the highest proportion in England.^{xxxi}

What is the Healthier Catering Commitment?

The London Healthier Catering Commitment is a voluntary scheme promoted by local authorities to help caterers and food businesses make simple, healthy improvements to their food. When a food business signs up to the scheme, it commits to improving the food it provides and sells by making small, affordable changes such as:

- Making smaller portions available on request
- Offering some healthy options, for example, lower sugar drinks and snacks, serving salad and fruit and offering water, reduced sugar drinks and fruit juice in the place of fizzy drinks
- Heating oil to correct temperature and regularly replacing used cooking oil with fresh cooking oil. This can help chips, and other fried foods soak up less fat during the cooking process
- Using unsaturated fats and changing the cooking oil to healthier alternatives.

Support for the Healthier Catering Commitment in London

Twenty-four London boroughs have already adopted a Healthier Catering Commitment (HCC) and are working to improve nutritional value of food for their residents.^{xxxii} Of the 24 boroughs that responded to the relevant questions in our survey, 19 councils were participating in the HCC or had developed their own scheme for businesses. The remaining five boroughs were not participating in the scheme, listing lack of resources as the reason. For example, both Havering and Barking and Dagenham hope to relaunch HCC with new staff members.

Redbridge council focuses on ensuring that all local food businesses within 500 metres of school zones provide and serve food that is lower in fat, sugar or salt and that they change their cooking oil to a healthier option.

Enfield has been running the HCC for four years and currently has 80 businesses signed up. They aim to increase the number of businesses signed up in areas of deprivation, where the council has previously struggled to involve businesses.

The HCC scheme not only improves health outcomes for residents but can also save businesses time and money. In Lewisham, 52 food businesses have achieved the HCC award. Many of the businesses are also Sugar Smart and have reported that their business has managed to save money by taking part in the initiatives as businesses are not using as much sugar.

Healthier Catering Commitment in London

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Photo credit: Zoe Warde-Aldam

Food related recovery planning

In response to the immediate Covid-19 crisis, London councils utilised existing ties with the local voluntary and community sector, made new partnerships, and worked collaboratively often quite intensely and out of necessity. This new joined up way of working is in many cases now being formalised into new alliances or partnerships. Support to VCS groups is in many areas being continued, or new community or locality hubs are being transformed into more permanent community spaces that both provide food aid, but are also a positive community space with library facilities, meeting spaces, and a diversity of other resources. Councils are also looking more widely at local assets that can support resilience, such as community food growing spaces that are good for wellbeing and access to fresh food, or the local shops that provide vital neighbourhood food supplies within easy walking distance.

All councils developed Food Transition Plans to set out ongoing arrangements for food support during the transition from lockdown to recovery. Lewisham, Croydon and Camden were amongst those to address how to ensure food aid organisations have what

they need to support low-income residents, whilst also working towards a situation where food aid is needed less, through the integration of wraparound support in community hubs or food banks. Alongside this many councils are embedding sustainability principles into their food aid work whilst others have a strong focus on food within their climate plans or green recovery plans.

Despite these positive steps across London, much still needs to be done. Across the UK, unemployment has risen since the crisis^{xxxiii} and predictions indicate that London households will continue to lose income throughout 2021.^{xxxiv} Consequently, thousands of London residents are experiencing financial crisis or may fall into crisis soon. Some councils have reported that case workers are now regularly advising clients not to spend their limited money on food, but instead go to foodbanks, so that they will prioritise paying rent and not face homelessness. However, charitable food banks were established to help people out of one-off emergency financial or crisis situations and should not be institutionalised as a long-term solution to food poverty.

Case study: Hounslow

As part of its recovery, Hounslow Council is placing a significant emphasis on supporting and working with the local VCS, especially groups delivering emergency food aid. The council is consulting partners who it worked with in response to the crisis, to scope interest in and feasibility of a food alliance and is working proactively with the borough's foodbanks through regular weekly calls with each foodbank. Together, the council and foodbanks are developing plans to integrate wraparound services into foodbank sites, to support clients with issues such as mental health, social isolation and debt.

As a cornerstone to this new collaborative way of working, the community hub that was set up as part of their crisis response is being transformed into a long-term community solutions model that will work with the VCS and provide holistic, wraparound support to people in financial difficulty or crisis. Space in existing libraries and other Council venues will be used for community activities, and the aim is to foster community focused initiatives which also help address underlying issues causing food poverty.

The council is also embedding health and sustainability into its emergency food response for example through an agreement with Hounslow Community Foodbox in which fresh fruit and vegetable boxes will be delivered to residents in food insecurity. Hounslow Council have set up a Green Recovery Task Force that has officers from across council departments and which is scoping numerous potential flagship projects including the expansion of 15-minute neighbourhoods in Hounslow or a green skills academy. The council is planting orchards and is working with a fruit tree specialist to graft further fruit trees ready for planting in 2021. In response to Covid-19, Hounslow Council has launched a community allotment project called 'Hounslow Micro Gardens'. Two large allotment plots have been divided into smaller 3 by 4-metre introductory plots and allocated to residents without a private garden on a first-come, first-served basis. Additional locations for tree planting and other growing initiatives will be identified as part of the Green Recovery Plan.

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Our publications



[Food and Covid-19: How local authorities can support recovery and resilience](#)



[Community Food Retail and Food Poverty](#)



[Sustain briefing: Fringe Farming in London](#)



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Response, Resilience and Recovery: London's Food Response to Covid-19

A Sustain publication

November 2020

About Sustain

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote equity. It represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

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About London Food Link

Part of the food and farming charity Sustain, London Food Link is the voice of good food in London. Our network is made up of individuals, enterprises and organisations who are working for better food in the capital and represented on the London Food Board.

We lead and partner on policy initiatives, campaigns and practical projects to improve the food system. These include the Good Food for London and Beyond the Food Bank reports, the London Food Poverty Campaign, Capital Growth, Urban Food Fortnight and The Jellied Eel magazine.

www.londonfoodlink.org





LOCKDOWN, LIFELINES AND THE LONG HAUL AHEAD:

The impact of Covid-19 on food banks
in the Trussell Trust network

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We are particularly grateful to all of the food banks in our network which helped to make the surveys possible, and we extend our gratitude to the people using food banks who took part in these surveys and shared insight in to their circumstances and experiences.

The Trussell Trust would also like to thank ASDA's Fight Hunger Create Change partnership which has funded the research described in this report.



FOREWORD

When the coronavirus pandemic struck, we had already been experiencing year-on-year rises in the number of people unable to afford food and consequently forced to use food banks across the country. Now, our research finds that the devastating effects of Covid-19 have led to thousands of new people needing to use a food bank in our network for the first time.

This is not right.

Looking forward, we face yet tougher times ahead with mass unemployment predicted on a scale not seen since the early nineties. The projections in this research indicate that if we don't take action now, there will be further catastrophic rises in destitution in the future, with six parcels being given out per minute by food banks in our network over the coming months. But it doesn't have to be like this.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it has exposed the power of what happens when we stand together in the face of adversity.

Communities across the country have shown enormous resilience and determination to provide vital support to people unable to afford the essentials. In some food banks, our volunteers have helped more than double the number of people they normally would, and in the most difficult circumstances. It is an honour to work alongside such dedicated people. This goes for all the food and poverty charities, individuals and businesses who have stepped up to help.

But this cannot go on. We must harness the power we have when we come together and make the changes that are needed to prevent people being locked into poverty this winter. The government response to threats posed to jobs and incomes during this pandemic has shown what a difference it can make when the right support structures are put in place. The much-needed rises to some benefit levels and the job retention scheme have safeguarded many people through these difficult times. We know without these provisions, many more people would have been forced into poverty. But as these emergency measures wind down, extremely worrying times lie ahead.

We now sit in the eye of the storm – a period of relative calm after the initial shock of lockdown as we benefit from the Job Retention Scheme and investment into Universal Credit. But these measures are, for now, temporary.

We can either continue forward into a future with the widespread destitution predicted within our research – or we can choose to take a different path and embed the changes we need to make a lasting difference. There should be no higher priority than preserving the lifelines that have saved many of us from destitution through this pandemic. This autumn's Budget and Comprehensive Spending Review present a crucial opportunity to ensure we have a chance of weathering the storm left in the wake of Covid-19 – we must take it.

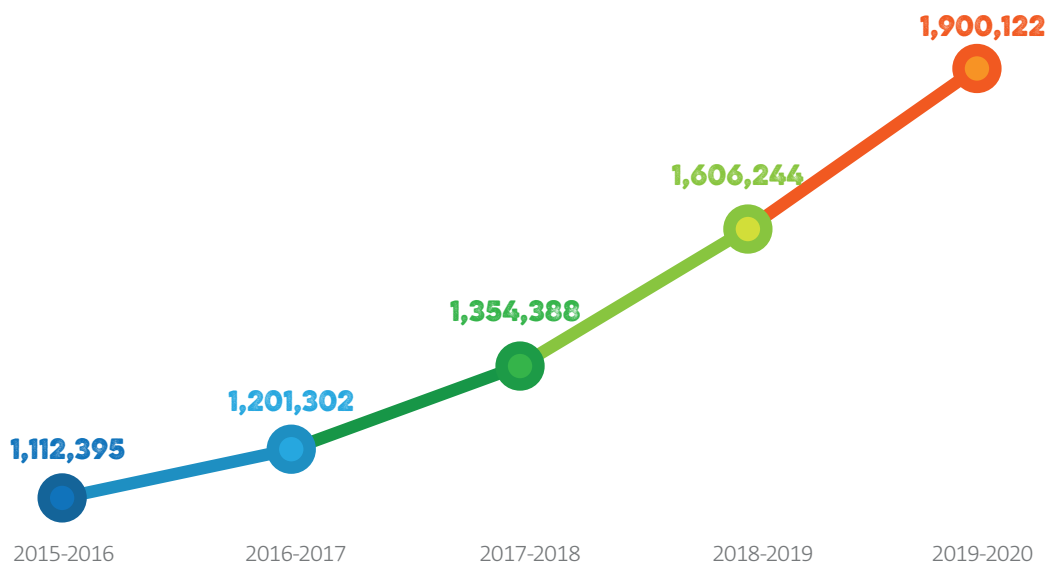
Emma Revie

Chief Executive of the Trussell Trust



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Well before Covid-19 hit the UK, food banks in the Trussell Trust network had been seeing year-on-year increases in levels of need, with 1.9 million emergency food parcels given out in 2019/20. Previous research has found that the overwhelming majority of people using food banks in the Trussell Trust network are destitute and, even before the pandemic, the number of people struggling to make ends meet was increasing. This crisis has landed after years of stagnant wages and frozen, capped working age benefits - leaving those on the lowest incomes vulnerable to income shocks.



2. As Covid-19 hit the UK, the Trussell Trust saw an immediate and sustained surge in need across its food banks. In April there was an 89% increase in the number of emergency food parcels given out compared with the same month in 2019. This included a 107% increase in the number of parcels given to children, compared to the same period last year. The latest data shows that for the second quarter of 2020 need remained much higher than normal. New findings also show that almost 100,000 households received support from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network for the very first time between April and June.



at least

81%

increase in need across Q2

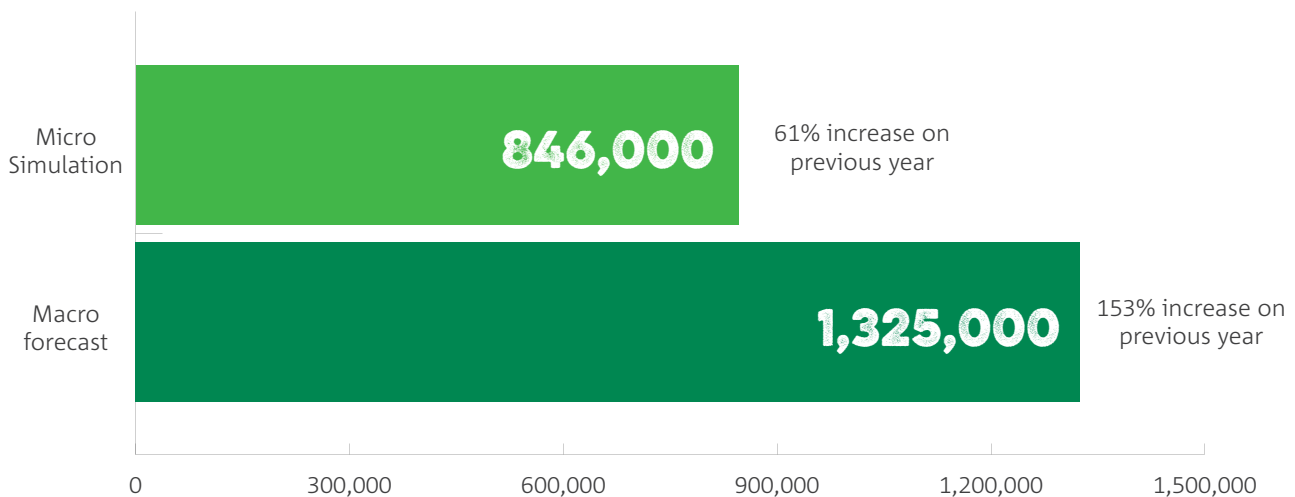
3. Food banks showed extraordinary resilience in meeting this need given the challenging operational environment they were facing. There has also been an increase in the provision of emergency food by charities and other organisations across the UK – illustrating the incredible national response at this time of crisis.



39%

of people needing a food parcel had this delivered to them across June and July

4. At the start of the pandemic, the Trussell Trust commissioned work to understand the levels of need food banks in the network would be likely to see as the economic impact of Covid-19 unfolded. This modelling has been carried out by Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with the National Institute for Economic and Social Research. Two different approaches have been taken – one based on forecasts at the macro-economic level, and one based on a microsimulation model based on changes to household employment status and income levels.
5. The findings show that there is likely to be a significant rise in levels of destitution in the UK by the end of the year, and at least an extra 300,000 emergency food parcels are likely to be distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network in the last quarter of 2020 – an increase of 61% compared to the previous year. The modelling shows that – depending on factors like the strength of the economy and a second wave of Covid-19 – levels of need could be even higher.



6. Many of the measures the UK Government has taken will have protected large numbers of people from being swept into financial hardship and destitution. New findings set out in this report indicate that removing the current temporary increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance rate could increase use of food banks in the Trussell Trust network by almost 10%.



£20

the £20 increase is helping to protect people

7. Despite the Government's action, there has been a sustained increase in the number of people needing to turn to food banks in the Trussell Trust network and other forms of support as they cannot afford the essentials that we all rely on – and the new projections show that a storm lies ahead.
8. We have a vital opportunity as we rebuild to shape the society we want to live in, and to ensure that the safety net we all want to be there for one another is as strong as possible. As a priority, we are calling for the Government to:
 - **Protect people's incomes by locking in the £20 uplift to Universal Credit**
 - **Help people hold on to more of their benefits by suspending benefit debt deductions until a fairer approach to repayments can be introduced**
 - **Make local safety nets as strong as possible by investing £250m in local welfare assistance in England every year**

We also urge the Government to rethink the impending cliff edge of the Job Retention Scheme coming to an end.

9. Food banks in our network have responded incredibly to this national crisis, as have countless other organisations. We want to see an end to the need for food banks in the UK by tackling the issues that drive people into destitution and needing crisis support. We urge the Government to lead the way.

CHAPTER ONE

A RISING TIDE: NEED FOR FOOD BANKS BEFORE COVID-19 AND THE INITIAL RESPONSE

Well before Covid-19 hit the UK, food banks in the Trussell Trust network had been seeing year on year increases in levels of need, with 1.9 million emergency food parcels given out in 2019/20. Previous research has found that the overwhelming majority of people using our food banks are destitute and, even before the pandemic, the number of people struggling to make ends meet was increasing. This crisis has hit after years of stagnant wages and frozen, capped working age benefits - leaving those on the lowest incomes vulnerable to income shocks.

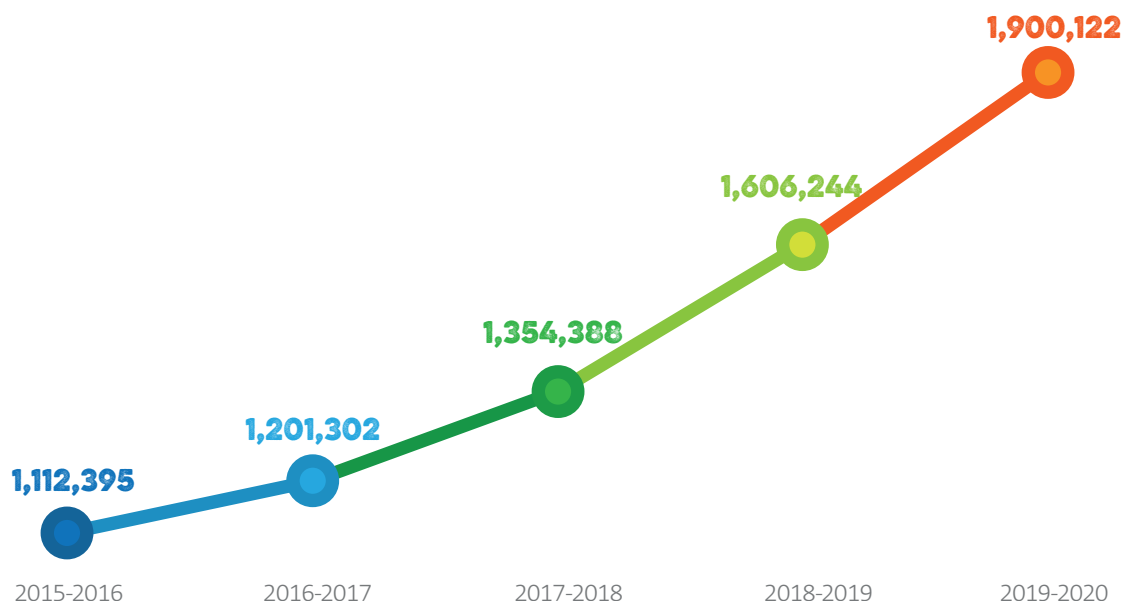
The Government has put in place a range of very significant measures to try and address the economic impact of Covid-19. Specific steps have also been taken in each nation. But there have been notable gaps in the response and the economic data strongly indicates that extremely tough times lie ahead, which will have serious consequences for those individuals and families who are already living in destitution or are at high risk of being swept in to it.

WHAT DID DESTITUTION AND NEED FOR FOOD BANKS IN THE TRUSSELL TRUST NETWORK LOOK LIKE BEFORE COVID-19?

The Trussell Trust supports a network of 1,200 food bank centres across the United Kingdom. People are referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network by local partners in the voluntary, statutory and faith sectors, following an assessment of their financial situation. They are provided with a three-day emergency food parcel, and also receive support that can include help with dealing with benefits issues or signposting to other services. The support food banks provide is available to anyone who is in crisis.

Levels of need at food banks in the Trussell Trust network were rising steadily in the years before the pandemic. The Trussell Trust's network, has seen a 74% increase in the number of three-day food parcels distributed over the last 5 years, including an 18% increase in the year to 2019/20.¹

Figure 1.1 Increase in number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell Trust



Drivers of food bank use

Research carried out for the Trussell Trust by Heriot-Watt University shows that the need to use a food bank is typically caused by some combination of inadequate or reduced benefits, a challenging life experience (such as illness or a household breakdown) and a lack of informal and / or formal support.² Underlying this is a strong link between food bank use and destitution: in 2018 94% of people needing to use a food bank were destitute³, meaning they could not afford the essentials we need to be safe and well.^{4,5}

Although not all people that are destitute use food banks, being destitute clearly increases vulnerability to the types of shocks described above.

The causes of destitution are complex, but the following are important factors for many people:

- **Debt**, particularly multiple debts and harsh recovery practices – including from public authorities;
- The delivery of **working-age benefits**, which is designed to include a five-week wait for the first payment, as well as sanctions and delays;
- **Benefit levels**, which have been frozen since 2015 and were capped for more than 46,000 households claiming Universal Credit (UC) in February 2020, containing at least 123,900 children;⁶

2 The State of Hunger (2019), *The Trussell Trust*, <https://www.trusselltrust.org/state-of-hunger/>

3 In this analysis people are defined as destitute if they do not meet the 'destitution on essentials' criterion, the 'destitution on income' criterion, or both.

4 The State of Hunger (2019), *The Trussell Trust*, <https://www.trusselltrust.org/state-of-hunger/>

5 Destitution in the UK 2018 (2018), *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018> The items considered essential are shelter, food, heating a home, lighting a home, weather-appropriate clothing and footwear, and basic toiletries.

6 Benefit cap statistics: Households capped to February 2020, (2020), *DWP*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-february-2020>

- **Poor quality employment**, including low-paid, insecure work and erratic pay;⁷
- **Health problems**, including mental and physical health.

Levels of poverty and destitution in the UK – and key drivers

The most recent data from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that poverty rates for children and pensioners have risen in the five years to 2017/18. They found that around 14 million people were living in poverty in the UK in 2017/18. The majority (8 million) of these are working age adults, 4 million are children and 2 million are pensioners.⁸

More recent research by the Social Metrics Commission shows that, while the rate of poverty in the UK has remained fairly stable at 22% in 2018/19, the number of people living in poverty has increased – and the proportion of people living in deep poverty has increased too, to 7% up from 5% 20 years ago.⁹ This represents an increase of 1.7 million people (2.8 million in 2000/01 to 4.5 million in 2018/19). In this instance, those living in deep poverty are defined as being 50% below the Commission's poverty line of income.

Deep poverty here is a slightly broader definition than those living in destitution. Those that are destitute experience a more severe form of poverty, with measurement focusing on life's necessities. Those that are destitute often must go without the bare essentials that we all need to eat, stay warm and dry, and keep clean. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that in 2017 1.5 million people in the UK experienced destitution at some point, including 365,000 children.¹⁰ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines destitution through a minimum income threshold and / or lack of essentials.

In late 2020 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is planning to release an updated baseline of the number of people that experienced destitution in 2019. With year-on-year increases in food bank use recorded since 2017, it is likely that the rate of destitution will have increased during this period.

The increase in the numbers of people affected by poverty has been driven by a range of inter-related factors, including but not limited to:

- **The freeze, cuts and cap on benefits** for working age people: The five-year benefits freeze alongside the range of cuts to benefit levels is one of the main reasons that real-term incomes for those in the lowest 10% of incomes have fallen in recent years, benefit levels lost 6% of their value between April 2013 and April 2019 purely as a result of the benefit freeze.¹¹ In 2018-19, real incomes for this group were no higher than they were in 2001-02.¹²
- **High levels of debt** among those on working age benefits: 25% of people receiving UC before the pandemic had problem debt, compared to just 8% of the general population – and 43% of people receiving benefits have had to take on debt to buy essentials such as food.¹³ When income from work

7 Destitution in the UK 2018 (2018), *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018>

8 UK Poverty 2019/20, (2020), *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/54566/download?token=-tq2TGsD&filetype=full-report>

9 Social Metrics Commission 2020 Report, (2020), *SMC*, <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/>
Deep poverty' is a relative poverty measure and refers to those living more than 50% below the poverty line

10 Destitution in the UK 2018 (2018), *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018>

11 UK Poverty 2019/20, (2020), *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/54566/download?token=-tq2TGsD&filetype=full-report>

12 The Living Standards Audit 2020, (2020) *Resolution Foundation*, <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-audit-2020/>

13 Problem Debt and the Social Security System, (2020) *StepChange*, <https://www.stepchange.org/Portals/0/assets/pdf/social-security-mini-brief-report.pdf>

and benefits fails to meet essential living costs, people have no choice but to use debt to cover everyday expenses. This can have serious knock-on effects, especially if someone's income take a further hit and they can no longer make debt repayments.

- **Stagnant wages:** While there have been record levels of employment, it took until 2019 for average weekly earnings to reach that of 2007.¹⁴ Wage growth has been slowest for those on the lowest wages, with weekly gross wages for the 10th percentile increasing by only £34.80 in the last decade compared to an increase of £46.10 per week for wages at the 20th percentile. Wages at the 60th percentile have increased by £90.¹⁵
- **Lack of savings:** Low income households are more at risk from financial shocks if they don't have savings, potentially driving them further into debt or putting them at risk of negative outcomes such as homelessness. Six in 10 (59%) households in the bottom 20% of household incomes have no savings, compared to 9% of households in the top 20%.¹⁶ Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that one in three (30%) low-income households stated before the pandemic that they couldn't manage for a month if they lost their main source of income.¹⁷



£34.80

Weekly wages have increased by only £34.80 for the lowest earners in the last decade



59%

of low income households have no savings

These figures show that the number of people struggling to make ends meet was increasing even before the pandemic. This crisis has hit after years of stagnant wages and frozen, capped working age benefits, driving those living on the lowest incomes into high levels of personal debt and removing any financial cushion to get them through difficult times. This has left those on the lowest incomes vulnerable to income shocks and means redundancy or loss of hours as a result of the pandemic are more likely to sweep people into crisis.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

The lockdown required to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 forced the closure of a quarter of UK businesses and prevented millions from working.¹⁸ Those with zero-hours or similar contracts were among those facing the most immediate consequences, with cancelled shifts meaning an instant loss of income.¹⁹

14 The Living Standards Audit 2020, (2020) *Resolution Foundation*, <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-audit-2020/>

15 Analysis by the Trussell Trust of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, All wages, ASHE Table 8, ONS. Figures from 2019 are compared to those for 2009. Figures are for the United Kingdom.

16 I-SPHERE analysis of UKHLS data from waves 8-9, Estimated savings by Income Quintile for working age households (Net equivalised after housing costs)

17 Covid-19: the impacts of the pandemic on inequality, (2020), *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14879>

18 Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey questions: 23 March 2020 to 5 April 2020, (2020), *ONS*,

19 Industries heavily affected by the economic crisis like accommodation, hospitality and entertainment are more likely to make use of zero-hour contracts. 22.6% of employees who were on zero-hour contracts in 2019 worked in the accommodation and food sector. EMP17: People in employment on zero hours contracts, (2020), *ONS*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=%2femploymentandlabour%2fpeopleinwork%2femploymentandemployeetypes%2fdatasets%2femp17peopleinemploymentonzerohourscontracts%2fcurrent/emp17aug2020.xlsx>

In the last two weeks of March, the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) recorded over a million claims to UC – nearly seven times the usual rate of applications.²⁰ That so many needed to claim UC so quickly – and for many even before the strict lockdown started on 23 March – shows how fragile many people’s work situations are, and how vulnerable their incomes are as a result.

Unprecedented measures

Forcibly closing large parts of the economy to protect people’s health required the UK Government to take huge steps to protect people’s incomes. The most significant by far has been the Jobs Retention Scheme (JRS), which paid 80% of furloughed workers’ wages (up to £2,500 per month) and has supported around 9.6 million jobs.²¹

Similarly, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has provided those who’d been self-employed for at least a year before the crisis started with grants equivalent to 80% of profits (up to £2,500 per month). 2.7 million claims were made for a grant in the first round of applications.²²

These two interventions have supported the incomes of around a third of the UK workforce while businesses and workplaces have been shut down. This includes 32% of eligible employees being supported by the JRS for at least some time, and around half of self-employed people receiving support through the SEISS.^{23,24}

Changes have also been made to increase the levels of support provided by the social security system – with a total £9 billion boost to the benefit system.²⁵ One of the most significant changes has been the end to the freeze on, and the subsequent uprating of, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), bringing levels back up to the 30th percentile of local rents for areas throughout the UK. In addition, as well as the planned uprating of working age benefits by 1.7%, there has been a flat £20 per week increase to the standard rate in UC and Tax Credits. This brings the standard allowance for a single person over 25 to £94.59 per week, up from £73.34 in March this year. As discussed subsequently there are limitations to this uplift, such as the benefit cap and the lack of eligibility for those on legacy benefits.

The temporary suspension of some types of deductions from UC (and the pause on evictions, which might have offered some people the opportunity to suspend repayment of rent arrears) also meant that people receiving UC were able to keep more of their benefit entitlement at the start of the crisis.²⁶ Since up to 30% of the UC standard allowance can be deducted to repay debts, this measure will have provided a significant increase to the incomes of many of the most financially vulnerable households across the UK. In May last year, 60% of UC

20 Between 16th March and 29th March 2020 1,040,840 individual declarations to Universal Credit. Up from 157,930 in the first two weeks of March 2020. Universal Credit declarations (claims) and advances: management information, (2020), DWP, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-declarations-claims-and-advances-management-information>

21 Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: August 2020, (2020), HMRC, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020>

22 HMRC coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics, (2020), HMRC, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics#self-employment-income-support-scheme>

23 Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: August 2020, (2020), HMRC, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020>

24 Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics: August 2020, (2020), HMRC, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-august-2020/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-august-2020>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/may2020>

[2.6 million people claimed a grant via the SEISS in the first round, around half of the 5 million people who were self-employed in 2018/19. This is also around half of the 5 million people estimated to be in self-employment in March 2020, based on the Labour Force Survey](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/may2020)

25 The Living Standards Audit 2020, (2020) Resolution Foundation, <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-audit-2020/>

26 Deductions to repay government debts (such as benefit and Tax Credits overpayments and Social Fund loans, but excluding Universal Credit Advance Payments) were suspended from April to July.

recipients had deductions from their payments, with nearly one in three of those receiving UC experiencing deductions of 20% or more.²⁷



In May 2019
60%
 of Universal Credit
 recipients had deductions

Responses across the UK

Across the UK, measures were put in place to support families with children eligible for free school meals; the amount of support and mechanisms for providing this varied in each devolved administration.

In Northern Ireland, £7.8 million was spent on an emergency food parcel scheme for those who were shielding or could not afford food. Other initiatives included the suspension of benefit deductions for overpayments and loans and a Discretionary Support Covid-19 Short-term Living Expenses Grant.

In Scotland, £350 million was made available to support communities, including more than doubling the Scottish Welfare Fund with £45 million, £70 million to specifically tackle food insecurity and £50 million to meet increased demand for council tax reduction and social security.

In Wales, the Discretionary Assistance Fund received an additional £11 million to provide Emergency Assistance Payments and Individual Assistance Payments. A further £2.8 million was made available to local councils to help fund the increase in demand on Welsh Government's Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Schemes specific to England have included the Hardship Fund to increase the support local authorities could provide through council tax relief, and more recently the £63 million funding for the Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies.

Gaps in the UK Government's response

These significant policy interventions have supported the incomes of millions. However, there are big gaps which left many people without support and therefore vulnerable at the height of the pandemic.

More than 1.5 million self-employed people weren't eligible for the SEISS – including an estimated 650,000 people who entered self-employment in the last year and so did not have a tax return for 2018-19.^{28,29} The SEISS also did not cover those who paid themselves in dividends. Similarly, the JRS did not support all workers affected by the crisis, as many were made redundant before the scheme was announced and employers were not able to rehire those who had been let go.

27 Million Universal credit households 'do not get full entitlement', (2019), *The Observer*, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/nov/23/million-families-cut-universal-credit-benefits-debts>

28 Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics: August 2020, (2020), HMRC, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-august-2020/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-august-2020>

29 Income protection for the self-employed and employees during the coronavirus crisis, (2020), *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14786>

While increases to UC and LHA have made a real difference, the benefit cap is still in place and unchanged. This places a limit to the amount of income a person or household can receive from UC, and the increase to LHA in particular means many more people will reach the cap amount. This significantly reduces or even removes the effect of the increases to LHA and UC for many, especially for families in urban areas and in London and the South East. 154,000 households receiving either UC or Housing Benefit were subject to the benefit cap in May (up 93% from February). The majority (86%) of them are households with children.³⁰

Additionally, the increase to the UC standard allowance is a flat rate – doing little to recognise the situation of families with children, for example – and that legacy benefits have been excluded from the uplift.

The five-week wait built into UC has been largely unchanged during the pandemic. Although a run-on has been introduced for those moving to UC from legacy benefits such as Jobseeker’s Allowance, this was only implemented in July and was part of planned changes to UC rather than a response to the crisis. The five-week wait means that those starting a UC claim must choose either to receive no money for five weeks, or to take out a loan (or ‘Advance Payment’) which must be repaid from future UC payments within a year. In February 2020, 43% of all people receiving UC were repaying an Advance Payment.³¹ For many, the existence of the five-week wait means they have to take on debt – either privately or through the Advance Payment – in order to make ends meet before they receive their first payment.

The low level of UC means that the impact of repaying an Advance Payment can be significant and importantly these repayments were not included in the freeze to deductions. With benefits providing the minimum people need to live on (and often falling below), any further reduction will obviously affect people’s ability to make ends meet.

For those having to move from a legacy benefit, such as Tax Credits, to UC because of a change of circumstance, such as redundancy, they are not entitled to the same transitional protections that apply to those moving on to UC through the ‘managed migration’ process.

Finally, no additional social security provision has been made for the nearly 1.4 million people who live in the UK with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).³² While people with NRPF are entitled to support through the JRS or SEIS, for those who fall through those gaps there is no social security net.

The economic impact of Covid-19 to date

As of August 2020, the data available presents a mixed picture of the severity of the economic impact of the pandemic. National labour market statistics show relatively small changes; the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports that there were 730,000 fewer employees on payroll in July 2020 compared to March 2020, and unemployment has remained stable at 3.9%.³³ These figures likely reflect the protective effect of the JRS.

However, the extent of the impact of the pandemic on the economy is clear elsewhere. GDP fell 20.4% in the three months to June 2020, with a record monthly fall of 20% in GDP in April alone.³⁴ In addition, the

30 Benefit cap statistics: Households capped to February 2020, (2020), DWP, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-february-2020>

31 Universal Credit Written Question 54921, (2020), UK Parliament, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/54921/>

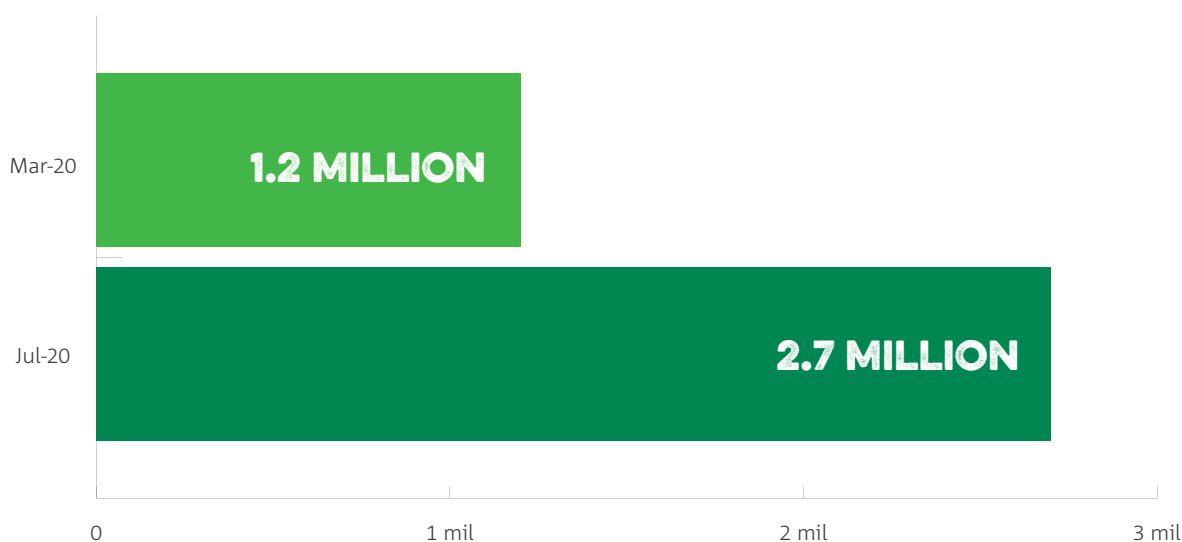
32 Citizens Advice reveals nearly 1.4 million have no access to welfare safety net, (2020), Citizens Advice, <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/how-citizens-advice-works/media/press-releases/citizens-advice-reveals-nearly-14m-have-no-access-to-welfare-safety-net/>

33 Labour market overview, UK: August 2020, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020#vacancies>

34 GDP first quarterly estimate, UK: April to June 2020, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/gdpfirstquarterlyestimateuk/apriltojune2020>

experimental Claimant Count statistics show 2.7 million people were receiving out of work benefits in July, more than double the 1.2 million receiving these benefits in March.³⁵ There were also 5.6 million people claiming UC in mid-July, up from 2.9 million in February – showing that, as well as the millions who've experienced redundancy, millions more have experienced a loss of hours or lost income from work for other reasons.³⁶ The number of hours worked fell 18% in the three months to June 2020, compared to the previous quarter.³⁷

Figure 1.3 People receiving out of work benefits



The ability of those that have lost jobs to bounce back and find another role, as well as of those that have lost hours and need to find alternative employment to make ends meet, has been greatly affected by the crisis. Between April and June 2020 there were just 337,000 vacancies across the whole of the UK. This is a record low and represents a 58% decrease on the equivalent figures for January to March 2020.³⁸

How have people's lives been affected?

Evidence is mounting of the impact that the economic fallout of Covid-19 has had on people's lives so far. While the measures put in place by the Government has afforded a degree of protection, it has not been enough to support those already in or at high risk of financial hardship.

People in low-paid and insecure work have been particularly vulnerable to labour market instability. The Resolution Foundation estimates that more than half of those whose income falls in the lowest 10% of people in work have had that work affected, compared to less than a third of those whose incomes fall in the highest 10%.³⁹ Similarly, the Social Metrics Commission found that people employed and in deep poverty are almost

³⁵ Labour market overview, UK: August 2020, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020#vacancies>

³⁶ Universal Credit statistics 29 April 2013 to 9 July 2020, (2020), DWP, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-9-july-2020/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-9-july-2020>

³⁷ Labour market overview, UK: August 2020, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020#vacancies>

³⁸ Labour market overview, UK: August 2020, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020#vacancies>

³⁹ The Living Standards Audit 2020, (2020) Resolution Foundation, <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-audit-2020/>

twice as likely to have experienced a negative labour change because of the pandemic, compared to those who were more than 20% above the poverty line prior to the crisis.⁴⁰ This is another example of the way in which the economic circumstances before the pandemic have left the poorest most vulnerable to its consequences.

Labour market impacts may also have a multiplier effect on the financial resilience of those in poverty, affecting not just the household themselves but other households that may rely on their support to get by. This chapter has already set out that those in the lowest income groups are least likely to have any form of savings. This means they are more reliant on taking on additional formal debt or needing support from friends or family to meet ongoing costs if they suffer an income shock.

Data from the April 2020 pandemic shows this to be the case. Low income groups are far more likely to need financial transfers from family if they have experienced a loss in earnings (16% of those in the bottom quintile did so vs. 6% of those in the top quintile).⁴¹ As the crisis broadens the scale of people's income losses, the ability to draw on these support networks may lessen for those in poverty, reducing their ability to manage.

The disproportionate impact on the lowest paid workers is also reflected in research by StepChange, which found that people who had less financial resilience are more likely to have been affected by the pandemic crisis. 45% of people in severe problem debt before the pandemic have been negatively affected financially by it, compared to 25% of those not in financial difficulty.⁴²

Some organisations, including Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and Citizens Advice, have also highlighted the broader effect of the crisis on specific groups. CPAG have focussed on the impact for families and found that school closures have hit low income families hardest, with 40% of low-income families missing one or more essential resource they need to support their children's learning from home.⁴³

Work by Citizens Advice has highlighted the difficulties migrants have faced during this crisis, particularly those who have NRPF. As well as seeing a 110% increase in enquiries about the rights of non-EU migrants to access benefits, they've found that 1.4 million people are subject to NRPF and that these restrictions mean many have felt forced to risk their health by continuing to work through the pandemic.⁴⁴

As we set out in the next chapter, the pandemic has resulted in a huge increase in the numbers of people needing to use a food bank, with many using a food bank for the first time. This gives another indication of the scale and severity of the impact of the pandemic on people's lives.

40 Social Metrics Commission 2020 Report, (2020), SMC, <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/>

41 The Idiosyncratic Impact of an Aggregate Shock: The Distributional Consequences of COVID-19, (2020), *Understanding Society Working Paper Series*, <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/working-papers/2020-09.pdf>

42 Coronavirus and Personal Debt: a financial recovery strategy for households, (2020), *StepChange*, <https://www.stepchange.org/Portals/0/assets/pdf/coronavirus-policy-briefing-stepchange.pdf>

43 The Cost of Learning in Lockdown, (2020), *CPAG*, https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/The-cost-of-learning-in-lockdown-UK-FINAL_0.pdf

44 Nowhere to turn: How immigration rules are preventing people from getting support during the coronavirus pandemic, (2020), *Citizens Advice*, <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Nowhere%20to%20turn%20briefing.pdf>

CHAPTER TWO

LIFELINES IN LOCKDOWN: WHAT FOOD BANKS HAVE SEEN DURING THE PANDEMIC

As Covid-19 hit the UK, food banks in the Trussell Trust network saw an immediate and sustained surge in need across its food banks. In April there was an 89% increase in the number of emergency food parcels given out compared with the same month in 2019. Latest data shows that for the second quarter of 2020 need remained much higher than normal, at 81% above last year's levels. New findings show there has been a significant increase in the proportion of people receiving support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network for the very first time. Almost 100,000 households needed support from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network between April and June. Food banks showed extraordinary resilience in meeting this need given the challenging operational environment they were facing. There has also been an increase in the provision of emergency food by charities and other organisations across the UK – illustrating the incredible national response at this time of crisis.

SUSTAINED SURGE IN NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM FOOD BANKS IN THE TRUSSELL TRUST NETWORK

The economic and social consequences of the pandemic have driven historic levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network. The level of increased need recorded in April 2020 meant that was the busiest month ever up to that point in time. Emerging evidence from the network indicates that levels of need have continued to be extremely high in the ensuing months.

The first wave of data collected from food banks in the Trussell Trust network covered the last two weeks of March, when the immediate economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was becoming apparent. This found an 81% increase in the number of people supported by emergency food parcels, with 122% more children receiving support from a food bank in the network in comparison to the same period last year.⁴⁵

April was busier still for food banks, with an 89% increase in the number of three-day parcels given to people, including a 107%

“When I first started working at the food bank you might see 20 people come on a normal day. At the peak of lockdown it could be as much as 80 a day. One day we saw 90 people.”

Gwen Williams, Caernarfon
Foodbank in North Wales

“We’ve seen a huge increase in demand through the pandemic... We changed to delivery only and during the busiest times we saw a 100% increase, at least... We are concerned the effects of this will go on for months – even years.”

- Jane Emery, Nantwich Foodbank
in Cheshire, North West

increase in the number given to children, compared to the same period last year.⁴⁶ This means that the crisis food banks in the Trussell Trust network saw at the beginning of lockdown continued throughout April, despite the introduction of Government measures to support people on low incomes.



Indicative data from all food banks across the Trussell Trust network shows that for Q2 2020 (April – June) levels of need have increased by 81%. This figure is likely to rise as food banks complete their data processing.⁴⁷

“We would normally give out 110 vouchers a week – but at the worst points we were making 150 deliveries (amounting to 220 people in need) per day. This was because of unemployment due to Corona. We’ve been really aware of very elderly people coming for help as well as an increase in families.”

- Daphine Aikens, Hammersmith and Fulham Foodbank in London

Scale of food insecurity reported by other organisations

It is not only data from the Trussell Trust that illustrates the scale of food insecurity across the UK as a result of Covid-19, but evidence from a range of other organisations.

- The Independent Food Aid Network has found that its member food banks distributed 175% more parcels in April 2020 than April 2019⁴⁸, and 177% in May 2020 compared to May 2019.⁴⁹ Differences in referral mechanisms, closures by local agencies during lockdown and geographic locations may account for the variation in the percentage increases seen between the Trussell Trust and the Independent Food Aid Network’s (IFAN) figures.
- The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has found that millions of people have had to turn to a food bank or charity during this time. Its survey for July shows that⁵⁰:
 - 9% of the population had had food delivered to their home by a food charity or food bank in the month to July, with households with children over-represented. The level of need is likely to be higher, as many people will have visited food banks or other forms of support in person during this time.

46 UK food banks report busiest month ever, (2020), *The Trussell Trust*, https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/APRIL-Data-briefing_external.pdf

47 Food banks manually enter voucher data which means that there is a lag between when someone receives support from a food bank and when the data is processed. This means that percentage increases are likely to be higher than stated.

48 Independent Food Bank Emergency Food Parcel Distribution in the UK: Comparing February – April 2019 with February – April 2020, (2020), *IFAN*, https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/5b3b4407-201d-4db1-a848-b062a806a002/INDEPENDENT%20FOOD%20BANK%20EMERGENCY%20FOOD%20PARCEL%20DISTRIBUTION%20IN%20THE%20UK_FINAL.pdf

49 Independent Food Bank Emergency Food Parcel Distribution in the UK: Comparing February – May 2019 with February – May 2020, (2020), *IFAN*, https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/0f6e2f2c-8b8a-4149-8eab-053693cc3104/INDEPENDENT%20FOOD%20BANK%20EMERGENCY%20FOOD%20PARCEL%20DISTRIBUTION_FEB-MAY_2019_20_FINAL_PUBLISHED_9.7.20..pdf

50 COVID-19 research tracker – wave four, (2020), *Food Standards Agency*, <https://data.food.gov.uk/catalog/datasets/da60fd93-be85-4a6b-8fb6-63eddf32eeab>

- The reasons for needing support from a food bank or charity are both economic- and health-related. One in four (26%) of those that used a food bank or charity did so because they were self-isolating or shielding. One in five (20%) simply said they did not have enough money to buy food.
- One in six people (16%) report cutting down on the size of their meals or skipping them altogether due to a lack of money. Again, households with children are over-represented.
- The longitudinal survey *Understanding Society* has run several additional waves to assess the impact of the crisis. This found that 2% of the UK adult population in private households had used ‘a food bank or a similar service’ in April.⁵¹ As with the FSA dataset, families with children are over-represented in the sample of those that had used food banks. Over one in three (36%) of those that had used a food bank had a dependent child in the household, compared to one in four (27%) of the population overall.
- The Food Foundation has conducted multiple waves of surveys throughout the crisis. They found that in May:⁵²
 - 4.9 million adults were food insecure compared with two million pre-lockdown – 1.7 million children lived in those households.
 - Reasons for food insecurity relate to both being unable to afford food and/or being unable to access food. One in four (26%) said that they were only food insecure because of economic factors. Over one in five (21%) said they were food insecure because of one or more reasons.

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED THE OPERATION OF FOOD BANKS IN THE TRUSSELL TRUST NETWORK?

The pandemic has driven an economic crisis that has swept many into destitution and poverty. It has also seriously challenged the ability of food banks to continue to support people in their local communities. Despite these challenges, the network has gone to extraordinary lengths to provide emergency food parcels and other vital support on an unprecedented scale.

Government recognition of the essential role of food banks

The governments of the UK recognised the crucial role that food banks unfortunately currently play, and they were included in the lists of essential services that did not have to close in March.

Challenges faced by food banks resulting from the initial lockdown included the impact of shielding requirements on many volunteers and the need to change their typical operating model due to social distancing requirements. Around 40% of volunteers at food banks in the Trussell Trust network are over 65, and over 70% are aged over 55. Despite these challenges, nearly every food bank in the network has continued to provide food parcels since the beginning of the crisis, with some short-term closures while food banks established new ways of working to meet social distancing requirements.

51 Trussell Trust analysis of Understanding Society COVID-19 study, 14,811 UK adults aged 16+ weighted individually, interviewed online, 27th May to 2nd June 2020.

52 Food Foundation Polling: Fourth Survey – seven weeks into lockdown, (2020), *Food Foundation*, <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/vulnerable-groups/>

Maintaining the referral process

To access emergency food parcels from food banks in the Trussell Trust network, it is expected that everyone goes through the referral process. This means that the vast majority of people using a food bank have had a discussion with a referral agency – which can include a local advice agency, a social worker, or a local authority – about the support they need to address the underlying causes of their financial crisis, and whether an emergency food parcel is required as part of this support. In some cases people will self-refer if they are unable to access a referral agency.

Just as the lockdown and social distancing had an impact on the running of individual food banks, so did they affect the agencies and partners that in normal times refer people to food banks. Many struggled to operate in the opening weeks of the crisis and had to move to operating online or over the phone, and in some areas there continue to be fewer referral partners than normal.

To support referral partners in this time and ensure that people could access emergency food if needed, the Trussell Trust accelerated the roll out of e-referral. Where previously the majority of people referred to a food bank would have arrived at the food bank with a paper voucher issued by the referring agency, more were referred electronically via the referring agency. This meant that physical attendance at either the referring agency or the food bank itself was not required.

This is one of the ways in which the pandemic has created opportunities as well as challenges. In addition to the acceleration of e-referral, many food banks have also been able to strengthen relationships with referral partners in their local area. There are also reports of increases in funding and public support for food banks.

Social distancing and new delivery models

Many food banks rapidly put in place arrangements to deliver food parcels to people's homes, in addition to or instead of operating a collection model from their food bank centres, in order to comply with social distancing requirements. Estimates suggest around half of food banks in the Trussell Trust network continue to offer some form of delivery. Many have opted to solely deliver food parcels to enable them to only use warehouses or larger spaces for packing food parcels that are safer for staff and volunteers.

A survey of people that had to use food banks in the Trussell Trust network during the pandemic shows that four in 10 (39%) people needing a food parcel had this delivered to them across June and July. This may have been even higher during the earlier months when lockdown restrictions were stricter. Most parcels (57%) were still collected from food banks

“Since March it has been very challenging in terms of logistics changing to a delivery model. We saw a significant increase – just over 100% and demand still remains high. However, our volunteers, the public and our local community has been incredible – we couldn't have coped otherwise.... We have seen a lot more families and people coming for the first time. People saying they never thought they'd be in this position – people who had been furloughed or waiting for wages because companies were in difficulties.”

- Hannah Worsley, Norwich Foodbank, East England



39%

of people needing a food parcel had this delivered to them across June and July

The shift to delivering food parcels also meant that some food banks started to provide seven days' worth of food, rather than the usual three days in a single food parcel. This approach meant that the potential need for repeat support was reduced and helped people to comply with social distancing or shielding requirements. During April 2020 9% of parcels given out were seven-day parcels.⁵³

“It was scary at the beginning with people panic buying – we thought if there’s no food on the shelves who is going to donate? But actually, we were inundated with donations...The community has been so generous and Tesco has been amazing – we have also had so many volunteer offers. We got to know our clients really well again because we were working in a different way, which has been fantastic. It’s been a long and busy five months but we are ok.”

- Bethany Biggar, Edinburgh Food Project in Scotland

A rapidly evolving landscape of emergency food support

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK, there has been a significant increase in the provision of emergency food to different groups in different parts of the country. As noted in a report on food vulnerability during Covid-19, responses to food insecurity have been on a scale and of a complexity not seen in recent times in the UK, and have come from all sectors (public, private and voluntary) and at all levels (local, national, UK).⁵⁴

There is as yet no comprehensive assessment of the number of people who have been supported and for what length of time by this broad range of interventions, or of the extent to which people in one target group (eg shielding) may have otherwise experienced difficulties in affording food. Findings from the FSA and the Understanding Society survey do however, as mentioned above, indicate the scale of support that has been available from a range of sectors. It is likely that levels of need seen at food banks in the Trussell Trust network – while extremely high – may have been suppressed by the availability of other forms of support.

Ways in which emergency food has been provided include:

- **Provision for people shielding for medical reasons** - across the UK, schemes were put in place to deliver to people who were advised not to leave their homes for medical reasons. In England alone, more than 2 million food boxes had been delivered to people by the end of May. Given social isolation and economic vulnerability often correlate, it is possible that people in the shielding group who were economically vulnerable were more likely to receive this support. In Northern Ireland, government food parcels over April to June were also available to people who were in economic need of food.
- **Other local authority provision** – some local authorities have provided support to other groups experiencing food insecurity, including those who have been unable to afford food. This is likely to have included support provided for rough sleepers during the lockdown period.
- **Free school meals** – support for children eligible for free school meals has been extended to cover the school holidays across the UK – a time that normally sees an increase in food bank use by families as this support is usually only available during term time.
- **Local community provision** - The government made available up to £16m for frontline charities and community groups in England – such as refuges and homeless shelters – to enable them to provide meals.⁵⁵ Measures were also put in place to help to redistribute thousands of tonnes of surplus food. In

53 All food banks in the Trussell Trust network for 1st April – 30th April 2020.

54 Mapping responses to risk of rising food insecurity during the COVID-19 crisis across the UK, (2020), Lambie-Mumford et al <http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Food-Vulnerability-During-COVID-19-first-project-report.pdf>

55 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/16-million-for-food-charities-to-provide-meals-for-those-in-need>

Scotland, £10 million was allocated for voluntary and community sector organisations. Many faith-based organisations have also provided additional support to people, and a number of new food banks have been set up.

- **National charities** – organisations such as the British Red Cross and the Salvation Army have provided support to tackle food insecurity, for example through the direct provision of food to people, hardship grants, logistical support or through partnerships with the private sector. As noted earlier, IFAN member organisations have seen major increases in need for emergency food parcels. The organisation has also seen an increase in the number of food aid providers joining its network. Of 144 organisations joining IFAN since the end of March, more than 40 were newly operating food banks. There are now 385 independent food banks in the IFAN network, while IFAN has identified at least 916 independent food banks distributing food parcels regularly at least once a week.
- **Local crisis support** – across the UK, additional funding has been made available to provide crisis support for people through different schemes.

WHICH GROUPS HAVE BEEN USING FOOD BANKS DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Through the State of Hunger research, the Trussell Trust has strong evidence on which groups of people are more likely to need to use food banks, and the issues driving them to be in that position. As set out in the previous chapter, destitution is the overarching driver, in turn caused by factors such as problems with the benefits system, loss of earnings or a significant negative life event.

Work carried out over the summer enables some early conclusions about the extent to which Covid-19 has led to changes among the groups of people using food banks in the Trussell Trust network and the reasons for this. This is based on a survey of 435 people using food banks in our network across the last week of June and into July. The survey was distributed through the same sample of food banks that took part in an equivalent survey of 716 people in January and February 2020. This allows us to compare across the two time periods. Analysis of the Trussell Trust's administrative data is also presented where available.

In summary, we can see:

- There has been a **significant increase in the proportion of people receiving support from a food bank for the very first time** – over half in April (52%) and 45% in May compared to one in three (34%) across January and February 2020.
- **Families with children have been hit hardest** - they made up four in ten (38%) households that needed support from food banks in April 2020, in comparison to one in three (33%) in April 2019.
- Just 4% of people using food banks during the pandemic were **furloughed**, potentially highlighting the success of this scheme.
- Significant growth in both the percentage and absolute number of those **born outside of Europe** have been seen since the start of 2020 (7% in early 2020 vs. 18% during the pandemic).
- People identifying as **Black or Black British are significantly overrepresented** in those that need to use food banks (9% vs. 3% of the UK population).
- The prevalence of **mental health issues** has continued to be extremely high for people needing to use food banks. 72% of households using a food bank in June or July reported someone experiencing poor mental health.

Figures provided here from the survey are a snapshot of the population that used food banks in the Trussell Trust network in June – July 2020. Food banks selected to distribute surveys were chosen to be representative of food banks in the Trussell Trust network. Data was weighted to be representative of the population of people that used food banks in the Trussell Trust network in June and July. Comparisons are made to a survey carried out in early 2020 at the same food banks. A technical report can be found in Appendix A and the full results are published alongside this report. It is important to recognise that while some percentages dropped between early and mid-2020, the significant increases in the number of people needing support from food banks mean that the absolute number of each group is unlikely to be lower⁵⁶.

There are some indications from the administrative data that the Trussell Trust collects that the demographic composition of households is similar in June 2020⁵⁷ to that seen in April 2020. When looking at the total number of instances of food bank visits,⁵⁸ in April 2020 families with children made up 38% of all households in April and 36% in June. The distribution of parcels shows similar patterns. In April 2020 39% of parcels were given to children that needed support. Correspondingly this was 38% in June. Further demographics are not available, but these indicate that the households seen at the start of the crisis are not drastically different to those that needed support in later months.

Significant number of people ‘new’ to the Trussell Trust require support

It is clear from both the broader economic data and specific poverty and hunger statistics that some groups have been hit harder than others by the economic crisis since March. The degree to which these groups are ‘newly’ destitute is a key question. Emerging data from the Trussell Trust provides some evidence on this.

The Trussell Trust collates information that is collected by food banks⁵⁹ on people that have received support from food banks in the network before. In January and February 2020 about one in three (34%) people that were referred to food banks had not used a Trussell Trust food bank previously.

This figure has increased significantly during the crisis period. Over half (52%) of people referred to food banks were ‘new’ in April 2020, and over two in five (45%) were new in May. Figures fall in June to 36%. This may in part be because those ‘new’ from March onwards are not tagged as such for the proceeding months. Between April and June 2020, 99,300 households needed support from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network for the first time.

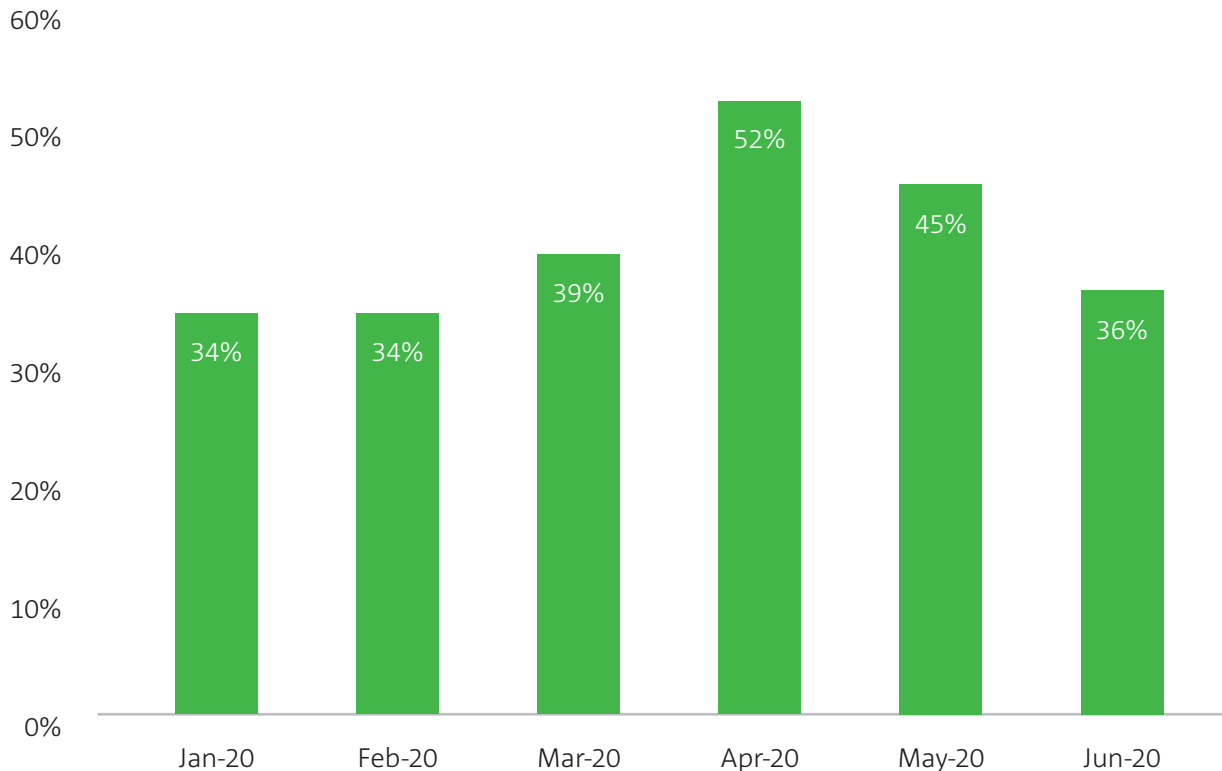
56 For example, the proportion of single people living alone has dropped in comparison to the same period last year, but in absolute terms the number of such people using food banks increased.

57 Due to lags in data processing all figures for June are indicative and do not represent all of the people that would have needed support in this period. Due to the volume of data processed percentages are unlikely to shift significantly.

58 Rather than unique households

59 The Trussell Trust instigated a client id system in April 2016. It is unknown whether any of these households would have used a food bank in the Trussell Trust network pre-April 2016.

Figure 2.1 Proportion of referred people that have not received support from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network before



Given the significant increases in volume of support that food banks in the Trussell Trust network have given across Q2 of 2020 compared to previous years, in absolute terms all these percentages represent a substantial 'new' population of people needing support from food banks.

The survey data highlights that the impact of the pandemic has driven additional levels of need. One in three surveyed during the crisis (35%) say that the main reason why they needed to use a food bank was because of the crisis, although just over half (57%) said that they would have still had to use a food bank, regardless.

Families with children hit hard by crisis

The Trussell Trust's administrative data shows that the impact on families with children has been severe during the crisis. Overall, between April 2019 and April 2020 food banks in the Trussell Trust network saw an 89% increase in parcels given out. This rises to 95% for families with children. Indeed, almost half (46%) of the increase in parcels given out from April 2019 to April 2020 was due to families with children needing support.

This has changed the distribution of households receiving support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network. In April 2020 single person households remained the single biggest group accessing support from food banks, at 42% of all households. However, this has declined from 51% for the same period in 2019. In contrast, families with children made up 38% of households receiving support in April 2020, compared to 33% a year earlier.

Indicative data previously presented in this chapter shows that the household distributions have not significantly changed between April and the later stages of the crisis.

Table 2.1 Household type for households that received a food bank parcel, and change from April 2019

	April 2019 %	April 2020 %	% of net increase
Single	51%	42%	31%
Single Parent	18%	19%	21%
Couple w/ children	15%	19%	25%
Couple	11%	12%	13%
Other	6%	7%	10%
Families with children total	33%	38%	46%

The Trussell Trust's statistics show just how disproportionately children have been hit by the economic impact of the pandemic. Despite children aged 0-16 accounting for just 20% of the UK population as of mid-2019,⁶⁰ these latest statistics show that parcels to children made up 43% of the additional parcels distributed across April 2020.



43%

Despite children aged 0-16 accounting for just 20% of the UK population as of mid-2019, parcels to children made up 43% of the additional parcels distributed across April 2020.

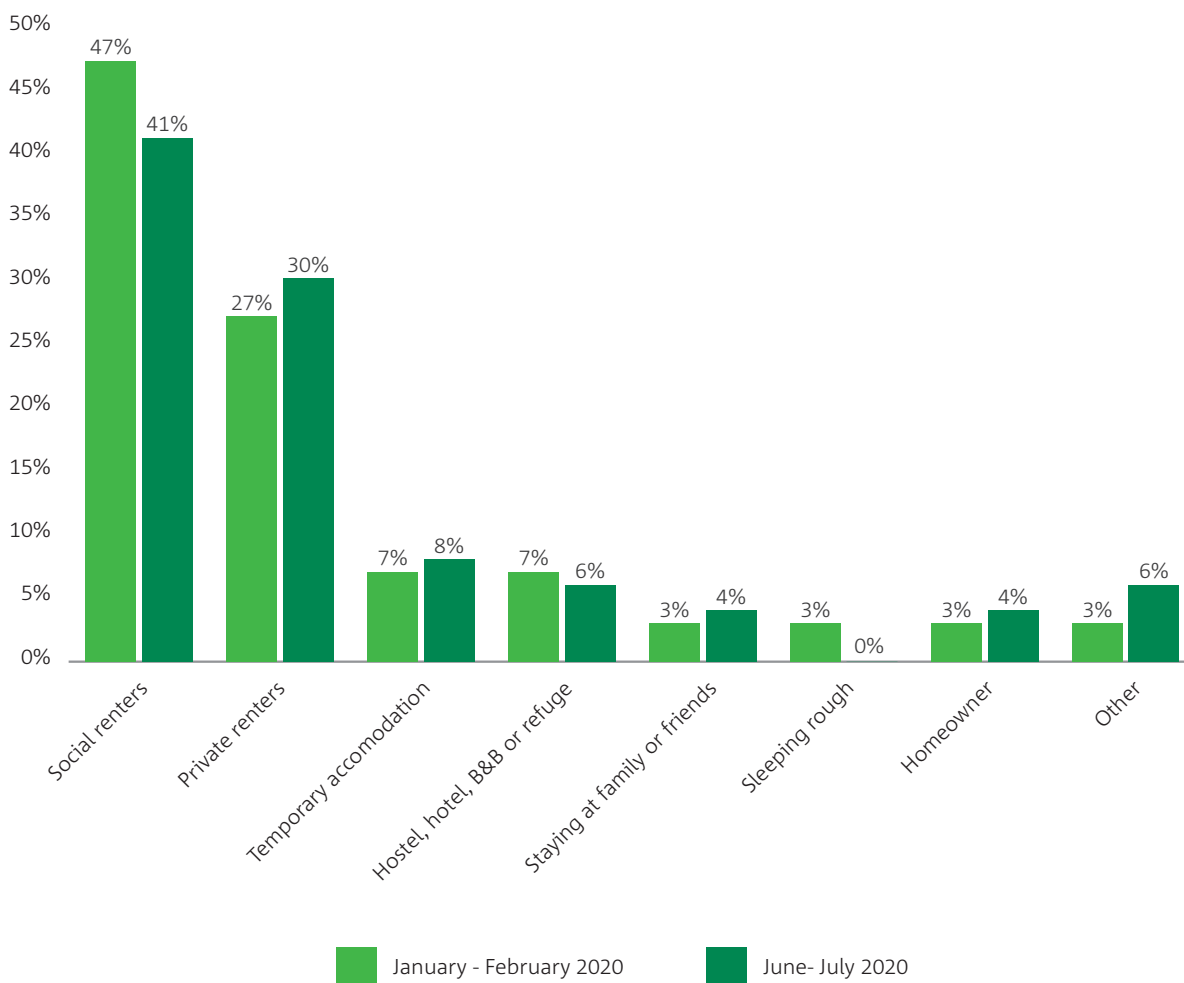
Social renters remain largest group in terms of housing tenure

During the pandemic social renters continued to be the largest group of households that needed support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network. However, as a proportion they have decreased by six points since early 2020 (47% to 41%). Increases are relatively evenly spread across the other tenures.

One in three (30%) of those needing support from a food bank during the pandemic were private renters. This is despite the LHA rate increasing to align with the 30th percentile of local private rents for private renters. Homeless households remain significantly overrepresented amongst those that need support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network.

60 Mid-year population estimates: Persons by single year of age and sex for local authorities in the UK, mid-2019, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/demographicandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesandnorthernireland>

Figure 2.2 Tenure of those using food banks in the Trussell Trust network



Overall household employment at point of use of food bank remains at pre-crisis levels

The majority (81%) of households that needed support from a food bank in June or July did not have someone working. This is the same proportion as in the pre-crisis period (83%).

Just 4% of people that needed to use a food bank in June or July were furloughed. This may in part reflect the success that this scheme has had in keeping people out of destitution or poverty – and raising concerns about the levels of need that food banks will see as this scheme is withdrawn and workers potentially lose their job or work reduced hours. It may also highlight that some of those that needed to use food banks were not eligible for the furlough scheme. Since early 2020 there has been a doubling in the proportion of those who were ‘not in paid work for some other reason’ (4% to 10%).

Chapter One identified that those in insecure employment were most at risk of job losses and data collected from the survey evidences this. Of those that indicated that they or their partner had a job before March, 43% stated that they worked on a temporary, zero-hour or no contract basis.

Crisis period sees increased proportion of people with mental health conditions

The Trussell Trust’s previous research has highlighted the extent of the mental and physical health issues that those using food banks are living with. Our State of Hunger report published in 2019 found that nearly 75%

of people using food banks reported someone in their household having a health issue.⁶¹ These figures were matched in early 2020 with 71% of those using a food reporting someone with a health issue.

During the crisis this has increased, with 83% of those using a food bank in June or July reporting someone with a health issue in the household. Increases have been particularly high for those experiencing poor mental health (including, stress, depression or anxiety). This has increased from 51% in early 2020 to 72% in June and July.⁶² A similar proportion of households with someone with a long-term physical condition or illness was also reported (28% in June July vs. 23% in early 2020).

This reflects overall trends seen in the general population. Almost one in five adults (19%) were likely to be experiencing some form of depression in June 2020. This has almost doubled from around one in 10 (10%) before the pandemic (July 2019 to March 2020).⁶³

Increased prevalence of those born outside Europe during crisis

The proportion of people using a food bank who were born outside Europe is higher now than at the start of 2020. In early 2020 just 7% of those needing to use a food bank were born outside of the UK. This almost tripled to 18% in June and July. This compares to one in 10 (10%) of the UK population being born outside Europe. During this period just over three quarters of people using food banks were born in the UK, in comparison to nine in 10 in early 2020 (79% vs. 91%).⁶⁴

Of those that were born outside the UK, the majority (60%) state that their household is receiving benefit income indicating that either they, or someone within their household, has eligibility for social security. It is important to note though that this is some 29 percentage points lower than the equivalent figure for all households (89% vs. 60%).⁶⁵

People from ethnic minorities overrepresented

Data collected during the crisis highlights that people from ethnic minorities are significantly overrepresented amongst people needing support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network.

One in 10 (9%) of people that were referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network during the crisis identify as Black or Black British. This is three times the rate of the UK population (3%). In contrast, just seven in 10 (71%) identify as White British, with a further 5% identifying as White Other. In the UK population these groups make up three in four (79%) and one in 12 (8%) respectively. Full breakdowns by ethnicity are published alongside this report.

9%
of people who received a food parcel from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network in June/July identified as Black or Black British

just **3%**
of the UK population are Black or Black British

61 The State of Hunger (2019), *The Trussell Trust*, <https://www.trusselltrust.org/state-of-hunger/>

62 Methodological differences may capture part of the differences here. For more detail please refer to the survey's Technical Appendix.

63 Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: June 2020, (2020), ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/coronavirusanddepressioninadultsgreatbritain/june2020>

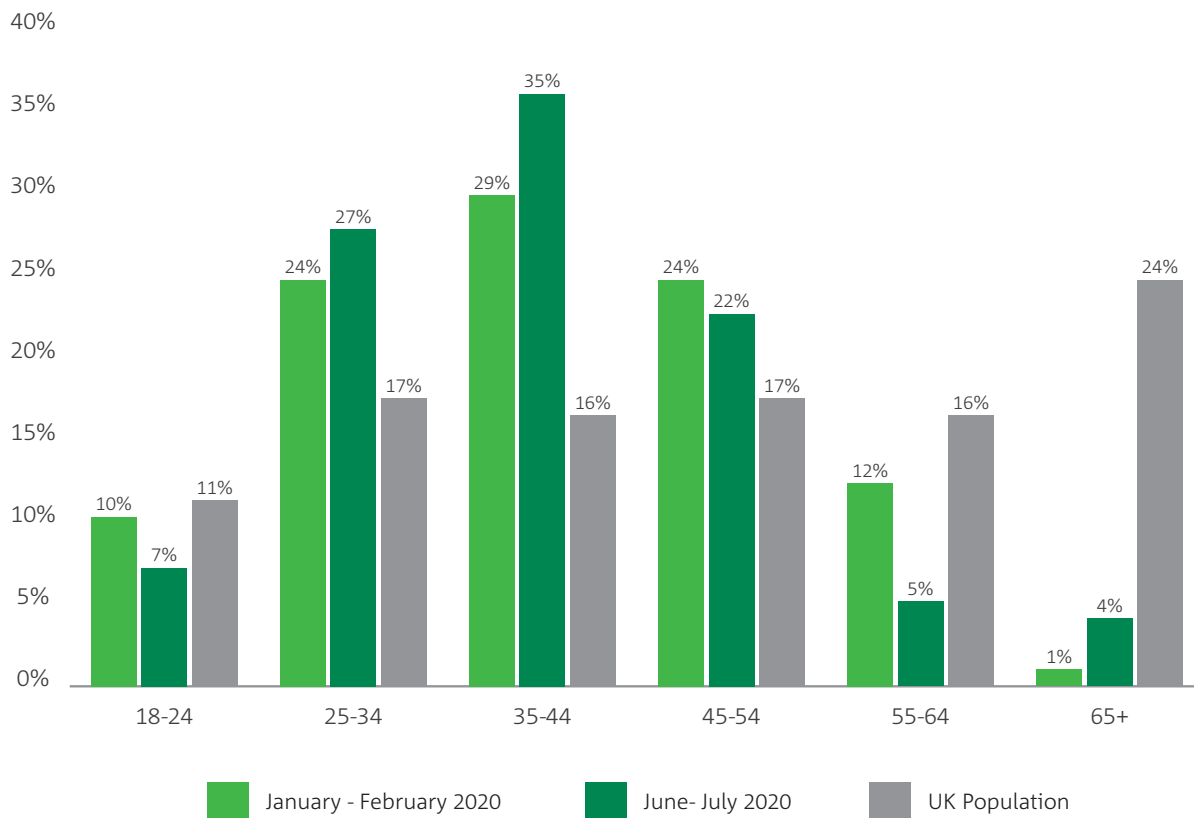
64 Due to the sensitivity of the question those surveyed were not asked whether they had no recourse to public funds. This measure is used as an approximate proxy.

65 This result should be regarded as indicative due to the small sample size (n=42)

Younger people worse off

People needing to use a food bank in June or July were comparatively younger than both the population of those receiving emergency food in early 2020, and the UK overall. Close to two in three (62%) of those that received emergency food in June or July were aged 25-44, up from 53% in early 2020, and significantly higher than the UK population (33%).⁶⁶ There has been a downwards shift in the proportion of the population aged 55+ receiving parcels from early 2020 (13% to 9%).

Figure 2.3 Percentage age distribution of those using a food bank



WHY ARE PEOPLE HAVING TO USE FOOD BANKS?

Previous evidence shows that there are some socio-demographic factors that may make people more at risk of having to turn to food banks during this crisis. However, underlying the majority of these factors is a fundamental lack of income to sustain a minimum standard of living. This - combined with a lack of support from social networks, no or low levels of savings, and reliance on eligibility for social security - makes people incredibly vulnerable to income shocks.

The Trussell Trust's previous work on identifying the drivers of food bank usage clearly pointed to destitution as the key factor behind food bank use, with 94% of people needing support from food banks living in destitution.⁶⁷ Our more recent findings highlight destitution again as a key issue.

⁶⁶ National Population projections by single year of age, (2020), *NOMIS* **Page 70**

⁶⁷ The State of Hunger (2019), *Trussell Trust*, <https://www.trusselltrust.org/state-of-hunger/>

In summary, we can see:

- Low income remains a significant factor in need for food banks. Destitution levels remain extremely high, and the majority (95%) of households needing support from food banks are living in relative poverty after housing costs.
- Most households (56%) that needed to use a food bank during the pandemic had experienced a drop of income since March 2020. This was mostly likely due to a drop of benefit income (46% of those who experienced any income drop), followed by a drop in earned income (40%).
- Increased levels of income were seen from early 2020. On average households received £77 per week (after housing costs) up from £57 in early 2020. This is likely due to the uprating of the standard allowance, LHA and the pause to deductions. They are likely to have prevented even greater levels of need during this crisis. However, they have clearly not provided enough protection to people in crisis potentially due to:
 - The wait for social security placing people at risk - one in five (22%) of households during the pandemic were waiting for a decision on a benefit application, or the first payment.
 - Levels of debts and arrears – 73% of households owed money when surveyed. Those using a food bank during the pandemic are more likely to be in arrears to two or more sources (48% vs. 41% in early 2020) or three or more (32% vs. 22%).
- Increases to social security levels during the crisis have not benefited everyone to the same extent. For instance, the £20 per week uplift to the Standard Allowance was only to UC and not to other income-replacement benefits. There is also some evidence of the impact of the benefit cap on those that need to use food banks. One in five (22%) of those that received benefit income said that their household was affected by the benefit cap⁶⁸.

Food banks users just as likely to experience destitution

Low levels of income remained the main reason for referral for people that needed to use a food bank in April 2020. The Trussell Trust's administrative data shows that over two in five (43%) were referred by agencies because their income was not at a level to sustain a minimum quality of life. One in ten (11%) referrals were due to benefit delays, and 6% were due to benefit changes. Sickness was also important, accounting for 6% of referrals.⁶⁹ Indicative data from June 2020 shows similar patterns with a slight increase in the percent of those being referred for low income (50%).⁷⁰

Given these referral reasons it is unsurprising that the Trussell Trust's survey during the pandemic found that people needing to use food banks were just as likely to be destitute as in early 2020. The survey asked three questions that are used as a measurement of destitution with each matching data collected pre-crisis.

⁶⁸ This result should be treated indicatively. This is a self-reported measure and as such may not be accurate. A high proportion of respondents said that they did not know for this result, indicating low overall awareness of the benefit cap.

⁶⁹ UK food banks report busiest month ever, (2020), *Trussell Trust*, https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/APRIL-Data-briefing_external.pdf

⁷⁰ All food banks in the Trussell Trust network for 1st June 2020 to 30th June 2020. Due to lags in data processing figures are indicative, although with the volume received are unlikely to shift significantly.

Table 2.3 Measures of destitution

	January - February	June - July
Destitute on food criterion		
Yes	77%	72%
No	23%	28%
Destitute on clothes and shoes criterion		
Yes	52%	49%
No	48%	51%
Destitute on minimum income criterion		
Yes	72%	69%
No	28%	31%

Evidence from the survey shows that the majority (95%) of those that needed to use a food bank during the pandemic were living in relative poverty after housing costs. Similar levels (96%) were seen in early 2020.

Routes into destitution and food insecurity

Most people (56%) that needed to use a food bank during the pandemic had experienced a drop in household income since early March 2020, indicating that income shocks continue to be an important factor driving food bank use.

Of those that had experienced a drop in household income since March, a drop in benefit income was the most common reason. Almost half (46%) of those who experienced any income drop had experienced a drop in benefit income. Four in 10 (40%) of those that experienced a drop in income prior to visiting a food bank had seen reductions in earned income.

This link to loss of earnings is also seen by the pre-lockdown employment status of those needing to use food banks. Before March 2020 one in four (25%) of those using food banks during the pandemic had someone working in the household. This drops to 16% at the point at which they were surveyed over the summer. Big increases in unemployment were seen for those using a food bank in June or July. One in five (18%) reported being unemployed in February, compared to one in three (32%) during the crisis.

For those that did not see an income shock during the crisis, longer term issues with benefits, lack of informal support, income levels after housing costs, debt and deductions are likely to have driven their need to receive support from a food bank. Over four in 10 (45%) said that a lack of support from family, friends or local organisations was directly related to their need to use a food bank.

This is despite the income levels of those using food banks during the pandemic being higher than those in early 2020. During the crisis period median weekly equivalised incomes after housing costs were £77, an increase from £57 in early 2020. Increases in income are likely to be driven by the changes to the standard allowance of UC, shifts in other benefits related to housing, and the pause on deductions helping people to keep more of their money. Those that are new claimants to UC are also not immediately subject to the benefit cap. It is however important to recognise that £77 is still well below the destitution threshold of income.

The increase in the UC standard allowance and support for housing costs will – as discussed in the next chapter – have protected many people from being swept into destitution and having to use food banks during this crisis. However, it must be noted that the increases and reforms have not been enough to protect everyone.

Wait for social security may put people at risk

Increases to household incomes may be mitigated in part because of the wait to receive a first payment and the hardship that this entails. Previous work from the Trussell Trust has consistently shown the five-week wait to be related to increased levels of support from food banks.⁷¹

One in five (22%) of those that used a food bank during the pandemic were waiting for a decision on a benefit application, or the first payment. Of those that were waiting, one in five (20%) had not received a decision on their first payment for six weeks or longer.

The majority (78%) of those that used a food bank while waiting for a UC decision or payment, had been waiting for five weeks or less at the time they visited a food bank. This highlights the lack of resources that households possess to cope with the wait for support from social security.

Additional data from the FSA shows the importance of receiving benefit payments promptly and without delay. One in four (27%) that had food delivered from a food bank or charity in the month to July did so because there was a delay or problem with their benefit payments.⁷²

DWP has significantly improved the timeliness of payments of new UC claims during the pandemic, which may have mitigated against some additional levels of need. However, many are still not receiving their full payments on time. When combined with the hardship of the five-week wait this can leave many people barely getting by, and lead to others being swept into destitution.

In March 2020, 12% of new claims either did not receive any of their payment or some of their payment on time. This falls to 4% in April 2020 but given the number of new claims during the late March and April period this represents a significant number of people.⁷³

Debt and repayment crisis for those using food banks during pandemic

As found in early 2020 and in 2019's State of Hunger report, the costs that households are having to cover with their income are significant, often pushing them further into destitution. The debts, arrears and deductions that households have when visiting the food bank are incredibly high and may further explain why the increase in standard allowance is not protecting people from falling into destitution. The level of income that people receive as part of their core benefits is barely enough to cover a subsistence level of living and in many cases does not even go this far. Our work in the State of Hunger report highlighted that removing income from this subsistence level leaves households vulnerable to being swept into destitution and poverty.

The evidence from the Trussell Trust's surveys highlights that over the course of the crisis many are still struggling with levels of debt, including money owed to the DWP.

A large proportion of people using a food bank during the pandemic owed money to the DWP. The reasons for these deductions being made can include repaying advance payments taken out during the five-week wait, UC for a first UC payment, or repaying benefits which may have been overpaid in error.

71 Early warnings: Universal Credit and food banks, *Trussell Trust*, 2017

72 COVID-19 research tracker – wave four, (2020), *Food Standards Agency*, <https://data.food.gov.uk/catalog/datasets/da60fd93-be85-4a6b-8fb6-63eddf32eeab>

73 Households on Universal Credit: Table 6 – Payment timeliness New Claims (2020), *DWP*, Stat-Xplore

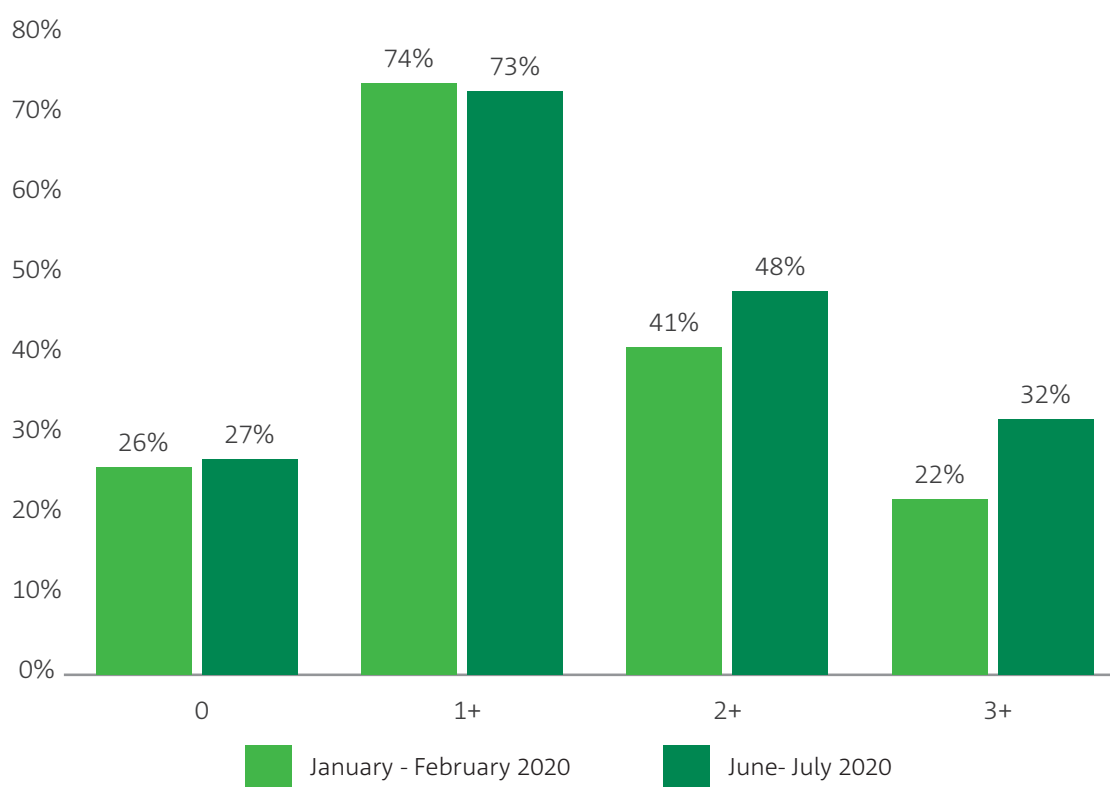
During the crisis 73% of those that needed to use a food bank and were receiving UC were repaying an advance payment. This is up from half (51%) in early 2020 and is higher than the average (43%) of all of those that were claiming UC in February 2020.⁷⁴

The number of people affected by advance payments has increased substantially during the crisis. Over 1.28 million advances were given out between 16th March and the 23rd June 2020.⁷⁵ This has not only impacted on new claims to UC but also people experiencing hardship and needing a budgeting advance, as well as those experiencing a change of circumstance.

People using a food bank during the pandemic were also paying back formal debt, with one in five (21% up from 15% in early 2020) paying money to the bank. Those that needed to use a food bank during the pandemic also owed money to informal lenders such as pawnbrokers (7%) and payday loans (15%).

This picture of an escalating debt crisis for those using food banks is seen when the figures for scale of arrears are viewed. During the crisis one in four (27%) households were not in arrears on bills. This is a similar figure to early 2020 (26%). However, those households that are in arrears seem to be more seriously so. Those using a food bank during the pandemic are more likely to be in arrears to two or more sources (48% vs. 41% in early 2020) or three or more (32% vs. 22%).

Figure 2.5 Count of households' arrears on bills



**Those needing support from food banks were asked about the following arrears on bills: rent / mortgage, energy, council tax, water, phone / broadband and other.

74 Universal Credit Written Question 54921, (2020), *UK Parliament*, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/54921/>

75 Universal Credit declarations (claims) and advances: management information, (2020), DWP, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-declarations-claims-and-advances-management-information>

Others may not be able to benefit from changes

Groups within those surveyed during the pandemic may not have received the full increase to benefits that have helped many people. Increases to the standard allowance have only been for those on UC, with those on legacy benefits missing out. A significant minority (32%) of those that needed to use a food bank in June or July and were claiming benefits were not claiming UC. Many people may have also been affected by caps to benefit levels.

Of those surveyed during the pandemic (that were receiving benefit income), one in five (22%) said they were affected by the benefit cap which may have reduced the otherwise positive impact of the increase to the standard allowance and other benefits during this period. This percentage must be treated indicatively as this is self-reported information. Understanding of the benefit cap may not be high, with two in four (41%) stating that they didn't know whether they were affected or not.

EXISTING DRIVERS OF POVERTY PLAY OUT IN NEED FOR FOOD BANKS DURING CRISIS

This chapter has set out the groups that have been using food banks during the pandemic and presents evidence on why they may have had to do so. Chapter One identified four key drivers of poverty and referenced a number of factors that may increase people's vulnerability to income shocks. These factors have all played a role in driving increases in need during the crisis.

The next chapter presents a look forward to the rest of 2020 and early 2021 to estimate how levels of need will continue to evolve as the economic crisis deepens.

CHAPTER THREE

A GATHERING STORM: PROJECTIONS OF NEED AT FOOD BANKS IN THE TRUSSELL TRUST NETWORK

At the start of the pandemic, the Trussell Trust commissioned work to understand the likely levels of need food banks in the network would see as the economic impact of Covid-19 unfolded. This modelling has been carried out by Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with the National Institute for Economic and Social Research. Two different approaches have been taken – one based on forecasts at the macro-economic level, and one based on a microsimulation model drawing on the *Understanding Society* survey to model changes to household employment status and income levels. The findings show that there is likely to be an extraordinary increase in levels of destitution in the UK by the end of the year, and a major increase of at least 300,000 additional food parcels food banks in the Trussell Trust network are expected to provide when compared to last year. New emergency food provision may pick up some of the additional levels of need.

UNDERSTANDING FUTURE LEVELS OF NEED

In April the Trussell Trust commissioned independent work to assess what future levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network might look like, given the early indications that Covid-19 would have a major effect on the UK economy.

These early concerns have unfortunately been borne out. While major changes in the unemployment rate have not yet been reported, this appears largely due to the protective effect of the JRS. Headline figures for GDP have fallen significantly in the second quarter of 2020.⁷⁶ Economic forecasts for the rest of the year continue to be pessimistic, particularly in terms of the unemployment rate.

Led by the I-SPHERE team⁷⁷ at Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with the National Institute for Social and Economic Research (NIESR), the work we have commissioned has developed two modelling platforms to forecast levels of need for the remainder of 2020 and the early stages of 2021. The I-SPHERE team have developed

⁷⁶ The UK economy at the end of Q2 2020 was 22.1% smaller than it was at the end of 2019. With two successive quarters of negative growth the UK economy is now in the largest ever recorded 'technical' recession, UK: August 2020, ONS, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/gdpfirstquarterlyestimateuk/apriltojune2020>

⁷⁷ The I-SPHERE team are experts in poverty and destitution and were supported in this project by Pro Bono Economics, IPPR, and Dave Simmonds Consulting.

a microsimulation model⁷⁸ based on the *Understanding Society* survey. The NIESR team, in association with Economics at Heriot-Watt University, has used its expertise in macroeconomic forecasting⁷⁹ to build a macro model looking at the relationship between economic indicators and food bank use.⁸⁰

Unemployment crisis forecast to unfold in late 2020

Both modelling approaches estimate the ‘additional’ level of need that food banks will see for the remainder of this year, going into 2021. Our existing work from State of Hunger shows both that most people that use food banks are not in employment and that significant life events such as becoming unemployed can drive food bank use. NIESR’s economic modelling also finds a macro relationship between changes to the unemployment rate and food bank use. Unemployment is therefore taken by both models to be a significant precursor of needing support from a food bank. Both models also look at the impact of loss of income for people in employment, which has been partially mitigated by the Government’s JRS scheme. The lack of small business support for the self-employed has also been factored in by both approaches.

In the remainder of 2020 and going into 2021 there are significant risks to the economy and more specifically the unemployment rate. Work conducted by NIESR, Pro Bono Economics and IPPR to support this project identify these as:

1. The removal of the JRS
2. Businesses beginning to repay accrued debt⁸¹
3. Businesses restarting payments such as rent⁸²
4. The potential of a second wave of Covid-19 forcing another economic shutdown

In August, NIESR published a review of economic indicators which provides insight into the economic storm to come. Using the International Labour Organization definition, the unemployment rate is expected to rise to 5.9% in Q3 2020 and increase sharply to 9.8% in Q4 2020 to coincide with the withdrawal of the JRS.



With almost one in 10 expected to be unemployed in Q4, this presents a higher rate of unemployment than any seen during the 2008 financial crisis and the highest level at any stage since early 1994.⁸³

78 A microsimulation is a computer program that mimics the operation of government programs and demographic processes on individual ("micro") members of a population—people, households, or businesses, for example. Information on the individuals is captured in survey form and interventions are applied to the survey data to change outcomes.

79 A macroforecasting model analyses relationships over time between national economic factors, in this case how unemployment and wage levels relate to food bank statistics. Using economic forecasts of unemployment it can then ‘predict’ what levels of food bank need will be if those forecasts occur.

80 Complete technical details of the respective modelling platforms are provided as technical appendices drafted by I-SPHERE and NIESR alongside this report.

81 A report by Pro Bono Economics prepared on behalf of Trussell Trust states that businesses may struggle with the private and public debt they have accrued during the crisis: “Not all these businesses will be used to making regular, structured payments out of operating cashflow, and potentially their operating margins might not be sufficient to afford such repayments. Furthermore, given uncertainty over recovery of demand, especially in sectors such as hospitality, tourism etc, SMEs may not see turnover recover to previous levels.” For further information on this report please contact the research team at Trussell Trust.

82 Until the end of September 2020, no business will be forced out of their premises if they miss a payment from 30th June to 30th September. Legislation also prevents landlords using Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery unless they are owed 189 days of unpaid rent. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-provides-further-halt-to-business-evictions-and-more-support-for-high-street-firms>

83 LFS: ILO Unemployment rate: UK: All: Aged 16-64: %: Seasonally Adjusted, ONS, August 2020 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/unemployment/timeseries/lf2q/lms>

Unemployment is projected to remain high but slightly improved in Q1 2021 at 6.8% as the economy rebounds slightly. A long-term increase of over 2% from the periods prior to Covid-19 is expected for the next two years.

Approaches to forecasting levels of need

The work we have commissioned uses two different methodologies to project what future levels of need will look like for food banks in the Trussell Trust network.

Microsimulation

Microsimulation analysis overlays, appends or applies additional data to existing ‘micro’ data. In the social sciences micro data is most often collected in large scale surveys and is recorded at either the household or individual level. By applying additional data, microsimulation models can test the impact of specific policies or societal changes on outcomes.

In this analysis I-SPHERE has used micro data from the *Understanding Society* survey. It applies calculated changes to a household’s employment status, level of income from social security and level of earned income to existing data from the survey.⁸⁴ This is combined with indicators of existing savings and debts, and of potential family and social support and health / disability status, in a risk framework which predicts the likelihood of destitution. By applying an existing percentage of how many destitute people use food banks, and the average number of repeat visits per referral, a total number of additional need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network can be calculated.

A summary of this methodology is presented in Appendix B, and the full technical paper written by I-SPHERE is published alongside this report.

Macro forecast

Macroforecasting analysis looks at relationships over time between national economic factors to assess the extent to which they are interrelated. By understanding how different data and measurements interact, analysis can forecast how these trends may evolve and change over time. In this instance NIESR has looked at the historic interplay and relationship between use of food banks and macroeconomic data on GDP and unemployment. NIESR’s analysis then uses its current macroeconomic forecasts to estimate the number of people that will need to use food banks in the Trussell Trust network for the remainder of 2020 and Q1 2021.

The different platforms therefore provide two independent approaches to answering the question of what levels of need will look like. The microsimulation work builds the risk of destitution, and from that food bank use from the bottom up at the household level. In comparison, the macro work takes a top-down approach by looking at headline figures rather than individual level data.

A summary of this methodology is presented in Appendix C, and the full technical paper written by NIESR is published alongside this report.

⁸⁴ The forecasts of the impact of the crisis on these factors is taken from the analysis conducted by IPPR, Pro Bono Economics and David Simmonds Consultancy

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF ADDITIONAL PARCELS TO BE PROVIDED IN LATE 2020

The headline results for both approaches indicate significant ongoing increases in need for support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network. Both present a range of scenarios, dependent on the scale of economic change to come. The following sections describe the central model for both approaches.

In summary, we can see:

- The micro-simulation forecasts a 61% increase in the number of distributed parcels in the last quarter of 2020 when compared to the same period in 2019.
- This represents an additional 300,000 parcels and would mean that food banks give out over six parcels per minute for this quarter.
- Over 670,000 people are estimated to be swept into destitution in the last quarter of 2020.
- Single parents, younger people living alone, those that identify as Black or Black British and private renters are more likely to fall into destitution.
- The macroforecast estimates a 153% increase in the number of distributed parcels in the last quarter of 2020 when compared to the same period in 2019.
- This represents an additional 800,000 parcels and would mean that food banks give out over 10 parcels per minute for this quarter.
- The majority of the increase is driven by people becoming unemployed as the JRS is withdrawn.

Microsimulation – I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University

Food banks in the Trussell Trust network are forecast to distribute 846,000 parcels in quarter four of 2020. This represents a 61% increase on the number distributed in quarter four of 2019, which was the busiest quarter of that year – around an **extra 300,000** emergency food parcels in comparison to the same period in 2019.

Food banks are forecast to give out 6.4 emergency three-day food parcels a minute in Q4 2020.

Levels of need will remain high going into mid-2021 and significantly above those seen pre-Covid-19 in 2019. The microsimulation presents a quarterly average of Q2 and Q3 2021 and forecasts 689,000 parcels to be distributed on average in these quarters. In comparison to the average for Q2 and Q3 2019 this represents a 63% increase in levels of need – around an **extra 267,000** emergency food parcels.

Table 3.2 Increase in food bank parcels from microsimulation

	Q4 2020	Mid-2021
	Central	Central
Reported levels of need for previous year (same quarter)	Q4 2019: 524,000	Mid 2019 average: 422,000
Total estimated level of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network	846,000	689,000
Percentage increase from same period in the previous year**	61%	63%

Substantial increases in the rate of destitution

These are incredibly large and daunting numbers and, of course, behind these are the individuals and families who are expected to be driven to destitution and therefore more likely to need to rely on a food bank. Many who are destitute will not use food banks, but remain at risk of being food insecure.

The initial impact of the crisis on the number of people that needed to use a food bank was significant and I-SPHERE's analysis shows a similarly substantial increase in the number of people that were destitute in the second quarter of 2020.

I-SPHERE's analysis estimates that over 720,000 additional people were swept into destitution in quarter two of 2020 during the initial phase of the crisis.

In 2017 just over 1.5 million people experienced destitution, going without the essentials and locked out of the chance of building a decent and secure life.⁸⁵ The economic crisis in 2020/21 is forecast to reshape this landscape, with over 670,000 additional people being swept into destitution for the rest of 2020 as they lose their jobs, income and businesses.

Figures for 2017 relate to the total number of people that experienced destitution within that year. An additional 670,00 people estimated to experience destitution in the last quarter of 2020 would represent a doubling in the rate of destitution in comparison to the same quarter of 2017.

Levels of destitution going into the crisis may be higher than the baseline reported here (2017). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is planning to release an updated baseline for 2019 in late 2020. With levels of food bank use rising year on year since 2017 levels of destitution are likely to have increased in this period.

Table 3.1 Significant increases in destitution forecast for remainder of 2020 and early 2021

	Q2 2020	Q4 2020	Mid 2021
Additional destitute	721,000	673,000	424,000

Risk of destitution is not evenly spread across the population, and many of the groups already seen in the survey and administrative data presented in Chapter Two are again highlighted here. I-SPHERE's analysis looks at the working age non-destitute population and estimates the percent of each group that are likely to fall into destitution.

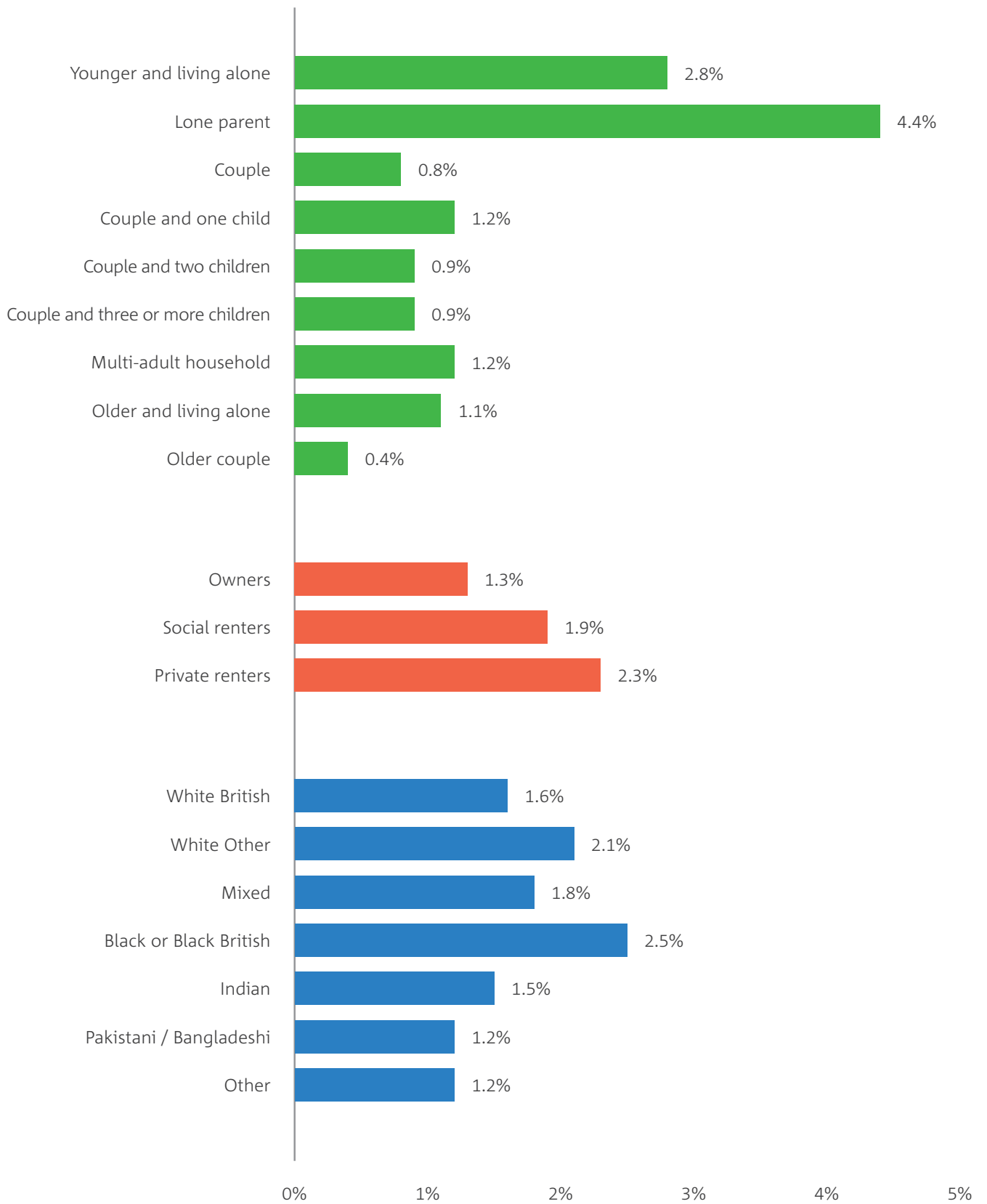
Based on the projections developed by I-SPHERE, the following groups are most at risk of falling into destitution in quarter four of 2020:⁸⁶

- **Single parent households:** 4.4% of single parents are likely to be destitute in comparison to 1.6% of all households.
- **Younger people living alone:** 2.8% of young people are likely to be destitute.
- **Those identifying as Black or Black British** and those from a **White Other** ethnicity are also more likely to fall into destitution. 2.5% and 2.1% of these ethnicities are estimated to be likely to fall into destitution.
- **Private renters:** 2.3% of working age private renters are estimated to be at risk of becoming destitute in Q4 of 2020, in comparison to 1.3% of owners and 1.9% of social renters.

⁸⁵ Destitution in the UK, JRF, 2018 https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018?gclid=CjwKCAjw1ej5BRBhEiwAfHyh1BuSnxXsMYKc7Ghv-qaJG7ncrxG6ct4ocQILuGYhOpK_FoMASEMWUBoCKZAQAvD_BwE

⁸⁶ All figures relate to the working age population of those groups.

Figure 3.3 I-SPHERE analysis of groups most at risk of falling in to destitution in Q4 2020



The risk of destitution and therefore growth in need for food banks is based heavily on one data source for the microsimulation. The *Understanding Society* survey is a robust household survey but like others of its kind may not capture certain groups. I-SPHERE states that around 30% of destitute households do not live in private households. This may mean that the estimates of destitution and therefore increased food bank use are slightly underestimated, but it is likely that most new Covid-19 induced destitution will be among the private household population covered by the survey.

Macro forecast – National Institute of Economic and Social Research (in association with Economics, Heriot-Watt University)

NIESR's figures indicate the economic storm that the country is going to weather in the second half of 2020, as the removal of the JRS, the restart of rental payments for businesses and repayment of business debt start to kick in. The macro-forecast that they have built similarly shows a shocking increase in the number of people that are likely to need to use food banks.

Based on NIESR's modelling of need for parcels from food banks in the Trussell Trust network, their central scenario forecasts 886,000 total parcels distributed in Q3 2020. This would represent a 105% increase on the same period in 2019 around an **extra 450,000** emergency food parcels in comparison to the same period in 2019.

Levels of need are projected to rise further for Q4 2020 and reach 1,325,00 parcels - representing a 153% increase on the previous year. Given that Q4 2019 was the busiest ever quarter previously recorded before this crisis, this is a truly shocking estimate that would result in an **extra 800,000** emergency food parcels.

Given these estimates, food banks in the Trussell Trust network are forecast to distribute 10 three-day emergency food parcels a minute in Q4 2020.

As we move into the first quarter of 2021, levels of need are expected to be slightly lower as the economy recovers marginally. Over a million (1,007,000) parcels are still forecast to be distributed in the first three months of 2021 - an increase of 89% (470,000 parcels) on the previous year.

Table 3.3 Scenarios for increase in food bank parcels from macro forecast

	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
	Central	Central	Central
Reported levels of need for previous year (same quarter)	Q3 2019: 431,000	Q4 2019: 524,000	Q1 2020: 534,000
Total estimated level of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network	886,000	1,325,000	1,007,000
Percentage increase from same period in the previous year	105%	153%	89%

NIESR's work forecasts levels of need through the impact on three different groups - those that become unemployed, those that receive lower incomes while remaining employed, and those that are self-employed and whose businesses are interrupted.

NIESR's initial estimates of additional need show a striking impact for those that were self-employed. In NIESR's analysis for Q2 2020 73% of the additional adults estimated to have needed to use a food bank were self-employed. NIESR states that:

'As self-employment is less stable in terms of income, and a person could be self employed by less than two years, the support they receive from the Government is likely not to be enough to cover their basic needs, hence the sharp increase in Q2 2020'.⁸⁷

As a driver of additional levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network, the significance of self-employment is projected to diminish after Q3 2020 and the principal driver of estimated need for Q4 2020 to Q1 2021 is established as loss of employment.

In the first two quarters of the crisis (Q2 and Q3 2020) unemployment was kept relatively low as the JRS kept people formally employed. As this is withdrawn the impact on unemployment and thus levels of need for food banks is expected to be profound. In the opening quarter of the crisis (Q2 2020) just 14% of the additional adults needing support from food banks were estimated from this modelling to be because of unemployment. This increases throughout the rest of 2020 to 48% in Q3 and 90% in Q4. At the beginning of Q1 2021 87% of the additional adults using food banks are expected to be unemployed.

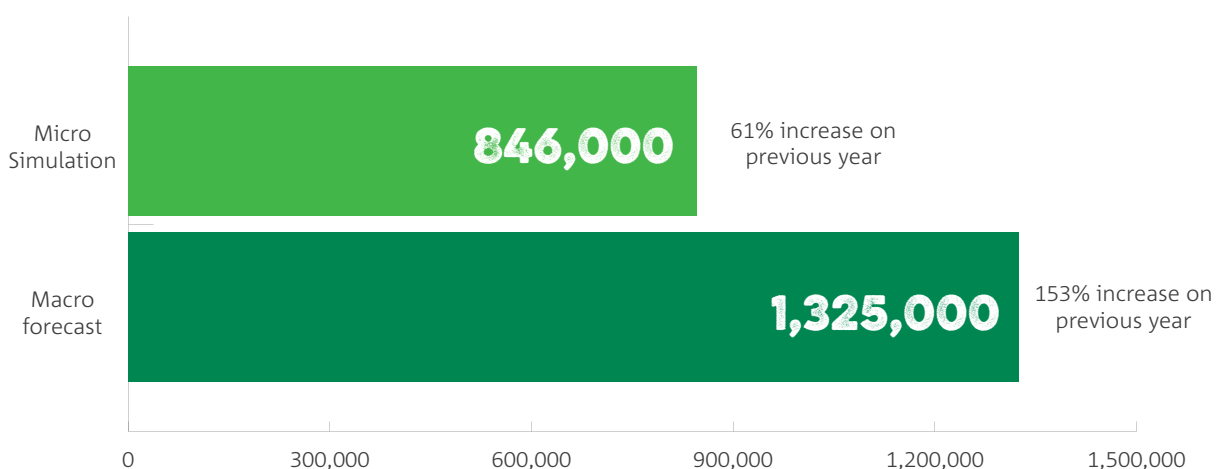
Throughout this period loss of income but not full employment or the closure of a business remains a stable channel for increased food bank use.⁸⁸

How do the models compare?

The headline results from the two platforms are shocking, but understandable given the context of the economic storm that the country is facing in the coming months. The models both estimate that hundreds of thousands of additional parcels will be distributed in the last quarter of 2020 when compared to the same period in 2019.

The models vary in their estimates of future levels of need, but both forecast substantial percentage increases on the previous year. The headline results for Q4 2020 imply 61% and 153% for the micro and macro models respectively, on Q4 2019.⁸⁹ An increase of 61% would result in over 846,000 parcels distributed in the last quarter of 2020, up from 524,000 in the previous year.

Figure 3.1 Estimated level of need at Trussell Trust food banks in Q4 2020



⁸⁷ Projection of Demand for food banks in the Trussell Trust network due to the COVID-19 Crisis: Quarterly at the UK (national) level, (2020), *National Institute of Economic and Social Research, in association with Heriot-Watt University.*

⁸⁸ Full results are available in Appendix C

⁸⁹ Data from the Trussell Trust's administrative database shows that 524,034 parcels were distributed in Q4 2019.

The main difference between the models occurs in Q4 of 2020, when the NIESR model predicts a very sharp spike, whereas the microsimulation shows numbers not so different from Q2. This is due to a combination of three factors within the macroforecasting including:

1. More pessimistic assumptions about the economy and policy - in particular, the complete cessation of the furlough scheme. The microsimulation in comparison includes some continuance of the furlough scheme.
2. The macroforecasting is driven by relationships with key variables (unemployment or income, depending on the group), which display sharp changes in this period, whereas the microsimulation prediction is driven by many variables, not all of which change.
3. The assumption that all additional destitute households/adult/children use food banks, whereas the microsimulation assumes that 56% of destitute people will need support from food banks. 56% is taken from existing research related to destitution.

HOW DO THESE FORECASTS RELATE TO FOOD BANK FIGURES FROM THE TRUSSELL TRUST?

Work on both modelling approaches began in early Q2 2020 as the initial economic and social impact of the pandemic were becoming evident. As such, both models produced initial estimates for Q2 of 2020, with the macro approach also producing an estimate for Q1 2020. These can be used to test the accuracy of the approaches against the figures collected for those periods by the Trussell Trust administrative database.

Food banks in the Trussell Trust network provided just over 530,000 three-day emergency food parcels in Q1 2020 and 743,000 in Q2 2020.⁹⁰ Table 3.4 below indicates that both the macro and micro approaches perform well when forecasting levels of need for Q2 2020.

Indeed, both models are within 5% of the data collected by the Trussell Trust for these periods. At this stage both models slightly overestimate levels of need. The macro approach also ran estimates for Q1 2020 to test robustness of the approach and results are within 5% of the actual results. This level of accuracy provides some confidence in the assumptions that underpin the modelling and therefore in the future forecasts, notwithstanding the high levels of economic uncertainty.

Table 3.4 Forecast total parcels for the first half of 2020 vs. actual Trussell Trust data

	Macro platform		Micro platform
	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q2 2020
Forecast total levels of need	554,000	762,000	744,000
Trussell Trust data recording for that period	534,000	746,000	746,000
Percentage difference from Trussell Trust recorded figures	4%	2%	0.3%

⁹⁰ Food banks in the Trussell Trust network input some data through paper vouchers. This means that for some food banks there is a lag between when a person receives a parcel from a food bank and that data being processed. This means that figures for Q2 2020 are likely to be an underestimate.

The assumptions from these modelling platforms are also represented in the survey data that we have collected so far:

- The JRS has so far suppressed larger levels of need - just 4% of those needing to use a food bank during the pandemic were furloughed. The majority (78%) of those that needed to use a food bank during this period had not suffered a drop in income caused by a drop in earnings since March 2020. Indeed, just 18% of households that used a food bank had someone employed pre-March.
- Demographic groups most at risk of destitution are over-represented in our survey data; e.g. single person households and single parents, those identifying as Black British, and private renters.
- Younger people are also estimated to be more likely to have experienced destitution in quarter two of 2020. Our survey data shows that in early 2020 63% of people that visited a food bank were aged 18-44. This has increased to 69% during the crisis.

LOOKING FORWARD

What might affect the levels of need that food banks see against these figures?

The accuracy of forecasts is always vulnerable to changes in the assumptions that underpin them. As such there is a risk that these figures may not prove to match those that come to be recorded by food banks in the Trussell Trust network. This could be positive as new government policies may reduce the projected increases in destitution. Or it may be that due to a range of factors relatively lower levels of need are seen by food banks in the Trussell Trust network, despite levels of destitution rising overall.

The following represent high-level factors that could confound the models:

1. **Changes to government policy:** Significant changes to social security policy or an extension to the JRS could bring a welcome fall in the number of people that are forecast to fall into destitution and need support from food banks over this period.
2. **Economic uncertainty:** The economy is currently prone to shocks depending on the outcomes of Government decisions, such as the tightening or loosening of lockdown measures. Other factors such as the results of Brexit negotiations or the finding of a successful vaccine for Covid-19 may also significantly shift real GDP and the unemployment rate. The modelling results attempt to take these into account by presenting different scenarios but cannot forecast all scenarios in this period of uncertainty.
3. **The continuation of a wide range of provision of food support:** As highlighted in Chapter Two the number of organisations providing emergency food has increased significantly during the crisis, alongside provision for those shielding. Both platforms assume that food banks in the Trussell Trust network will meet 60% of the provision of emergency food parcels in the forecast periods - emergency food being defined here in relation to economic need, where people fall into destitution and require support, rather than providing food parcels to those shielding because of health reasons. If alternative providers continue to operate figures may be lower than estimated. Crucially this does not necessarily mean that the increase in destitution would not have occurred, or that food insecurity will not have become more prevalent, just that more of this need would be being picked up by providers other than food banks in the Trussell Trust network.

4. **Changes to parcel distribution:** The Trussell Trust has historically just reported on the number of three-day parcels that are distributed. During the crisis some food banks have been distributing seven-day parcels to reduce repeat visits or deliveries. The modelling approaches do not distinguish between parcel size which may slightly overestimate the total number of parcels given out.

The impact of government policy

Looking to the long term beyond mid-2021 the decisions that governments at all levels make will affect how many people will need support from food banks. Analysis from I-SPHERE implies that the implementation of significant welfare reform, including the uplift to the Standard Allowance of UC, uprating of the LHA and pauses to deductions, may have suppressed even greater levels of need for 2020.

Suppressing existing levels of need

I-SPHERE's statistical analysis of drivers of food bank up to 2019, including welfare measures, indicated that levels of need in a non-Covid 2020 might have been suppressed by as much as 32% given the policies put in place in March – April 2020. This reduction would have been driven predominantly by the increase in the Standard Allowance.

This analysis is built off an existing model created by I-SPHERE⁹¹, to understand the relationship between food bank use and real-world factors such as rates of income, socio-demographic and geographic factors. The model was previously run to 'predict' levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network in 2019/20. It forecast a c.20.5% increase in England which performs very well against the actual increase seen.

I-SPHERE's work does caution that real world decreases may be smaller than estimated due to statistical and practical reasons. For instance, it may take time for existing food bank users to exit from a cycle of destitution. The results from the survey of people needing to use food banks during the crisis does show that existing levels of need continue to be high. The size of the impact estimated in the model may also be overestimated.⁹²

Analysis of the impact of individual policies is also possible within the micro-simulation modelling. By changing benefit levels within the model, the follow-on increase in food bank use can be assessed. It should be noted that the following figures only relate to changes in additional need and do not take into account changes to the 'existing' population of people that might need to use food banks. The overall impact on food bank use is therefore underestimated.

One policy assessed was the uprating to LHA rates. Rates have been increased for those within the micro-simulation to account for higher levels of support. For estimates of mid-2021 these were subsequently removed in this analysis to assess the extent to which this policy change has suppressed additional levels of need for food banks.

The uplift to LHA rates will likely prevent an additional 2.5 percent of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network in mid-2021. Overall, this is low in terms of total levels of need but is higher for specific at-risk groups. Private renters would likely experience an additional 12% increase in need in mid-2021 if these had not been uprated. The impact also disproportionately benefits people who identify as Black or Black British. The increase to LHA is likely to have prevented a further 25% increase in levels of need for food bank support from this group. As discussed in the following chapter this indicates the change to LHA has been essential for some groups, and a robust mechanism for uprating it in line with housing costs must be implemented.

91 State of Hunger(2019), *The Trussell Trust*, <https://www.trusselltrust.org/state-of-hunger/>

92 Firstly because the model may be capturing other national time and place factors not included in the model. Secondly because the specific microsimulation test of reversing the UC standard allowance showed a much smaller impact (see below).

Maintaining the social security safety net

This analysis can also be expanded to assess the implications of removing the uplift to the Standard Allowance from April 2021. The impact of this on increased levels of need is significant and must be considered when making the decision of whether to remove this measure. It is important to recognise that this analysis builds on already significant increases and represents excess levels of need to that already forecast.

Overall, removing the uplift to the Standard Allowance would likely further increase levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network by 9%. The impact of this is concentrated amongst larger families, younger people and social renters.

- Those living in families – **couples with one (15%) or two children (21%)** would see higher rates of impact, highlighting that children could again be at the forefront of the impact of the crisis.
- **Younger people in their 20s** would see percentage increases almost twice that of the national average (17% vs. 9%).
- **Those who identify as Indian (37%) and Pakistani or Bangladeshi (27%)** are far more likely to be impacted than those identifying as White British (9%).

The forecasts presented in this chapter represent a reshaping of the landscape of poverty, destitution and food insecurity in this country. In September we sit in the eye of the economic storm to come. But we can still make a difference to these figures and to the lives of the individuals and families they represent. The Government must take heed of this and make the changes necessary to protect those most at risk of being swept into destitution.

CHAPTER FOUR

STRENGTHENING OUR

LIFELINES: GOVERNMENT

ACTION TO HELP WEATHER

THE STORM

Many of the measures the Government has taken will have protected large numbers of people from being swept in to financial hardship and destitution. Despite this, there has been a sustained increase in the number of people needing to turn to food banks in the Trussell Trust network and other forms of support. There is now a vital opportunity to rebuild and shape the society we want to be and to ensure that the safety net we all want to be there for us – and for each other – is as strong as possible. As a priority, we are calling on the Government to:

1. Protect people's incomes by locking in the £20 uplift to UC
2. Help people hold on to more of their benefits through the economic crisis by suspending benefit debt deductions until a fairer approach to repayments can be introduced
3. Make local safety nets as strong as possible by investing £250m in local welfare assistance in England each year

Food banks in our network have responded incredibly to this national crisis, as have many other organisations. We want to see an end to the need for food banks in the UK by tackling the issues that drive people into destitution and needing crisis support. We urge the Government to lead the way.

The impact of Covid-19 and the ensuing economic crisis on food banks has been profound, and all the indications are that as a country we face a major recession and a surge in unemployment. As set out in the previous chapter, the risk of this resulting in increasing levels of destitution and reliance on food banks and other types of emergency support is profound.

There have been repeated calls on the Government to extend the furlough scheme and avoid the cliff-edge that is approaching in October. The summer economic statement set out plans to boost employment and support people in to work. But there is too great a risk that millions of people will fall through the gap of the furlough scheme ending and the economy recovering, and that there will be a wave of redundancies. **We urge the Government to reconsider its plans to close the furlough scheme in its entirety.** Options put forward by experts in the field include taking a sector-by-sector approach or targeting a scheme at businesses and jobs

which are most likely to be sustainable. The government should also consider what further support is needed for people who are self-employed.

As well as taking steps to prevent more people losing their jobs and facing the risk of falling in to poverty and destitution, the Government must take urgent steps to **make sure the safety net that we all rely on is as strong as possible** and prepared to support people over what may be a long haul ahead.

BUILDING ON THE INITIAL RESPONSE

The government acted with urgency in response to the crisis, creating the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, introducing a £20 increase to the UC Standard Allowance and raising the LHA. This was built on by separate measures taken in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, particularly investment in forms of local welfare assistance. A huge amount of effort was also put in to ensuring that new UC claims were processed quickly and people could start getting the support they are entitled to, and DWP should take credit for this.

This package of support offered by government at the start of the crisis has undoubtedly helped many people.

Although very welcome and important, these measures have not been enough to avoid the unprecedented level of food bank use seen across the Trussell Trust network over the past few months.

More action is needed to support families being pulled into hardship right now, including the millions of people are already relying on our social security safety net, and the many more who will come to rely on it over the coming months.

There must be a recognition of the unique role the social security system needs to play to protect people from serious financial hardship and to make sure that people already in destitution are pulled out of it swiftly and protected from falling back in.

There is a growing consensus around this. Polling conducted on our behalf by YouGov shows that seven in ten people agree that ‘it seems more important to have a good welfare system now than it did before the crisis’⁹³.

A crucial time for the nation

We believe that urgent action is needed on a number of fronts, and that there is a compelling need for the Government to support those most vulnerable to the Covid-19 economic crisis and to send a powerful signal about its concern for those at all groups in our society. The forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Budget represent important opportunities for delivering these changes.

Our policy recommendations reflect the new evidence that is set out in this report. But they are also based on three core principles, which we believe should also inform the Government’s response:

- **Acting with urgency** - many people are already experiencing or at growing risk of destitution. Responses should focus on what can be delivered quickly, building on existing measures to offer protection through the recession.

- **Treating people with dignity** – people deserve the dignity to make their own choices, and solutions which are focused on raising incomes and reducing costs are always preferable to solutions involving the provision of food.
- **Leaving no one behind** - social security policy needs investment at multiple levels, to ensure particular groups are not left behind.

With this evidence and principles in mind, we have prioritised three calls on central government. This alone will not be enough to end the need for food banks, but we believe they will make significant impact on levels of destitution and ensure our social security system is weather-proofed quickly for the coming storm.

We call on the Government to:

Protect people's incomes by locking in the £20 uplift to UC

At the start of the pandemic, the Government announced the biggest boost to social security in a decade – in the form of the uplifts to UC, working tax credits and LHA. This benefited some of the hardest hit across all nations of the UK. This was desperately needed, with benefit values at their lowest level in decades going into the pandemic. The changes have stopped thousands from needing to turn to food banks across the UK, and without them the projections in this report would be even more alarming. The work by Heriot-Watt University indicates that removing the uplift in UC would see a rise in use of food banks in the Trussell Trust network of almost 10%.

The changes to UC and working tax credits were introduced as temporary measures. There is no reason why people will be in any better position come April 2021 than April 2020. A reduction of £20 to UC standard allowance will jeopardise the financial resilience of millions of individuals and families, and put many more at risk of destitution and food bank use. There should be a parallel increase in the value of legacy benefits, to ensure everyone is receiving this vital additional support.

It is very welcome that the uplift to the LHA will continue beyond April 2020. It is now vital that the Government commits to making sure there is a robust mechanism for uprating rates in line with housing costs.

The government did the right thing in increasing these benefits. Rather than considering pulling this lifeline away, it should commit now to maintaining it and extending it to everyone who relies on the social security system.

Help people hold on to more of their benefits through the economic crisis by suspending benefit debt deductions until a fairer approach to repayments can be introduced

The government should immediately suspend all benefit debt deductions until a fairer approach to repayments can be introduced to reduce the pressure facing individuals and families across all nations of the UK.

This suspension would cover debts such as Advance Payments and benefit overpayments which come as a result of the five-week wait or from administrative errors. It cannot be right that people are given with one hand by the social security system, but taken away from with the other through these kinds of deductions to their benefits – which too often push them to needing food banks.

Suspending benefit deductions will also help people afford essentials such as utility bills and rent through the crisis, with third-party deductions being excluded from this measure. These should be prioritised over the recovery of government debt.

Going into the pandemic, almost a fifth of UC claimants were having 30% or more of their Standard Allowance deducted, which would leave a single person with just £50 a week and put them within the threshold of destitution. As we enter a period of serious financial uncertainty, we should not be compounding people's hardship with excessive deductions by the Government. The suspension of several deductions at the start of the crisis was welcome and showed the ease with which this issue can be tackled. The plan to reduce maximum repayments down to 25% and extend the repayment period for advances to 24 months from October 2021 is also welcome, but comes far too late for the millions who will face financial hardship over the next 12 months.

That is why we are calling for the immediate suspension of benefit debt deductions, while the Government introduces fairer approach to repayments in line with private lenders' practice. This should include carrying out affordability assessments, reducing maximum deductions to 10% and writing off historic debts.

Make local safety nets as strong as possible by investing £250m in local welfare assistance

The government should invest annual funding of £250 million for local welfare assistance in England. This would bring spend in England closer to levels in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In times of unpredictable crisis, including the ongoing reality of 'local lockdowns' to control the spread of the virus, local welfare assistance from councils can help people who are struggling to afford the most basic essentials and provide an extra safety net for people who fall through the gaps in national provision. However spending in England has fallen dramatically over recent years, and there are often significant barriers to people getting support.

The investment of £63 million for local welfare in England through the Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies has expanded the capacity of councils in England to provide support in the people in financial crisis, through cash grants or in-kind benefits. It represented the biggest investment in local welfare in a decade, but is only enough to cover what local authorities need for three months. This opportunity to rebuild local welfare will be wasted if further funding is not allocated for these essential schemes.

The Comprehensive Spending Review will result in new levels of funding in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is vital that action on destitution is taken at all levels of government, and we will continue to highlight to the devolved governments the steps that they need to take.

An unprecedented opportunity for unprecedented times

The term 'unprecedented' has been used repeatedly these past few months – in terms of the global impact of Covid-19, the response of local communities, action taken by governments, and the way in which all of our lives have changed. Food banks in the Trussell Trust network have certainly never seen a time like this before, and – like many charitable organisations – have done an outstanding job of supporting enormous numbers of people in their local communities. As a nation, we now have an unprecedented opportunity to rebuild and reshape our society as we wish it to be and the safety net we should all be entitled to.

Appendix A: Surveys of people that need to use food banks

I-SPHERE at Heriot-Watt University have conducted two surveys on behalf of the Trussell Trust in 2020.

Early 2020: 716 adults aged 18+ that needed to use a food bank completed a survey questionnaire between mid-January 2020 and early March 2020.

The survey questionnaire was administered on tablets at 43 food banks across the United Kingdom, selected using stratified random sampling. The number of food banks per region was assigned to be proportional of the share of food parcels distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network. Further detail on sampling are available here: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/Technical-Summary.pdf>.

Data are weighted by the household composition and number of visits in the past 12 months to match the profile of all people who visited all food banks in the Trussell Trust network during the survey period.

Mid 2020: 435 adults aged 18+ that needed to use a food bank across the United Kingdom completed a survey questionnaire between 22nd June 2020 to 31st July 2020.

Due to social distancing requirements paper survey invitations were inserted into food parcels at random to be distributed, at the same 43 food banks selected for early 2020. Respondents had a choice of completing the survey online or over the phone.

Data are weighted by the household composition, region and whether the household ever used a food bank before March, to match the profile of all people who visited all food banks in the Trussell Trust network during the survey period.

UK comparisons: UK comparisons are from I-SPHERE's analysis of the Labour Force Survey Q4 2019 household dataset, unless a different source is stated.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest percent.

Appendix B: Micro-simulation modelling

This appendix provides a high-level summary of the approach, key sources and assumptions that underpin the microsimulation model. For a full outline of the methodology please view the paper published by I-SPHERE alongside this report.

The approach

On behalf of the Trussell Trust, the I-SPHERE team at Heriot-Watt University have built a static microsimulation of the impact of the economic shutdown on working age adults and households across the UK.

This platform models the way job losses and reductions in hours/earnings related to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19, affect different individuals and households, and the extent to which this leads them into more extreme forms of poverty and destitution. From this, additional levels of need for support from food banks in the Trussell Trust network can be estimated.

The 'static' qualifier in the title underlines that this approach involves making specified changes in the situation of selected members of a model population, but not attempting to represent the whole continuous process of change and adjustment in people's behaviour, choices and interactions in various markets.

I-SPHERE built this platform from the *Understanding Society 2017-18* survey drawing primarily on Wave 9 (2017-18) but bringing in some information from the preceding wave. This is a large representative survey that contains both individual and household data. Given relatively stable economic and societal conditions it can be taken to be broadly representative of the pre-Covid UK population. The sample size is large (N=36,055 individual adults in c.20,000 households). Some additional information (e.g. on housing markets) is attached to these micro data at Local Authority District (LAD) level (N=380). Financial variables are retained at 2017-18 values, except that the UC standard allowances have been adjusted to reflect the changes announced in late March 2020 in response to Covid-19.

Key sources

The I-SPHERE team have been supported in this work by ProBono Economics, David Simmonds Consultancy and IPPR.⁹⁴ They have produced separate reports that highlight different elements of the economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and associated lockdown measures, including the likely sectoral impact, the reach and limitations of government response measures, and impacts at local level and for particular groups:

Table B.1 Contribution of different organisations to micro-simulation

Organisation	Input
ProBono Economics	The impact of and take up of policy measures including the JRS and the SEISS.
	Specific business finance and viability issues for specific sectors.
David Simmonds Consultancy	Inter-industry and regional multiplier effects of economic change down to the local authority level.
IPPR	Likely impacts on overall employment by industry sector under three economic scenarios.
	Likely impact on overall employment dependant on employer behaviour

These reports were reviewed alongside a range of forecasts including NIESR's, issued over the period up to June, and made particular use of the ONS 'Business Impacts of Coronavirus' Survey from the end of May 2020. A release of data from HMRC also allowed detailed modelling of the take-up of the furlough scheme within the *Understanding Society* dataset. HMRC's release contained full sectoral breakdowns of the number of claimants as well as the value claimed.

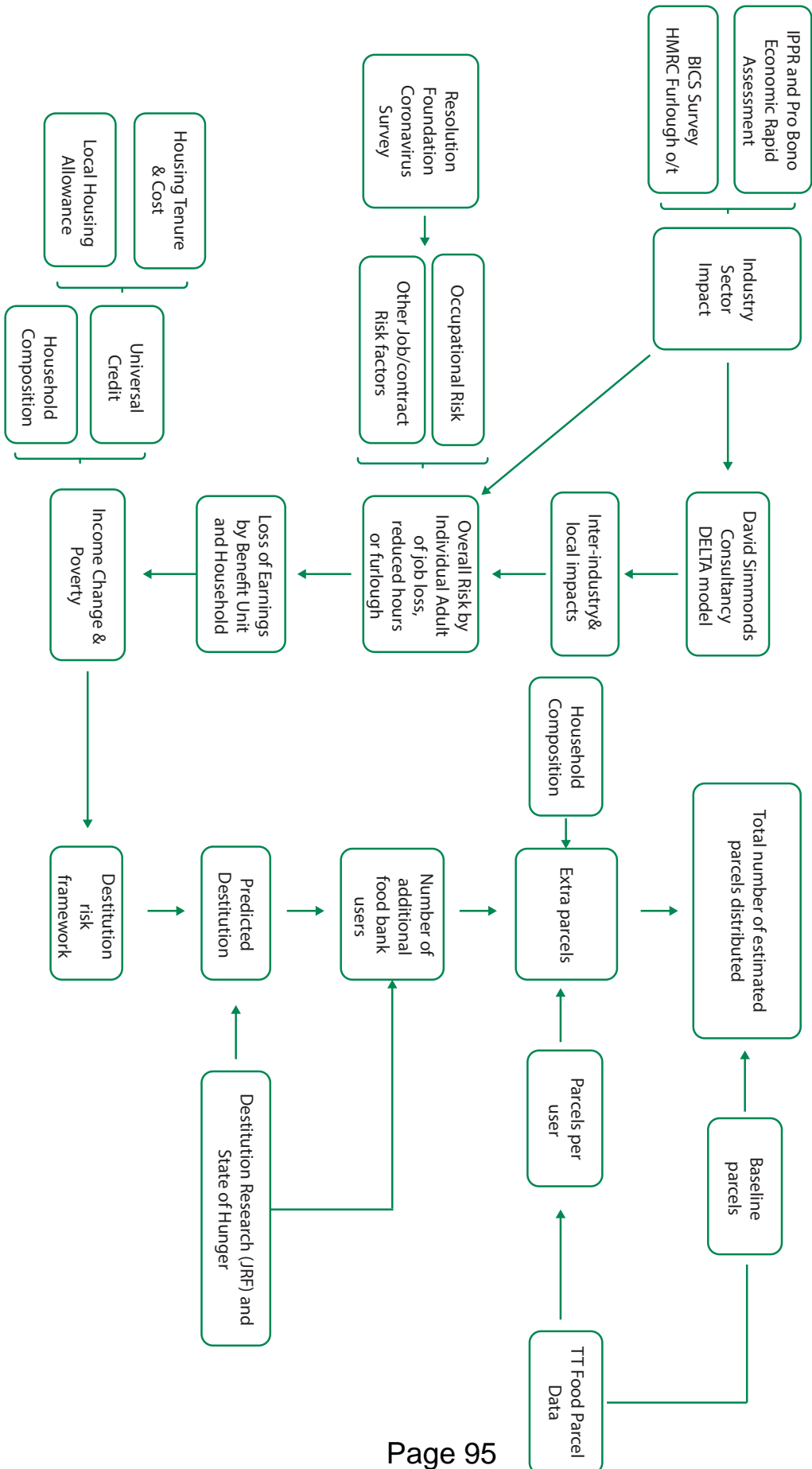
These different sources provided the foundation of how the platform models individual level job losses and reductions in hours / earnings. By applying this external information to the data that *Understanding Society* contains on employment for each household (including contract type, industry and length of employment) changes to the household's employment and income status were modelled.

The modelling approach

The following diagram provides a high-level summary of the stages and inputs that the microsimulation takes to estimate levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network.

This diagram shows how the sectoral employment projection derived as described above, drawing on a range of outside inputs, was then complemented within the survey dataset by taking account of additional risk factors and working this through to estimates of income losses, benefit entitlement and resulting poverty levels for individual households.

Figure B.1 Flow diagram of micro-simulation



The destitution risk framework:

Once a household has been assigned an outcome on employment and income change due to the economic impact of Covid-19, the modelling platform uses detailed household and individual level information from data contained within *Understanding Society* to estimate a risk of falling into destitution. Higher scores on each of these factors worsens a household's chance of falling into destitution after they have become unemployed or suffered reduced hours / earnings.

The below summarises the four calculated risks associated with falling into destitution. These are presented as a red-amber-green. Within the modelling a greater emphasis or weight is placed on scoring for poverty and levels of savings or debt, than UC or social family and health.

Table B.2 Framework developed to assess household risk of destitution

	Red	Amber	Green
Poverty	Household income is less than 40% of the median (After housing costs). Or less than 60% of the median and the household suffers from three or more material deprivations.	Household income is less than 60% of the median but the household does not suffer from three or more material deprivations	Household income is greater than 60% of the median and the household does not suffer from three or more material deprivations
UC	Household is not eligible to receive a positive amount of UC.	Household eligible for positive amount of UC but affected by any of -Benefit Cap, Bedroom Tax or limit to LHA	Household eligible for positive amount of UC and not affected by caps
Savings and Debt	Household is under high level of debt stress ⁹⁵ or has no savings	Household is under moderate debt stress and has less than £500 of savings	Household is not under debt stress and has savings of more than £500
Social Family and health	Person has low levels of family support, is socially isolated and is either disabled or caring for someone.	Person has low levels of family support or is socially isolated and is either disabled or caring for someone within the household.	Person has higher levels of family support, is not socially isolated and has no disability and does not care for someone within the household

How the microsimulation considers changes to social security

As the opening chapter of this report detailed there have been several significant changes to social security introduced by governments across the UK. The modelling work deals with these in the following ways:

- Increase to Standard Allowance: for those claiming UC or estimated to claim UC, levels have been adjusted to reflect the changes announced in late March 2019 in response to Covid-19 (currently applicable for one year).
- Up-rating of LHA: Those claiming LHA or the housing element of UC (as a private renter) have had the amount they receive increased to the maximum for that area.

⁹⁵ Defined as households that are in arrears on housing or other bills, have problems with credit card payments, or have high credit card debt.

- Changes to deductions: the modelling cannot input these as there is not enough detailed information on the amounts of debts, overpayments and arrears that households are in.
- Increases LWAS funding and the introduction of free school meal support over the holiday period: These have not been modelled as not enough is known about their functionality at a local level.

Key assumptions on projected level of need for support from food banks

The modelling carried out within the microsimulation provides the total number of additional people that are at risk of being swept into destitution because of loss of employment, or income in late 2020 and mid-2021. The following assumptions are used to assess what this will mean for levels of support needed from food banks in the Trussell Trust network:

- That 56 percent of destitute households (excluding migrants and complex needs cases) will use a food bank. This is based off a survey of destitute people in 2017.
- That 60% of those that need to use a food bank will use one in the Trussell Trust network.
- That each person that will need support from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network within each quarter will return 1.78 times within that quarter. This is based off evidence of the number of visits within quarter two of 2020 from the Trussell Trust administrative database.

A Non-Covid-19 2020

The microsimulation model specifically estimates 'additional' levels of need. Some work has gone into estimating what a non-COVID 2020 and 2021 would have looked like without the economic crisis in order to provide a baseline to add this 'additional' need to.

The baseline includes an estimate of the impact of the introduction of the welfare changes on the existing population of people that would have needed support from food banks regardless of the economic crisis. This non-COVID 2020 and 2021 was calculated by:

1. Taking the average number of parcels distributed for the equivalent period a year earlier. E.g. for quarter two 2020 an average of the monthly parcels distributed in quarter two 2019 was used. For Mid-2021 an average across quarter two and three 2019 was used.
2. Inflating this by the annual growth trend voucher data from the Trussell Trust – taken here to be 10%.
3. Taking into account the impact of social security easements – taken here to reduce levels of need by 20 percent.
4. Reducing the total number of parcels distributed by 10,000 to allow for reduced level of need from homeless people due to the special provision for these individuals during the Covid-19 period.
5. Reducing the total number of parcels distributed by 10,000 to conservatively account for the increase in alternative food provision.

All scenarios and time period

The microsimulation provides estimates for three different time periods. The first is for Q2 of 2020. This analysis was used to calibrate the model to match closely with the recorded levels of need that food banks in the Trussell Trust network were seeing for this period. It also provides future estimates of need for Q4 of 2020 and an average for Q3 and Q4 of 2020. This platform provides three scenarios, ranging from optimistic to pessimistic.

Table B.3 Full range of scenarios of predicted food bank use and percentage increases on previous year

Scenario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Time frame	2020 Q2	2020 Q4	2020 Q4	2020 Q4	2021 Q2/3	2021 Q2/3	2021 Q2/3
Relative Economic Outturn	Est Act	Better	Central	Worse	Better	Central	Worse
Total TT parcels	743,562	782,338	845,740	932,143	618,516	688,947	754,536
Previous year actuals	Q2 2w019: 411,968	Q4 2019: 524,034			Mid 2019 average: 421,628		
Percentage increase on previous year	80%	49%	61%	78%	47%	63%	79%

Alongside the estimates for the number of three-day parcels needed to support people in these periods, the additional number of destitute people is also estimated.

Table B.4 Full range of scenarios of predicted additional destitute households and persons

Scenario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Time frame	2020 Q2	2020 Q4	2020 Q4	2020 Q4	2021 Q2/3	2021 Q2/3	2021 Q2/3
Relative Economic Outturn	Est Act	Better	Central	Worse	Better	Central	Worse
Percent of working age population that are additionally destitute %	1.71%	1.36%	1.62%	1.96%	0.74%	1.01%	1.30%
Additional Destitute households	316,613	251,999	301,205	363,451	138,243	187,588	239,442
Additional Destitute persons	720,576	566,895	672,905	817,372	305,775	423,536	533,201

Appendix C: Macro-forecast modelling

This appendix provides a high-level summary of the approach, key sources and assumptions that underpin the macro-forecast model. For a full outline of the methodology please view the paper published by NIESR alongside this report.

The approach

NIESR in partnership with Economics at Heriot-Watt University have built a macro-forecast looking at the impact of the economic shutdown on working age adults and households across the UK.

This platform models how job losses, the closure of business impacting on those that are self-employed and reductions in hours/earnings affect levels of need for support from food banks in the Trussell Trust.

The model looks at the historical relationship between unemployment and wages, and the number of emergency three-day parcels distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network to assess how forecasts of unemployment will impact on need.

The Wealth and Assets Survey 2017 which is a representative sample of Great Britain was used to project the impacts of income shocks on individuals that remain in employment (particularly self-employed individuals) and small businesses. The work in this survey allows NIESR to estimate the number of people who remain in employment but have lower levels of income and are therefore swept into destitution.

Key sources

The main source of economic forecasts for the macro model are taken from NIESR's NiGEM (National Institute Global Econometric Model, NIESR 2018) model projections from the August 2020 Review (NIESR 2020). The below table highlights the forecasts from this model:

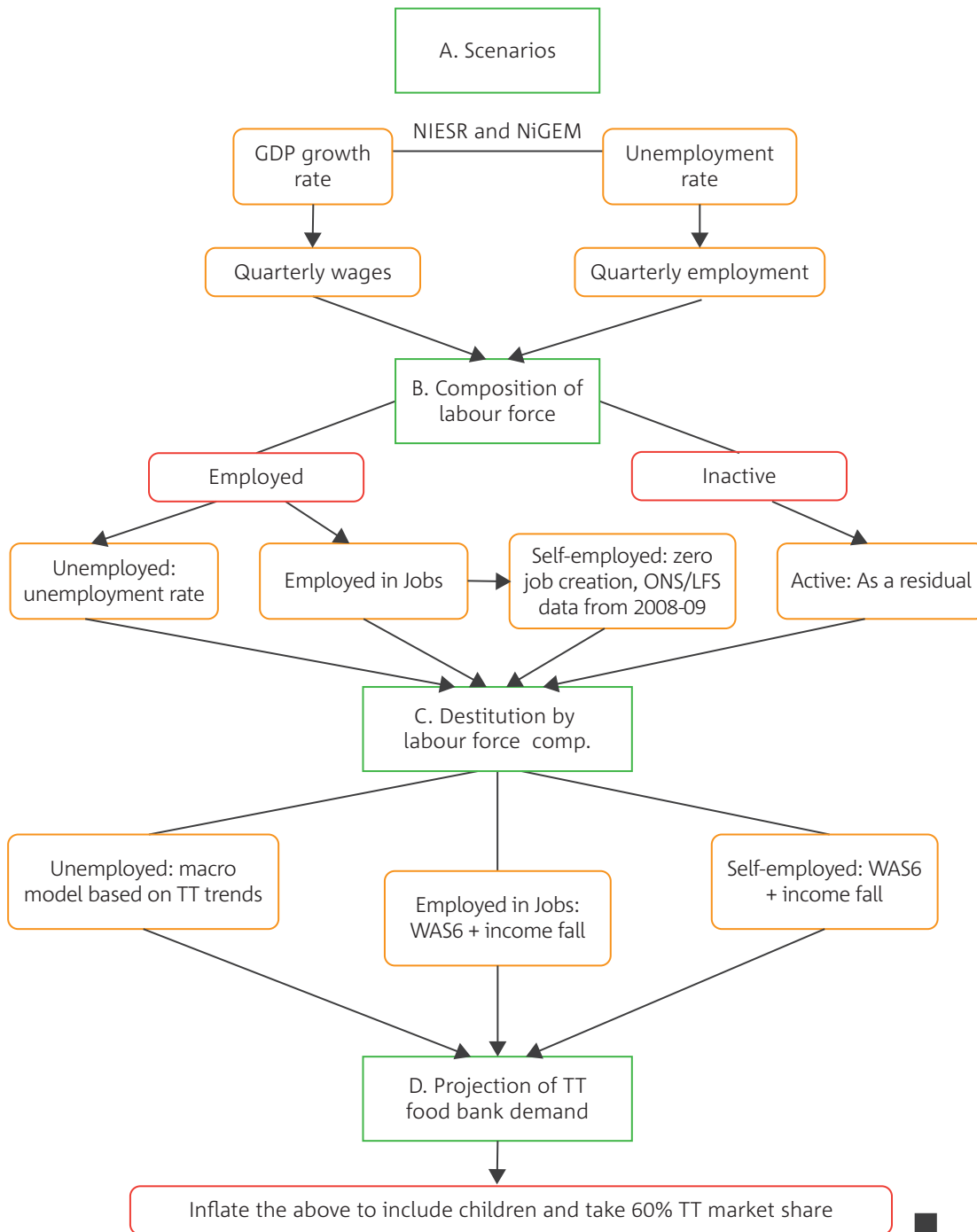
Table C.1 Projected growth rate of Real GDP (per cent relative to previous year)

Quarter	Growth rate scenarios			Likely scenario
	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Likely growth	Unemployment rate
2020Q1	-2.1	-1.4	-1.7	3.9
2020Q2	-21.7	-16.5	-19.1	4.3
2020Q3	-14.1	-12.0	-13.0	5.9
2020Q4	-12.2	-0.5	-6.3	9.8
2021Q1	-9.6	2.5	-3.5	6.8

The modelling approach

The following diagram provides a high-level summary of the stages and inputs that the macro-forecasting takes to estimate levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network:

Figure C.1 Flow diagram of macroforecasting model



Framework for assessing levels of need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network:

It is assumed that the COVID19 impact on food banks arises from three sources:

1. Persons losing their livelihood (unemployment)

The number of people that lose their jobs and need to use a food bank is determined by historic macro analysis of trends between the unemployment rate, wages and income, and quarterly use of food banks in the Trussell Trust network. The model also takes into account seasonal differences and time trends in food bank use.

2. Persons employed in jobs suffering reduced income (either because of furlough or reduction in hours) and thereby pushed into food poverty.
3. Self-employed persons moved to food poverty either because of income loss or because their businesses are not being covered sufficiently by the Government's small business schemes.

The number of people who suffer income loss but remain employed, that need to use a food bank is based on analysis using the UK Wealth and Assets Survey data for 2017. For persons employed in jobs, this entails looking at the existing proportion that were destitute in the data, and comparing this with the proportion that would become destitute when the average decrease to wages are applied to them. For self-employed persons, in addition to reduced income as above, those who have paid very low taxes and paid themselves largely through dividends are also added in, assuming that these persons may not receive adequate small business support from the Government.

The table below details which groups are driving increased use of food banks throughout the forecast periods:

Table C.2 Drivers of increased demand on food bank use – total number of working age adults

Quarter	Increased demand on food bank use: Drivers		
	Unemployed	Lower income in jobs	Self-employed
2020 Q1	0	22,514	19,847
2020 Q2	22,691	22,263	118,862
2020 Q3	107,981	21,806	94,265
2020 Q4	377,064	19,908	20,084
2021 Q1	191,414	21,429	7,640

How the macro-forecast considers changes to social security

The macro-forecasting exercise, by its very nature, cannot take full account of micro-level changes in policy interventions related to social security. However, the macro-forecasting exercise accounts for the benefits system in two simple ways. First, the forecasts are based on income after housing costs, assuming that LHA and related benefits cover housing costs. Second, recent temporary enhancements to UC scale rates are approximately modelled by enhancing the destitution benchmark weekly earnings by £20.

Key assumptions on projected level of need for support from food banks

The modelling carried out within the macro-forecast provides the total number of additional working age adults that are at risk of being swept into destitution because of loss of employment, or income loss in 2020 and early 2021. The following assumptions are used to assess what this will mean for levels of support needed from food banks in the Trussell Trust network:

- It was assumed that the number of economically inactive persons is not affected substantially by the crisis. However, in principle, percentage of inactive persons may be on the lower side during the crisis, since other household members may find job search and retention more difficult. Inactivity rate had been falling over the past few years and just up to the crisis, it was at its lowest ever at 35.6%. This is assumed fixed at this proportion over the period under study.
- This model inflates the number of working age adults by a ratio of children to adult need for food parcels. For every additional working age adult that is estimated to need to use a food bank 0.6 children are added. This is based off evidence from the Trussell Trust's administrative database during quarter two of 2020.
- Every person that is estimated to need to use a food bank in the Trussell Trust network is assumed to need to return 1.78 within a quarter. This is based off evidence from the Trussell Trust's administrative database during quarter two of 2020.
- That 60% of those that need to use a food bank will use one in the Trussell Trust network.

A Non-Covid-19 2020

The macro-forecast model specifically estimates 'additional' levels of need. Some work has gone into estimating what a non-COVID 2020 and 2021 would have looked like without the economic crisis in order to provide a baseline to add this 'additional' need to. NIESR describe this as a non-COVID counterfactual.

The non-COVID counterfactual on levels of need for 2020 and 2021 was obtained by time-series regression of growth in semi-annual food parcel demand (Trussell Trust, 2020) on the unemployment rate and wages (in logarithms), after accounting for non-stationarity and seasonal trends in the relevant variables. About 53% of the total variation in annual growth rate of Trussell Trust food bank use is explained by this model.

All scenarios and time period

The macro-forecast provides estimates for five different time periods. The first is for quarter one of 2020. It also provides future estimates of need for quarter three and four of 2020 and for quarter one of 2021. This platform provides three scenarios ranging from optimistic (O) to pessimistic (P).

Table C.3 Full range of scenarios for macroforecasting model

Time frame	2020 Q1			2020 Q2			2020 Q3			2020 Q4			2021 Q1		
	O	Central	P	O	Central	P	O	Central	P	O	Central	P	O	Central	P
Scenario															
Total TT number of parcels non-COVID	482,101			483,977			505,105			615,580			631,920		
Total forecast additional TT parcels	64,777	72,014	81,179	241,996	278,487	544,058	218,943	380,887	665,897	606,606	708,995	817,221	279,491	374,822	483,993
Total forecast TT parcels	546,878	554,115	563,280	725,973	762,464	1,028,035	724,048	885,992	1,171,002	1,222,186	1,324,575	1,432,801	911,411	1,006,742	1,115,313
Previous year actuals	Q1 2019: 454,312			Q2 2019: 411,968			Q3 2019: 431,287			Q4 2019: 524,034			Q1 2020: 533,917		
Percentage increase on previous year	20%	22%	24%	76%	85%	150%	68%	105%	172%	133%	153%	173%	71%	89%	109%



LOCKDOWN, LIFELINES AND THE LONG HAUL AHEAD:

The impact of Covid-19 on food banks
in the Trussell Trust network

Authors: Tom Weekes, Emily Spoor, Rory Weal and Gill Moffett



trusselltrust.org



Hackney Food Poverty Alliance: Food Poverty Action Plan

FOREWORD

Hunger should not exist in the 21st century, let alone in the world's 5th richest economy. But hunger is rising in Hackney. The root causes of poverty and hunger are often a result of national government policy, such as welfare reform. But we must also recognise that local authorities can help to tackle food poverty and the harm it can cause for our residents.

In 2018 we committed to creating Hackney's first poverty reduction and inclusive economy strategies to make Hackney a place where everyone can not only survive but thrive. Hunger is an acute form of poverty. This is why we have invested in a specific plan which aims to bring together residents, community organisations and council services to end food poverty in the Borough.

I'm proud of the work that is already being done to tackle food poverty. I've appointed a Cabinet Lead for Food Poverty, Councillor Christopher Kennedy. Hackney Foodbank provides a vital lifeline for those in an emergency. There are community food growing projects, cooking classes and shared meals; fruit and veg voucher

schemes and campaigns to ensure the Borough's most vulnerable children

have access to free school meals to name but a few. I'm hopeful about the potential of this food poverty action plan to build on and enhance this existing activity.

This plan has been developed collaboratively. We've spoken with residents who have shared their experiences of hunger. We've met with stakeholders up and down the Borough, from church initiatives in Stoke Newington to community cooking classes in Shoreditch. We hosted a workshop with over 50 services and organisations in October 2019. Thank you to everyone who has contributed and to our funders, Food Power and The Big Lottery, whose generous support enabled this to happen.

[signature and photo]

INTRODUCTION

The vision for this action plan is that every Hackney resident enjoys a healthy, sustainable, affordable and culturally appropriate diet and that Hackney is a borough where food brings people together through growing, cooking and eating. We recognise that there may always be some need for emergency food provision but we are united and motivated by the aim to end chronic hunger and the current scale of use of emergency food aid in Hackney.

There are a number of varying definitions of food poverty or household food insecurity but we understand it to mean people who are unable to afford (or to be certain they can afford) a healthy and culturally appropriate diet without having to resort to emergency food supplies or other coping strategies. We use this understanding because food poverty isn't just about having enough food to eat, but having the resources (financial, physical access to shops, time to prepare food) to have a quality diet as well as the dignity of being able to choose what you eat.

Hunger in Hackney has increased dramatically according to the latest data. Hackney Foodbank distributed 6,185 parcels in 2018, a 40% increase from the previous year¹. Foodbank data is the tip of the iceberg as it does not include those who aren't able to access the foodbank. We therefore expect these figures to be an underestimate of food insecurity in the Borough and welcome the Greater London

¹ Hackney Foodbank data. There is a discrepancy between Hackney Foodbank data and the figures reported on their website from Trussell Trust data. This is because Hackney Foodbank relies on volunteers to input data which is then sent to the national Trussell Trust office, creating a time lag. Data used here comes from Hackney Foodbank and sources can be provided on request.

Authority's survey of household food insecurity in the capital, as well as

the UK government commitment to measure food insecurity from 2020.

The action plan has been developed by Hackney Council in partnership with Hackney Food Poverty Alliance (HFPA). HFPA was formed in 2018 by local residents and brings together 40 statutory services and community and voluntary organisations. Its membership spans faith groups, public health services, community food projects, including Hackney Foodbank, and advice providers. HFPA is part of Hackney Food Partnership and Food Power, a UK network of groups and alliances working to tackle food poverty through local, people-powered action. The creation of the alliance and the action plan has been spurred on by Sustain's London-wide ranking of boroughs for their efforts in tackling food poverty. In 2018, Hackney scored 44% when ranked against 10 indicators used to measure councils' existing actions and commitments². This action plan therefore aims to build and boost existing efforts to help end hunger in Hackney.

This action plan builds on research across the Borough to understand the reality of food poverty. This involved stakeholder engagement, the experience of Hackney residents who have known hunger and a workshop with over 50 statutory services and community organisations.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the research, to the residents that shared their experiences and expertise and to Food

² <https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/profile/?m=0&b=0&y=2018&v=1>

Power and the National Lottery Community Fund for their generous financial support.

HUNGER IN HACKNEY TODAY

Who is experiencing food poverty? Food poverty affects a wide range of residents across the Borough who are already living on low incomes. Groups which are particularly at risk are those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), disabled people and those living in temporary accommodation.

"It goes right across...it varies across all the age groups...families, single people, could be anyone." CAB adviser

What is driving food poverty? It is frequently triggered by central government policies. Key stakeholders have witnessed an increase since Universal Credit was introduced. Those with NRPF also experience acute levels of hunger and destitution. People's experience of food poverty is often compounded by underlying factors relating to their nationality or ethnicity, physical and mental health.

"I went from work to the benefits and I got hit with a benefit cap so that basically means that I'm just struggling to get by...I've gone through a bit of a crisis with my mental health...I don't want to say it's [being hungry] the main cause but it definitely hasn't helped." Callum, 25

What are the impacts of food poverty? The impacts on people's diets include cutting down or skipping meals, decrease in choice and variety in diet, eating food that is not culturally appropriate or against religious beliefs and losing the social aspects of cooking and eating with others.

"We don't have no for an answer. Whatever they give us we have to eat it. Like because I'm a Muslim and Muslims they don't eat pork, I don't have a choice, if it is pork that is available."

Imani, mum of two with no recourse to public funds

What is already happening to tackle food poverty? There are already lots of initiatives that aim to tackle hunger in Hackney either directly or indirectly. These include emergency food provision, enabling children from families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) to access free school meals, fruit and veg voucher schemes and cooking classes.

"I think that the Mayor's agreement to give free school meals to [NRPF] children...is a long time coming, and is really positive and I'm really happy about it. I think that there needs to be more consideration about all children in the borough accessing free school meals." Social Worker, NRPF team

What further action is needed to end hunger in Hackney? The challenge is better coordinating existing initiatives and increasing efforts to end hunger in Hackney. Areas highlighted in the research include improving the emergency food aid offer; better and more strategic sign-posting between services; increasing awareness and uptake of voucher schemes; food poverty training for frontline staff and pushing for policy change from central government.

"All of the statutory services and local agencies need to be working

together.” Shelter adviser

THE FOOD POVERTY ACTION PLAN: 2020 - 2022

The action plan is devised around three tiers of action: emergency provision, building resilience and prevention. For each tier of action, we have articulated the problem that we are trying to solve; the long-term goal we are trying to achieve; existing data tools which can be used to measure trends which relate to each goal; steps required to get there; the actions required to fulfil those steps and the indicators to measure whether we are successful or not. We’ve also identified those partners which will be key to implementing specific actions. Where relevant, we’ve tried to identify any outstanding questions. This action plan will live within the forthcoming poverty reduction strategy. As such, the actions here are specifically related to food and hunger. We of course recognise that food poverty is an acute manifestation of wider drivers of poverty, such as low income, high housing costs and welfare reform. Actions which focus on the wider issues will be addressed in the poverty reduction strategy.

List of definitions / short-hands used for partners:

- **Frontline workers:** all roles (professional and volunteer) that work directly with those who experience food poverty, including but not restricted to: social workers, Children’s Centres workers, teachers, health professionals
- **Advice providers:** those organisations which deliver advice services in the borough, such as Citizens Advice and Shelter as well as statutory services
- **Emergency food providers:** Hackney Foodbank, other informal food banks run by e.g. faith groups, community meals
- **Informal networks:** faith organisations / networks; community projects that are exclusively or mostly volunteer led

List of acronyms:

- HFPA: Hackney Food Poverty Alliance
- HWSP: Healthy Weight Strategic Partnership
- LBH: London Borough of Hackney
- NRPF: No Recourse to Public Funds
- HLT: Hackney Learning Trust
- HS: Healthy Start

TIER 1: EMERGENCY PROVISION

- The **problem** we are trying to solve: Resisting the normalisation of food poverty while continuing and improving emergency support to those in need.
- The long-term **goal** we are aiming to achieve: Long-term impacts of food poverty on people’s lives are mitigated through enhanced emergency provision.
- Existing **data** tools that can be used to monitor trends in this area: feedback from frontline workers through survey, feedback from existing partners and users through questionnaires and usage statistics

Step A: Break down silos between community-run and council-led services.

Number	Actions	Outcomes	Lead organisation	Key partners to implement actions	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
A.1	Identify how best to improve information sharing across organisations	Residents who currently experience or may be at risk of food poverty are better able and feel confident to ask for support before hunger takes hold.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontline workers, • Key advice providers - CAB to look into online forums & other ways to communicate in real time food poverty related issues) • Emergency food providers (formal & informal food banks, community meals, e.g. Hackney Food 	<p>Tools developed and implemented to improve information sharing</p> <p>Key partners report that tools are useful for them to support residents at risk of hunger</p>
A.2	Build on and use existing resources to share information (e.g. Hackney Advice , I care)				

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank and Felix Project Felix Project (meet with organisations who need Felix food) 	
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Step B: Tackle the stigma surrounding food poverty

Number	Actions	Outcomes	Lead organisation	Key partners to implement actions	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
B.1	Support and train frontline workers to identify and have knowledge of food poverty and community services available to support residents	Enhanced awareness, information and knowledge about food poverty specifically amongst key frontline community and council services will help reduce stigma, enabling those in need to get support earlier.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH People living with food poverty Frontline workers 	Tool to train and support frontline workers to understand and identify symptoms of food poverty Number of frontline workers who report that tool is useful
B.2	Consider language used (including name of alliance) drawing on good practice e.g. JRF research and toolkit when referring to food poverty? E.g. The York alliance changed from food poverty to food justice alliance.	Conscious consideration of language used helps to reduce stigma		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People living with food poverty LBH Frontline workers HFPA 	Decide on name change Highlight need for sensitive, non-judgemental language in frontline worker tool above.
B.3	Continue to raise awareness about free food and fun activities that can help tackle holiday	Children and families who are at risk of food poverty have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH: Children and Young People's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HFPA: school holiday food 	Develop and circulate free food and fun list

	hunger, building on the “free food and fun” lists developed in 2019	opportunities to access food and advice over the holidays in a “less stigmatising” setting than e.g. foodbank	services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providers The Felix Project (who will meet with people and organisations needing Felix food) 	Number of people who receive list through tailored communication channels
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Step C: Coordinating with local food growers, food waste charities and providers, shops and market stalls to diversify emergency food offer.

Number	Actions	Outcomes	Lead organisation	Key partners to implement actions	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
C.1	Understand and define what a more diverse emergency food offer means. Based on the research this includes access to fresh food and perhaps diversifying the dry staples that are donated and made available.	Accessibility, affordability, nutritional and cultural value of food understood as a fundamental part of emergency food provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH: Policy and Strategic Delivery coordinated working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People living with food poverty Hackney Foodbank Other “informal” food banks and community meals 	Definition of diverse and / or culturally sensitive food offer agreed by HFPA
	Begin conversations with local food businesses and providers (market traders, shops, food waste providers, food growers) and Hackney Foodbank to identify how they could contribute to diversify the offer			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People living with food poverty Relevant LBH contacts (e.g. existing traders who accept Healthy Start or Alexandra Rose vouchers; Children’s 	Number of businesses and providers approached about donating to emergency food providers Number of businesses and providers who give donations Agreement from

				<p>Centres in South who have Tesco relationship)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FareShare • Felix Project • Food Growers (Cordwainers Grow; Growing Communities) 	<p>emergency food providers to measure and monitor feedback on the food offer from clients</p> <p>Positive feedback from emergency food users about the food available</p>
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Actions from the workshop which weren't selected and outstanding questions:

- Home visits for service users who cannot access services for emergency food provision - there is no specific food poverty service and therefore this requires additional resources.
- Development of an online interactive map showing list of food providing organisations - there is [an existing advice database](#), could we build on this?
- Do we need to think about actions which support those who the research identified are particularly vulnerable? (NRPF, disabled people, people in temporary accommodation)

TIER 2: BUILDING RESILIENCE

- The **problem** we are trying to solve: to break the cycle of chronic food poverty in Hackney.
- The long-term **goal** we are aiming to achieve: Those who are on a low income are empowered with the skills, information and knowledge to access an affordable and healthy diet, in part supported through existing services/projects.
- Existing **data** tools that can be used to monitor trends related to this area: Healthy Start eligibility vs. uptake; Alexandra Rose uptake; Free School Meal eligibility and uptake; child poverty needs assessment (?); childhood obesity measurement programme; data on NRPF families that the Council is supporting and their access to food.

Step D: Use existing contacts, referral points (e.g. Children’s Centres) to better inform and support vulnerable groups to access services

Number	Actions	Outcomes	Lead organisation	Partners	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
D.1	Raise awareness of Healthy Start vouchers to those who are eligible through existing resources and networks	Those who are vulnerable to food poverty are able to access an affordable and healthy diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH: Public Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HENRY Children’s Centres Hackney Learning Trust HS steering group team HWSP members Hackney Works / Employment Support 	Promotional materials created, appropriate for target audience, and distribution channels identified to share materials e.g. Foodbank
D.2	Healthy Start training for frontline staff (using Food Power resources and other best practice)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH: Public Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HENRY Children’s Centres Hackney Learning Trust HS steering group team HWSP members Hackney Works / Employment Support 	<p>Working with LBH Healthy Start contract manager, LBH 0-5s Health Oversight Group & Henry, review and evaluation of current HS approach conducted to inform training</p> <p>Meeting(s) with key stakeholders held to inform and understand ways they can support promotion</p> <p>Number of HS champions identified, including appointment of HS coordinator in LBH</p> <p>Number of meetings / sessions attended to promote HS vouchers with frontline staff</p>
D.3	Raise awareness of		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH: Public 		Promotional materials created,

	Alexandra Rose to those who are eligible through existing resources and networks (provided AR has secured funding to continue to work in Hackney)		Health (?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HENRY • Children's Centres • Hackney Learning Trust • HS steering group team • HWSP members • HMC • Hackney Works 	appropriate for target audience, and distribution channels identified to share materials e.g. Foodbank
D.4	Work with organisers of community meals / cooking classes / growing projects including the new union of community growers (i.e. places where food brings people together) to raise awareness of voucher schemes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMC • Made in Hackney • Bags of Taste • Children's Centres' cook & eat sessions • Young Hackney 	Number of new community projects that distribute HS/AR promotional material
D.5	Provide information (and possibly training) for advice providers on voucher schemes available		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meg - Digital and Integrated Commissioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBH Public Health • Hackney Grants Advice Programme grantees 	Number of advice providers who use or provide Healthy Start/Alexandra Rose promotional material

Step E: Targeted awareness raising and information sharing among informal networks of food poverty related services

Number	Actions	Outcomes	Lead organisation	Key implementing partners	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
E.1	Develop information guide tailored to informal groups about identifying food poverty	There is better coordination and collaboration between		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HFJA, informal networks (as defined above) 	Information guide developed

	and services that can help tackle (emergency and beyond) to circulate via informal networks	informal and formal services / projects. The wider benefits of food growing, cooking and eating together in helping social isolation and building individuals' confidence and well-being are recognised.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hackney Faith Forum • Relevant LBH teams and services • Well Street Common (to check if directory services on the neighbourhoods pilot have a search tag for free food) • Food growing organisations e.g. Cordwainers Grow (to contact Children's Centres about gardens and growing) 	Information guide distributed to key informal networks: Hackney Faith Forum, union of community growers and others
E.2	Collaborate with other existing networks e.g. Hackney Faith Forum and Cordwainers Grow union of food growing projects, to continue to build informal-formal relationships				Number of new "informal" partners who are contacted, including establishing links with social prescribing networks in the Borough.
E.3	Continue to build and strengthen membership of HFPA to include more informal networks				Number of new "informal" partners who sign-up to HFPA mailing list
E.4	Develop an easy-to-use communication tool that enables those informal groups who are time and resource pressured to access information easily				HFPA email list established which enables easy communication

Step F: Ensure children have access to healthy and sustainable food 365 days a year

Number	Actions	Benefits	Lead organisation	Key implementing partners	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
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F.1	Implementation of Mayoral commitment for children with NRPF to access Free School Meals (FSM)	Children with NRPF experience lower levels of hunger and are able to concentrate and participate more fully during their school day Families with NRPF have marginally increased income to provide other family meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor of Hackney and relevant Cabinet members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor of Hackney and relevant Cabinet members 	Financing mechanism for NRPF FSM finalised Number of children from NRPF families who are accessing FSM increases
F.2	Identify best practice among schools and explore ways to share best practice	Schools are able to provide universal FSM through innovative financing mechanisms, e.g. Urswick use rent from hires to fund FSM for all, in Greenwich a school uses pupil premium to pay FareShare membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HFPA HLT Governors Group Teachers and support staff 	Number of schools that share best practice Number of schools that trial and / or adopt approaches to school food provision
F.3.1	Delivery of Holiday Hunger programme, with Department for Education funds.	Children from low-income families do not experience hunger during holidays Families on low-income have marginally increased income through savings from holiday programmes to provide other meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Hackney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Hackney and youth hub partners LBH Youth partners 	For summer 2020: number of children reached through DfE funded holiday hunger programme, anticipated to be 2460 children, of which 1120 eligible for FSM
F.3.2	Delivery of Holiday Hunger programme, without Department for Education	Children from low-income families do not experience hunger during	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Hackney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Hackney and youth hub partners LBH 	For summer 2020, number of children who are reached

	<i>funds.</i>	<p>holidays</p> <p>Families on low-income have marginally increased income through savings from holiday programmes to provide other meals</p>			<p>through council holiday hunger programme. Precise target / figure TBC when further detail received on Council-led plans.</p>
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Actions which weren't selected and outstanding questions: Actions related to the food environment (the links between obesity and food poverty) such as enhancing the Hackney Healthier Catering Commitment are not included here as these will be addressed / dovetail with the Healthy Weight Strategic Partnership framework

TIER 3: PREVENTING FOOD POVERTY

- The **problem** we are trying to tackle: Food poverty is caused by multiple factors and wider drivers of poverty; to prevent food poverty we need to strategically align with these wider drivers.
- The long-term **goal** that we are aiming to achieve: Food poverty decreases in Hackney.
- Existing **data** tools which can be used to monitor trends related to actions: Council data (housing benefit, council tax, debt to council and forthcoming Poverty Index too will LBH IT department are developing) Index of Multiple Deprivation (last update in 2019 and updated every 4 years, good for sub-borough data); Hackney Foodbank data, national government food insecurity data from 2020; food environment mapping of Borough;

Step G: Ensure that food poverty is strategically addressed across relevant areas of the Borough’s work

Number	Actions	Outcomes	Lead organisation	Key implementing partners	What will we measure to know whether we are successful or not?
G. 1	Food action plan finalised, implemented and regularly monitored.	Enables effective implementation and strategic coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBH • HFPA 	<p>Food poverty action is published and made publicly available</p> <p>Progress is monitored quarterly</p> <p>Mayor and Cabinet Members are held to account on progress and implementation</p> <p>HFPA and Council continue to publicly communicate about impact of food poverty and Borough’s plan to</p>

					tackle it through media, social media and at community events
G. 2	Continue to build strong local food network through HFPA	HFPA is the go-to “hub” for food in the borough		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HFPA 	<p>HFPA has quarterly meetings to aid progress and monitoring of plan</p> <p>Council continues to support and resource (in-kind or other) maintenance of alliance</p> <p>HFPA has new members</p>
	Strategic coordination of food / food poverty into other council strategies and frameworks by including / implementing relevant references and actions related to food poverty: poverty reduction strategy, HWSP, ageing well, sustainability strategy, regeneration plans and the inclusive economy strategy	Hackney creates a healthy, sustainable and affordable food environment.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBH Heads of Services • HWSP • Leads for Poverty Reduction 	Food poverty related objectives, actions or indicators included in other relevant strategies and plans
	Advocate on wider issues, including national policy, that affect food poverty	Hackney contributes to campaigning for change on wider drivers of food		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBH • HFPA 	Number of media articles which quote / reference Hackney’s

	such as calling for urgent review of no recourse to public funds, influencing the National Food Strategy, national Industrial Strategy and regional strategies to ensure more balanced and inclusive economies, welfare reform and universal free school meals.	poverty			positions on this Number of relevant national government consultations which Hackney contributes to Joining network efforts e.g. Food Power, Sustainable Food Cities, London Food Link etc to push for national change
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Actions which weren't selected and outstanding questions: Actions related to wider poverty drivers, such as wages and housing, are not included as these will be addressed in the poverty reduction strategy.

Scrutiny Panel 8th March 2021 Item 5 – Hackney Food Justice Alliance & Hackney Food Network	Item No 5
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Outline

Scrutiny Panel will hear an introduction and overview of the Food Justice Alliance & Food Network before hearing about the work of local organisations working as part of the Hackney Food Network.

There will be an update about the strategic direction and future work of the Food Justice Alliance, and an update following the implementation of the advice services review. Following the presentations there will be a Q&A session.

Invited guests

- **Sonia Khan**, Head of Policy & Strategic Development, London Borough of Hackney
- **Lisa-Raine Hunt**, Strategic Delivery Manager, London Borough of Hackney
- **Adrian McDowell**, Strategic Delivery Officer, London Borough of Hackney
- **Colette Allen**, CEO, Hackney Quest
- **Carib Eats**
- **Oladapo Awosokanre**, Programmes Coordinator, Community African Network
- **Nicolette Nixon**, Morningside & Gascoyne
- **Kome Owusu**, Development Manager, African Community School
- **Joe Walker**, Director, Round Chapel

Action

Scrutiny Panel is asked to note the presentations and pose questions to the guests about their food poverty work.

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Scrutiny Panel 8 th March 2021 Work Programme 2020/21	Item No 6
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OUTLINE

Attached is the work programme for the Scrutiny Panel for 2020-21. Please note that this is a working document and regularly updated.

ACTION

The Scrutiny Panel is asked for any comments, amendments or suggestions for the work programme.

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Overview & Scrutiny

Scrutiny Panel Scrutiny Commission

Rolling Work Programme May 2020 – April 2021

All meetings take place at 7.00 pm and will be virtual until further notice. This rolling work programme report is updated and published on the agenda for each meeting of the Panel.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Comment and Action
<p>Wed 13th May 2020 Joint meeting with Living in Hackney</p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 1st May</p>	<p>Living in Hackney on the Impact of Covid-19 in relation to Housing and Domestic Violence</p>	<p>Children, Adults and Community Health Directorate Director of Children and Families, Sarah Wright from LBH Borough Commander from Hackney MPS, Detective Chief Superintendent Marcus Barnett Neighbourhoods and Housing Directorate Interim Director Regeneration James Goddard from LBH</p>	<p>Discussion to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update on domestic violence (locally) and the support available. • An update on the support services available to residents living in council housing and housing association properties in the borough.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Comment and Action
	Cabinet Question Time Mayor Philip Glanville	Chief Executive's Directorate Mayor's Office Ben Bradley / Tessa Mitchell	Discussion to cover 1. The Council's preparations and response to the crisis particularly for vulnerable residents. 2. How the Council's is working with partners, voluntary sector, local businesses and trade unions. 3. To review the long term impacts of the pandemic on the Council and the community.
<p>Tues 30th Jun 2020 Special Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel</p> <p>Papers deadline: Thurs 18th Jun</p>	Call-in of a decision of the Executive	Monitoring Officer Dawn Cater-McDonald Neighbourhoods and Housing Directorate Group Director Neighbourhoods and Housing, Ajman Ali	<p>The call-in relates to the decision of Cabinet of 18 May 2020 in respect of Restricting Residual Waste (Key Decision No. NH Q47) to introduce fortnightly collections for residual waste to street level properties, using black 180l wheeled bins.</p> <p>The basis of the call-in is that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in making its decision Cabinet failed to consider relevant evidence; and • that the decision taken was not in the interests of the Borough's residents and a preferable alternative decision could be adopted.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Comment and Action
Thurs 23rd Jul 2020 Papers deadline: Mon 8 th July	Quarterly Finance Update – Covid 19, Corporate and Medium Term Financial Update	Finance and Corporate Resources Directorate Group Director Finance and Corporate Resources Ian Williams	Finance update the financial position of the council and the affects that Covid-19 is having on the council's budget.
	Update on the impact of Covid-19 on Poverty and Inequalities in the Borough	Chief Executive's Directorate Strategy, Policy and Economic Development Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery Sonia Khan	The discussion will cover the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis and assessment of the impact on poverty and inequalities in the borough • Information about the areas highlighted in a recent letter from Cllr Williams to a parliamentary inquiry on people and protected characteristics • Verbal update on the future plans and refresh of the Corporate Plan as a result of Covid-19.
	Communication and Scrutiny	Chief Executive's Directorate Director of Communications, Culture and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how scrutiny councillors can use different communication channels more effectively like You Tube videos or live streaming. • The communication strategy or system in place for non-executive Councillors • Explore how scrutiny councillors can make their work more publicly accessible through the communication channel of public choice. • Discuss the barriers and challenges that need to be overcome to enable scrutiny councillors to communicate more flexibly with the public.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Comment and Action
	Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Work Programme for 2019/20	Chief Executive's Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Team Tracey Anderson	Discussion and review of the Overview and Scrutiny function work programmes for 2020/21. Update from each scrutiny commission Chair on their work programme for 2020/21.
Mon 5 Oct 2020 Papers deadline: Wed 23 rd Sept	Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Work Programme for 2020/21	Chief Executive's Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Team Tracey Anderson	Discussion and review of the Overview and Scrutiny function work programmes for 2020/21. Update from each scrutiny commission Chair on their work programme for 2020/21.
	Annual report on Complaints and Members Enquires	Chief Executive's Directorate Business Analysis and Complaints Team Bruce Devile	Annual report of the Council's Complaints and Members Enquires for 2019/20
	Cabinet Question Time Mayor Philip Glanville	Chief Executive's Directorate Mayor's Office Ben Bradley / Tessa Mitchell	CQT session with the Mayor.
	Quarterly Finance Update	Finance and Resources Directorate Ian Williams	Finance Update

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Comment and Action
Mon 1st February 2021 Papers deadline: Wed 20 th Jan	Quarterly Finance Update	Finance and Resources Directorate Ian Williams	Finance Update
	Chief Executive Question Time	Chief Executive's Directorate Chief Executive Tim Shields	Question time session with the Chief Executive
	Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21	Chief Executive's Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Tracey Anderson	Review of the Scrutiny Panel work Programme for 2020/21
Mon 8th Mar 2021 Papers deadline: Wed 24 th Feb	Food Poverty Strategy	Chief Executive's Directorate Strategy, Policy and Economic Development Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery Sonia Khan	Update on the Food Poverty strategy and work to tackle food poverty in the borough.
	Update on the Advice Services Review	Chief Executive's Directorate Strategy, Policy and Economic Development Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery	Update following the implementation of the advice services review.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and officer contact	Comment and Action
		Sonia Khan	
	Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21	Chief Executive's Directorate Overview and Scrutiny Tracey Anderson	Review of the Scrutiny Panel work Programme for 2020/21 and note any suggestions for the work programme in the new municipal year

To be scheduled

Information about how the learning from complaints is cascaded and used by service areas	TBC - All Group Directors	A briefing from each Group Director to explain how they use and cascade the learning from complaints to make improvements to services.
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Scrutiny Panel 8th March 2021 Item 7 - Minutes and matters arising	Item No 7
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OUTLINE

Attached are the draft minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel held on 1st February 2020.

Matters Arising

- Chief Executive to confirm the date for the launch of the new Bullying and Harassment policy
- Head of Scrutiny and Ward Forums to set up a session with Comms officers and Scrutiny Panel to progress the social media use training.

ACTION

Members are asked to agree the minutes and note the matters arising.

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Chair	Councillor Margaret Gordon
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Mete Coban, Cllr Peter Snell, Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Sophie Conway, Cllr Sharon Patrick
Apologies:	Cllr Polly Billington
Officers in Attendance	Tim Shields (Chief Executive), Ian Williams (Group Director Finance and Corporate Resources), Deirdre Worrall (Director Neighbourhoods and Housing Finance), Rob Miller (Director of ICT), Tracey Anderson (Head of Scrutiny and Ward Forums), Jarlath O'Connell (O&S Officer)
Other People in Attendance	Mayor Philip Glanville, Cllr Rebecca Rennison (Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply), Cllr Nick Sharman (Chair of Audit Committee)
Members of the Public	
YouTube link	https://youtu.be/cFul4SrJmKk
Officer Contact:	Tracey Anderson <input type="checkbox"/> 020 8356 3312 <input type="checkbox"/> tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Margaret Gordon in the Chair

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
 - 1.1 An apology for absence was received from Cllr Billington.
- 2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**
 - 2.1 There was no urgent business and the order of business was as on the agenda.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were none.

4 Chief Executive's Question Time

4.1 The Chair stated that a key element of the scrutiny function is to hold the Mayor, Cabinet and senior officers to account in public as part of a Cabinet Question Time Sessions. The Chief Executive Question Time is the responsibility of the Scrutiny Panel. He had been given advance notice of the topic areas which would be:

- Harassment and bullying policy
- Ongoing impact of the Cyber attack
- Recovery plan from Covid-19.

4.2 Chair welcomed to the meeting:

- Tim Shields (TS), Chief Executive

Harassment and bullying policy

4.3 TS stated that the Scrutiny Panel had been interested in this topic in the past but that had related to an issue in a specific service and much work had been done on this issue since. Subsequent to that more intensive work on tackling the issue has been done by managers across the organisation. For this item he wanted to speak more broadly about the subject. He suggested there was scope for the unions to be more involved in relation to aspects such as micro aggressions as well as bullying and harassment and they've worked with the unions' BME groups and with the Council's own Equalities Champions. One issue of focus was ensuring that the common standards are also applied to agency workers and this is made clear to them.

4.3 TS added that, more broadly, the pandemic had of course changed how the Council works in every respect. Senior managers have held numerous webinars and Q&A sessions with staff on Covid impacts, on working from home as well as on the bullying and harassment policy linked to supporting staff in terms of their mental health. The Council has introduced diversity champions who have trained senior managers across the organisation and, just that day, introduced new Mental Health Champions. The organisation is now more focused on supporting the workforce throughout covid. There has also been a gradual increase in the staff survey results with good feedback on the support received from senior managers. The survey results were demonstrating that managers do care and were flexible and so the Council would be in a good position to progress. There has also been a renewed commitment to greater diversity in senior roles.

Cyber Attack

4.4 TS stated that the attack in October was a major and sophisticated criminal act. Many systems were still unavailable. The council's investment in modern cloud technology had paid off and meant that it was able to carry on with essential functions. Teams had worked tirelessly through it all. He cautioned that the nature of the work to be done in recovering lost systems and data will be lengthy and slow. Workarounds had been put in place, housing benefit was

being paid and housing repairs actioned. Some systems were already recovered and others on their way to being restored or replaced and they continue to update the website on what is available. They had now also published the Electoral Register following a huge amount of work on processing a backlog of electoral information into a new system. He added that he shared residents' and businesses anger at this attack and the huge disruption it has caused. The focus is on bringing all systems back and recovering data and they have risk managed the data theft aspect. They were working closely with the National Crime Agency and the Metropolitan Police on that. The data that had been published on the dark web was relatively small compared to what the Council holds and the Information Commissioner was consulted throughout and has been complimentary of the Council's efforts.

Recovery plan from Covid-19

- 4.5 TS reflected that they had thought recovery would be in Sept 2020 which of course hadn't happened. The impacts for example on young people and on businesses, just two examples, were immense and the Council had continued to provide services whether it be support to business through grants, to residents through food parcels or prescription deliveries, it all involved teams of staff working in completely different ways.
- 4.6 Regarding the financial implications, TS stated that budget proposals were being brought at the end of February for 21/22. The strain on the council's finances was immense despite the positive support received from central government. In the short term, everyone has to wait for lockdown to ease but the Council now knows more about how to start up services again quickly. There is still great uncertainty re timelines and when recovery can begin. Schools had been set to re-open on 8 March but this seems unlikely. Other issues such as the travel corridors and Brexit would also impact. In the longer term, the impact on mental health, on social care and on the economy will be great. While it is clear what support is needed now it is not clear what the long term impacts really will be. As soon as national timelines are clarified they will immediately start to work with schools and businesses etc. He concluded that the Council has in its back pocket a number of worked up plans which would kick in should they need them but it was not realistic at present to have one master plan to deal with everything.

Q&A

- 4.7 All Members in their responses paid tribute to the Chief Executive, who had recently announced his retirement, thanking him for his immense contribution over the years and for being a bedrock of stability for the Council.
- 4.8 The Chair welcomed that the Pulse study had shown an improvement and asked how that compared with past results, what the trends were and how many grievances there had been recently. TS replied that the concerns originally related to one particular team. He was only aware of 1 or 2 cases per year before 2020. During 2020 case loads had dropped considerably, most likely because staff were working from home. The main focus of the recent survey therefore was on mental health relating to home working and barriers to home working. He'd been very impressed by the collaboration across Directorates in the aftermath of the pandemic.

- 4.9 The Chair asked what reassurance would be given to the public on data published following the leak. TS replied that a recovery plan was put in place for each of the systems and data sets accounting for what might be lost or subsequently published elsewhere. This was devised with the National Crime Agency and the National Cyber Security Centre. When the data dump happened in Jan the response focused on any use of people's bank details as part of that and where any personal information was compromised those individuals were immediately contacted. The scale of the 'data dump' was small and involved a lot of rather mundane information such as HR manuals. Staff worked tirelessly to risk assess the loss and give assurances. Postal voters were written to for example asking for a refresh of their signatures and dates of birth as that data had become locked and inaccessible. Ian Williams added that all data that had been published had since been taken down.
- 4.10 A Member asked what action the Chief Executive was taking to ensure a stable transition as two new Group Directors would be starting soon and he would also be departing. TS commented, re institutional memory, that he could always be contacted for advice if needed. He stated he promoted the restructure which had begun in November and Ajman Ali had been confirmed in his post as GD for Neighbourhoods and Housing and Helen Woodland would be joining in March as the GD for Adults, Health and Integration. By the time he departs the GD of Children's and Education would also be in place and the appointment process of his replacement would be advanced. In the next tier, Directors of Legal and Governance and of Housing and of Adult Services would be filled in the next few weeks. When he leaves his role would be the only substantive senior appointment to be filled and he was confident that a smooth transition would be in place.
- 4.11 A Member praised the transparency and candour of the Council after the cyber attack and asked whether the attack had been worse than expectations and how the Council would resist any similar attack in future and how it would up its game. TS replied that the intention was, being a public sector body, to be as transparent as possible, whereas that would not be the case in the private sector. The Information Commissioner had been contacted immediately and they were very open with them. The attack had greatly impacted on the Council's legacy system and the aim now is to move as much as possible to a cloud system. As they addressed the legacy systems the aim is to strengthen security even more and the Director of ICT has been very open with colleagues in other public bodies to make sure that everyone is better protected.
- 4.12 A Member praised the ongoing capability and success of the Volunteer Hub and its ability to deploy volunteers at short notice and asked how library staff and others had been adapting to their changed roles during lockdown. TS thanked Members for their comments and added that the volunteering had been a great success in the Vaccination Centres for example. The usage of volunteers was still variable and he praised the staff that had stepped up in Parking, Libraries etc. In the first wave they had struggled with the Shielding Nest work because the data had not been as good as it could have been, so much work had gone into better identifying vulnerable people, matching the government's shielding lists with local health bodies' lists. The government had also now narrowed the Shielding Nest to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. Supermarkets and Pharmacies had also stepped up and provided many more slots and more delivery options. In terms of re-deployments there had been

great work around distribution of PPE and on food delivery in the first wave but the second wave was quite different however. Large numbers of re-deployed staff were being used and there had been a Skills Assessment done for the majority of the staff which had aided with planning.

- 4.13 A Member asked what the timeframe was for finalising the Bullying and Harassment Policy and asked whether diversity would increase at senior level following the restructure. TS undertook to provide the exact date for the launch. It was currently with the Diversity Champions for review, he added. Re senior level diversity, he added that a specialist Consultancy had been engaged to help redesign and improve the senior management recruitment process. They had changed the language, the advertising and the whole approach in order to make it more inclusive. This was a difficult area in which to bring about change, but he was looking forward to their report and the learning from it would be cascaded down to inform other management recruitment within the organisation. He added that those Members invited onto senior management selection panels will already have noticed the change of approach.

ACTION:	Chief Executive to confirm the date for the launch of the new Bullying and Harassment policy
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- 4.14 Members asked for the outgoing Chief Executive's advice to councillors on areas where they need to hold his successor to account. TS replied that he'd suggest they hold the new CE to account on the vital need to support businesses and the local economy. Covid has placed huge burdens on the Treasury and one thing councillors should do is to keep talking about supporting local businesses. He added that councillors needed to keep doing what they did as they were not generally valued enough by the public. They did this work in their spare time and it was hard work and they often received abuse. He added that his response to critics often was that they had a choice and if they didn't like the approach of the councillors they could always try to get themselves nominated and elected.
- 4.15 A Member asked about the need to rebuild the local economy. TS replied that Hackney doesn't have high streets containing massive retail chains which are currently in trouble and instead had smaller, more niche, businesses. During Covid the Finance Dept had to flip from collecting revenue from businesses to paying out business grants to keep them afloat and there had been amazing work done here by the finance and grants teams. New schemes had kept coming on stream with changing grant conditions. The critical thing was to get those grants out quickly so that the businesses are in a position to start up quickly after lockdown. He added that the campaigns to Shop Local were also crucial here.
- 4.16 Members asked what the CE was most proud of during his tenure at Hackney. TS replied that there were a number of things but he recalled in particular getting the Woodberry Down development moving again. Also the work around the Building Schools for the Future which got £167m for schools. He also mentioned the Pembury Estate project and the Young Black Men project. Creating a borough that was safe, has less crime, better housing, fantastic education had been the goal. The Council was hugely resourceful and was

now strong. It was also a nice place to work as evidenced by how many who leave and later return.

- 4.17 The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his attendance and all Members again thanked him for his contribution to the Council.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.
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5 Quarterly Financial Update

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting:

- Mayor Glanville
- Deputy Mayor Rebecca Rennison (RR), Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply
- Ian Williams (IW), Group Director Finance and Corporate Resources

- 5.2 Members gave consideration to the following reports:

1. Tabled presentation on the *Council Budget* for 2021/2022 from the Group Director
2. Council's *Monthly Overall Financial Position (OFP)* Report - This report provides information about the Council's latest budgetary position in 2020/21.
3. *Capital Programme* report - This report provides information about the Council's Capital Programme.
4. *Housing Revenue Account* budget 2021/22 including tenants rents and service charges.

- 5.3 In introducing the item the Deputy Mayor stated that the papers contained a lot of tracking data on the development of the finances during the pandemic but that she'd like Members to focus on the need to plan early for the 2022/23 budget. She thanked Scrutiny Members for their input so far on the development of the budget. She added that more detail on the Government's spending commitments had just come in.

Q&A

- 5.4 A Member asked about the Housing Revenue Account budget and how sustainable projections can be, considering the current financial situation many residents find themselves in. She asked how HRA Capital Budget spending decisions were made and how proportions were allocated e.g. repairs, vs buy back vs building new council properties.

IW replied that the HRA was one of the most challenging parts of the budget – the cash element of housing income. The Council had put in place a package of support to tenants around employment and further work is ongoing. Where tenants have difficulties the aim is to ensure that they are not chased separately by each part of the Council and that instead help is offered and he's discussed this with the other Group Directors. Overall the level of rent arrears is increasing which is a concern but in terms of the overall sustainability of the HRA it is in a much better place in Hackney than in other boroughs.

On borrowing, the focus is to borrow to invest and they do not borrow for Revenue expenditure. He described the recent reports on the council property buy-back scheme which had involved 25 properties. The sources for funding this are a challenge in terms of rules around Right to Buy receipts so they are looking for schemes where they can utilise those receipts better. Over the last year they had done detailed analyses with Members on the challenge of funding HRA so that the distinction between what the choices are can be better understood. RR added that the Council could cover only 1/3 of buy backs on receipts and overall there was no magic fix to these funding challenges.

5.5 A Member asked for clarification on the funding gap, whether it was £11m and if it had been bridged by items other than a council tax rise. RR replied that the gap had started at £22m and they had found £8m in corporate savings from a range of areas. The government had just come in with additional Covid related funding for the coming year which has now effectively bridged that gap. There were no sudden financial decisions that needed to be taken but ongoing savings discussions must continue with Directorates and it was unfortunate that government was requiring councils to make savings in the middle of a pandemic.

5.6 Members asked whether the £3.4m Council Tax Reduction Scheme funding was for one year. RR replied that it was, and she wanted therefore to use it as creatively and constructively as possible. She added that CTRS was structured very tightly in legislation so the Council could not change it in the short term even if it wanted to. The priority now was to have a scheme that can get this money out the door as quickly as possible. She added that when the Council took the scheme on they'd hoped to take the related mapping work over this year. Changes to the caseload and government alterations to the scheme itself meant they couldn't do that. There was a need for the government to make the parameters, in terms of spending, clearer.

On the 22/23 budget the gap had been closed by finding more savings and then a late announcement from the government. For the following year the concern is the government's decision on the Fair Funding issue and she wanted to make sure that the process for next year's budget begins now. After a decade of austerity finding any further savings would not be easy, she added. IW added that the final budget papers would clarify the medium to long term financial plan.

5.7 A Member asked that with the end of the Britannia project in sight what capacity was there to move on to other major capital projects such as King's Hall.

IW replied that Britannia is on track but Phase 2a and 2B were yet to be done. A Capital Management Review was taking place to determine which capital project might be next and they were conscious of the need to be ahead of the game. Resources, people and project management capacity need to be in place as well as the finances. Mayor Glanville added re King's Hall that it was not as easy a site to develop as it is a heritage site and would be more challenging to cross subsidise. There needed to be a plan first on how to fund the work but the priority in the short term was to keep it open and safe.

- 5.8 A Member asked about the transformation of the property portfolio and the need for a uniting vision for supporting both the voluntary sector and the business sector in terms of accommodation.

IW replied that the challenges faced by local high street were considerable but much work was going on by a range of council teams to support them. The first tranche of business grants had been completed. There was an Asset Management Review taking place in conjunction with the Voluntary Sector Lettings Policy to ensure that the Council was deploying its assets better and this involved Property Services, Regeneration, Finance and relevant Service departments. After the first lockdown a programme of support for commercial/VCS tenants was put in place and the Commercial Team had evolved their relationships with those tenants he added. So far, no tenant had to return their keys and the support from the Council was being acknowledged. This work has to be continually developed, however. The pandemic aftermath meant that the Council has to be mindful of the new challenges and to think more about what support can be put in place and to consider carefully the social value aspects. There were many examples of good practice out there, he added.

Mayor Glanville added that Hackney had seen a net increase in the VCS 'affordable use' space and referred to Clapton Common and the Marie Lloyd Centre examples. When the Council received assets back it had to consider carefully how to best deploy them. The first instinct with Hackney Wick developments for example wasn't about maximising income but rather how to best contribute to the wider regeneration of the area and how those assets can contribute to local culture and local VCS economy. This represented a shift in culture, he added. Across the VCS portfolio they had regularised the leases from 2011. They had put in place £4/sq ft rents which hadn't changed since. The Review however has to be completed this financial year because most of the leases with VCS sector are set to expire in 2022. The challenging bit relates to those leases which are in between commercial and VCS rent and about how to scope out value and balance VCS and community uses

- 5.9 A Member asked whether the new senior management structure would have budget implications and what the main budget challenges were from now on.

IW replied that this was the third restructure he had overseen and it was made clear from the outset that costs couldn't increase. There had, prior to this restructure, been a 40% reduction in senior management costs and so an need for increased productivity. There had also been savings from the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme and the savings from both of these meant they could bring in this senior management restructure as cost neutral.

On the next immediate challenges IW stated that, notwithstanding the pandemic and the impact of the cyber attack, there would be pressures in Children's Social Care. The austerity welfare reforms and the cuts to school budgets would also impact as there still weren't any national solutions on the level of the dedicated schools grant and or on SEND and the Council wanted a commitment that that be properly funded. Adult Social Care would continue to be a huge challenge which requires a national decision on funding. Temporary Accommodation remains a challenge and there will need to be more spent to bring back the local high streets. RR added that the challenge was immense.

She stated that there had been great discussions with Scrutiny Members over the past year and these needed to continue. She added that it would be easy to just focus on one or two key areas, but the Council had to look at services as a whole. Rough Sleeping for example represented a failure of statutory services generally. The key point was that it was not possible to just pick up one or two big ticket items in isolation.

- 5.10 Cllr Sharman (Chair of Audit Committee) congratulated the Cabinet Member on bringing the 21/22 budget in during such trying conditions saying it was a good result and a good process. He endorsed IW's point on the importance of securing 3-year projections from government. Coming out of Covid would create great challenges for a range of groups who have been adversely affected by it, he added, and there is a need to work towards a three-year budget plan rather than too many quick short-term solutions.

RR replied that they had put additional resources into the budget to plan exactly for this and she thanked IW and his team for rising to the challenge of budget forecasting in the current environment. Reflecting on the situation in Croydon and the Section 114 notice they had to make, she stated that the Auditor Report on it made clear how vital it was to be aware of how issues can build. We have to face the austerity challenge set by government she added, but we also have to be resilient. Finally, she cautioned that many of the new programmes that people want to take forward will have high recurring costs.

- 5.11 Cllr Sharman asked how best to take forward the successful work thus far between Audit and Scrutiny. RR replied that the Working Group had been very useful and had helped inform the budget setting process for the coming year. How do we get to balance the overall financial oversight role with Scrutiny Members wanting to get into the detail of savings proposals needs to be considered and she suggested that she would take a steer from the Chair of Audit and Scrutiny Panel Chair on how this balance might operate.

- 5.12 A Member asked about to build resilience in the voluntary sector and in local businesses and how to be on the front foot on these challenges.

RR replied that she wanted to reassure members that the Council needed to be strict with itself and realistic about building in all the necessary contingencies and fall backs. They had set a balanced budget now and also got resources to fall back on if needed.

Mayor Glanville commented on supporting the local economy to be resilient. He stated that teams in the Council were now working more closely, that communications and engagement was good, and progress was being made in place-based regeneration and housing delivery and this all linked into planning across the Town Centre teams. Teams were increasingly good at making Business Cases to Finance, for example on the enhancement of Hackney Central station. There was a huge amount of resilience in integrated education services regarding the skills offer and back to work schemes for those who will have had a long period of unemployment and he commended the Kickstart programme. adding that the Council needed to maintain investment in these. The Hackney Opportunities Service underpinned by S106 investments was another example. The point here was about making long term investments and this investment can be maintained for now.

- 5.13 The Chair thanked the Mayor, the Cabinet Member and Group Director for their contributions and for making time to attend.

RESOLVED:	That the presentation and reports be noted.
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8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 8.1 Members gave consideration to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 5 October and noted the matters arising.
- 8.2 Members noted a response from the Director of Communications, Culture and Engagement on the issue of social media training and the Chair undertook to take this forward with officers and Scrutiny Panel members.

ACTION:	Head of Scrutiny and Ward Forums to set up a session with Comms officers and Scrutiny Panel to progress the social media use training.
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RESOLVED:	That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October be agreed as a correct record and that the matters arising be noted.
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9 Work Programme 2020/21

- 9.1 Members' gave consideration to the updated work programme for the Panel. The Chair stated that the next meeting would include a discussion panel on food poverty and an update on the Advice Services review.

RESOLVED:	That the updated work programme be noted.
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10 Any Other Business

- 10.1 There was none.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00-9.05 pm



London Borough of Hackney
SCRUTINY PANEL
Municipal Year 2020/21
Date of Meeting: Monday, 8th March 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of
the Scrutiny Panel held
virtually from Hackney Town
Hall at 19.00 hrs

Chair	Councillor Margaret Gordon
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Polly Billington, Cllr Peter Snell, Cllr Ben Hayhurst, Cllr Sophie Conway, Cllr Sharon Patrick
Apologies:	None
Officers in Attendance	Sonia Khan (Head of Policy & Strategic Development) Claire Witney (Strategic Lead), Lisa-Raine Hunt (Strategic Delivery Manager), Adrian McDowell (Strategic Delivery Officer)
Other People in Attendance	Kye Lockwood (CEO, Hackney Foodbank), Sue Bell (Chair, Hackney Foodbank Board of Directors), Morven Oliver-Larkin (London Food Poverty Campaign Coordinator, Sustain), Colette Allen (CEO, Hackney Quest), Ali Kakande (Founder, Carib Eats), Kome Owuasuu (Development Manager, African Community School), Nicolette Nixon (Director, Morningside & Gascoyne), Oladapo Awosokanre (Programmes Coordinator, Community African Network), Joe Walker (Director, Round Chapel), Cllr Nick Sharman (Chair of Audit Committee)
Members of the Public	None
YouTube link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH0HIA1c8
Officer Contact:	Tracey Anderson ☎ 020 8356 3312 ✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Margaret Gordon in the Chair

- 1 **Apologies for Absence**
 - 1.1 There were no apologies.
- 2 **Urgent Items / Order of Business**
 - 2.1 There were no urgent items.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 National Food Poverty Landscape

4.1 Chair introduced the item citing that since the pandemic, Hackney Foodbank has had to distribute over 18,000 emergency food parcels and that usage of foodbanks has risen over 200% over 2 years.

4.2 Chair clarified that while the agenda listed invited guests for the item as being from the Trussell Trust, that they were actually representatives from Hackney Foodbank which is within the Trussell Trust's network of food banks.

4.3 Chair welcomed to the meeting:
Sonia Khan (Head of Policy & Strategic Development, LBH)
Morven Oliver-Larkin (London Food Poverty Campaign Coordinator, Sustain)
Sue Bell (Chair, Hackney Foodbank Board of Directors)
Kye Lockwood (CEO, Hackney Foodbank)

4.4 Chair invited the Head of Policy & Strategic Development to speak.

4.5 Head of Policy & Strategic Development stated that the whole of the items on the agenda is the way that the food poverty strategy is being delivered rather than just her specific section, clarifying further that there is no need to distinguish strategy from delivery.

4.6 Head of Policy & Strategic Development's presentation made the following points:

Pre-Pandemic Response to Food Poverty

4.6.1 During 2019, we had been working with Hackney Food Partnership to develop a food justice alliance and a food poverty plan. This responded to the fact that poverty has increased in recent years including in work poverty and that food poverty partners had seen a stark increase in demand on their services.

4.6.2 It enabled us to focus on food poverty as part of a wider commitment to tackle poverty.

4.6.3 The Food Poverty Action Plan, developed through lived experience insight, engagement and co-production with organisations was adopted in February 2020 with a focus on:

4.6.4 Better join up of emergency provision, better join up between food poverty and wider support and longer-term prevention.

4.6.5 We had 40 members and immediately went into the pandemic- now much larger number.

4.6.6 Action plan and underpinning research and insight:
<https://hackney.gov.uk/hackney-food-justice-alliance>.

Pandemic Response

- 4.6.7 Always knew the response needed to go well beyond those who were shielding to support wider groups impacted directly and indirectly.
- 4.6.8 Lockdown 1 - Council delivered direct support with food, funded an offer in the Orthodox Jewish community and this complemented a much wider offer delivered by volunteers and in the community through members of food justice alliance, other organisations, and mutual aid groups.
- 4.6.9 From summer - we decided to work with those community organisations to develop a partnership so that we could draw on these organisations directly rather than deliver direct support - different ways of working in partnership evolved:
- Consortia to take direct referrals from the helpline
 - Community partnerships network
 - Wider food justice alliance.
- 4.6.10 Ultimately, we were looking to have partnerships in place that could continue to respond to the material impacts of poverty and pick up on the more developmental areas highlighted in the food poverty plan - not losing sight of the actions needed to reduce poverty that are more structural and preventative.

Headlines

4.6.11 Pre pandemic:

- Just under 20% (17.9%) of Hackney households live in poverty before housing costs and this rises to over a third (36.3%) after housing costs - Hackney is ranked the third highest out of all London boroughs for poverty after housing costs.
- In 2019 it was estimated that 48% of children in Hackney were living in poverty after housing costs. Certain families are more likely to be affected by child poverty including lone-parent families, families with two or more children and families with children under 5 years old.
- 100% increase in food bank referrals from 2018-2019 - from 2500 over 5000.

4.6.12 Pandemic impact

- Whilst we don't have official data that shows how poverty has been impacted by Covid-19 we would expect this to have worsened because of the increase in benefit claimancy.
- Research from Trust for London also finds that areas that were the most deprived have been hit the hardest by unemployment during the pandemic.
- The latest figures of children who have applied for free school meals and been found eligible for them indicates a rise since this time last year: from 32.2% to 35.2% - an increase of 777 to 12,064 in total in the October 2020 school census.

Ways of Working Together

- 4.6.13 National context: no single policy or funding response to food poverty during the pandemic. By building a network we have been able to lever external funding and also to improve the way food surplus is brought into the borough and distributed:
- Worked with partners on a bid to DEFRA for food donations, investment from Investec of 12 weeks' worth of food and smaller grants for youth organisations from UNICEF or Sustain.
 - We have so far routed £280k from the Council's Community Grants budget to support communities impacted by the pandemic. This has been awarded through the London Community Response Fund.
 - We have also awarded £120k of grant funding from the DEFRA emergency assistance funding awarded to Local Authorities over the summer
 - We have grant funded organisations from the Orthodox Jewish community and funded a fuel voucher scheme funded through the Winter Grant to complement the funding of free school meal vouchers.
- 4.6.14 By opening a 3rd food surplus hub in Hackney City Farm we are able to maximise the level of food surplus received by Hackney and allocate this effectively out to groups. We have tried to pick up on logistical issues - transport, accommodation.
- 4.7 Chair thanked the Head of Policy & Strategic Development and invited Morven Oliver-Larkin of Sustain to present.
- 4.8 Morven Oliver-Larkin advised that Sustain has been conducting research about what London Borough Local Authorities can do to help.
- 4.9 Morven Oliver-Larkin advised the piece of work/ report is called "Beyond the Food Bank" (BTFB).
- 4.10 Morven Oliver-Larkin advised that the report had somewhat changed owing to C19.
- 4.11 It was advised that the updated report compares measures in place prior to the pandemic and what measures are in place now. The information was primarily gathered via a survey. All the recommendations contained within the report should reflect what is happening on the ground with local authorities and food poverty.
- 4.12 It was echoed that levels of food poverty were high before the C19 crisis, but that the levels have certainly been exacerbated.
- 4.13 It was advised that, very broadly, local authorities can look at: systemic, holistic approaches, convener and coordinator, and cash-first approaches (i.e. investing in local schemes over investing in emergency relief).
- 4.14 Morven Oliver-Larkin directed attention to the list of recommendations found in Sustain's report which can be found in the agenda reports pack.

- 4.15 Expanding on cash-first approaches, Morven gave examples of paying living wage/ living hours to staff, investing in local welfare assistance schemes, and wraparound support within services. The report shows that councils already using this approach were able to respond rapidly, and respond well, to the demands of Covid-19 on Food Poverty.
- 4.16 In cases where councils had to start new schemes, it has been noted that this is a very substantial amount of work compared to the cash-first approaches.
- 4.17 Chair thanked Morven Oliver-Larkin and invited Kye Lockwood and Sue Bell of Hackney Food Bank to present.
- 4.18 The presentation focused on what has happened in regard to the food poverty landscape since the outset of pandemic. A statistic that was given that more residents used the Hackney foodbank in the second quarter of the year than in the entire year previous.
- 4.19 In terms of trends, it was observed that an increase in demand on Food Banks occurs whenever a lockdown is in place, and whenever schools are shut. Further, the longer the lockdowns last, the worse the increase on Food Bank demand becomes.
- 4.20 It was noted that the increase in Food Bank users between 2019 & 2020 was 20,000 from 8,000. Also, at the outset of 2021, the Food Banks are commencing with a higher demand than when lockdowns first arrived, painting the picture of a growing need.
- 4.21 A 'heatmap' of London was shown depicting where the areas of greatest Food Bank demand are. It was noted that Hackney Food Bank was one of the few banks in the Trussell Trust's network that remained open during the initial lockdown.
- 4.22 Prior to COVID, the Food Bank operated with a 'café style' approach; residents were referred to the bank via another service, and they could sit in the bank and select food, but owing to social distancing constraints, the service moved to an 'at the door' style approach, a notable difference being that the element of selecting which food to take away was eliminated for pre-packed parcels.
- 4.23 It was noted that the Food Bank ran lunch clubs during school holidays to address childhood hunger, and that the clubs had to be replaced with other services during the pandemic.
- 4.24 One of the key challenges for the Food Bank has been partnership working with other services. It was noted that agencies usually refer people to the Food Bank, and that those agencies are usually in a position to assess need and provide other wrap-around support, as well as advice on auxiliary issues like applying for benefits.
- 4.25 The Food Bank representatives advised that many of their partner organisations were invited to the Food Bank to sit and provide advice, but that too has had to stop due to the pandemic restrictions. It was noted that as an alternative, the Bank has created 'signposting sheets' which indicate to their users where advice services can be found.

- 4.26 The Food Bank representatives echoed that 'cash-first' is best practise when combating local food poverty, giving examples of pension credit investment to alleviate the numbers of over-65's using Food Banks.
- 4.27 The lack of face-to-face meetings and digital poverty were noted as substantial concerns of the Food Bank & advice services.
- 4.28 Chair thanked the Food Bank representatives and introduced the next item, inviting the Strategic Delivery Manager to commence the item with a presentation.
- 4.29 Chair welcomed to the meeting:
Claire Witney (Strategic Lead)
Lisa-Raine Hunt (Strategic Delivery Manager)
Adrian McDowell (Strategic Delivery Officer).

5 Hackney Food Justice Alliance & Hackney Food Network

- 5.1 Strategic Delivery Manager's presentation on the Food Justice Alliance & Hackney Food Network covered the following:

Hackney Food Justice Alliance (HFJA)

- 5.2 In 2018 the Council made a commitment to create the first inclusive economy strategy for Hackney and develop a poverty reduction framework, to work towards making the borough a place where our residents thrive.
- 5.3 Founded in 2018 by residents from the Hackney Food Partnership, the HFJA was originally a coalition of over 40 statutory services and community and voluntary organisations across the borough. Membership now has over 100 partners.
- 5.4 Membership spans public health services, schools, faith groups, food growers and suppliers, community food projects and advice providers.
- 5.5 The Food Poverty Action Plan 2020-2022 was developed in 2019 through engagement with HFJA partners and wider stakeholders that included a workshop with over 50 services and organisations attending in October 2019.

HFJA Aim and Objectives

- 5.6 To reduce food poverty in Hackney by both mitigating its impacts and addressing the underlying causes.
- 5.7 Better understand the causes and consequences of food poverty in Hackney and use it to create lasting local solutions.
- 5.8 Empower those with the lived experience to contribute to the analysis, design and delivery of HFJA actions, as equals.
- 5.9 Map existing food justice actions, information, and resources, and identify gaps.

- 5.10 Improve sharing of information, learning and best practice and strengthen coordination between partners.
- 5.11 Develop and deliver an inclusive, cross-sectoral Food Poverty Action Plan.

Covid-19 Response - lockdown 1

- 5.12 Survey to HFJA network, to try and understand what support could be offered by the Council to support HFJA efforts to respond to Covid-19.
- 5.13 Staff member from P&SD dedicated to co-ordinating suggestions, asks, and offers.
- 5.14 Encouraged the use of HFJA mailing list and collaboration between groups to continue partnership independent of the Council as well as direct Council support.
- 5.15 Council stepped up an ambient food parcel offer through a newly created helpline and Here East food hub. 4x VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector) partners grant funded to provide hot food services.
- 5.16 HFJA partners began independently providing hot food and grocery parcels and many wider VCS partners pivoted activities to respond to community food needs.

Covid-19 Response – maintaining support

- 5.17 Government announced the end of shielding support, and the Council continued the Covid-19 helpline.
- 5.18 Community Partnerships Network established to continue to support residents impacted directly or indirectly by Covid-19, in closer partnership with VCS.
- 5.19 Council stepped down its direct food offer in July 2020. Food Network established to increase partnership and support for VCS groups directly providing food.
- 5.20 Increased staff resource directed into supporting partners to stabilise their food offer and understand capacity in the system to meet demand.
- 5.21 Support included signposting and advice for grant applications, establishment of community surplus food hubs, linking partners to venues, volunteering and more.

Covid-19 Response - Increased Demand

- 5.22 Number of residents needing food support increased through 2020, with a sharper increase in January 2021 due to the impact of winter season and the latest lockdown.
- 5.23 Food partners worked with the Council to develop an open system of referrals/sign posting based on regular self-assessment of their own capacity.

- 5.24 Building on this, our team worked with partners to develop local food 'consortia' of groups prepared to work more closely with the Council to develop a direct referral system for residents self-isolating as 'shielding' or following a positive C-19 test.
- 5.25 Six food consortia funded by direct Council grants for residents shielding or isolating.
- 5.26 Broader food poverty response funded through the Council's contribution to the London Community Response Fund.

Food Network - Achievements To Date

- 5.27 Over 40 Hackney voluntary and community organisations providing food parcels, cooked food, food hubs, community supermarkets and co-ops.
- 5.28 Focus on local place based and asset-based community programmes.
- 5.29 Estimated 1500+ hackney residents volunteering to enable the network.
- 5.30 Movement from food aid to food solidarity - increase in programmes led by residents with lived experience and recipients are enabled to actively participate and volunteer.
- 5.31 Increased offer of culturally and dietary specific food.
- 5.32 Network partners are forming local consortia and networks, independently supporting each other with food, space, volunteers, and deliveries.
- 5.33 Over 300,000 food parcels and cooked meals provided since April 2020.

Food Network - Sustainable Provision

- 5.34 Food partners are beginning to shape and lead network meetings and future planning.
- 5.35 Research and development of community supermarkets, food coops and cash first approaches - HFJA subgroup has submitted an application to the GLA Food Roots Incubator programme to further this development.
- 5.36 Management Trainee 6-month placement across Community Partnership Network and Anti-Racism Action Plan will work with partners to further record lived experience of food poverty and to ensure sustainability of culturally specific food access.
- 5.37 Food Network contribution to wider Hackney strategy and transformation - including Poverty Reduction, Green Recovery and Preventative Approach development.
- 5.38 Increased independent collaboration with Hackney Community Halls, Public Health, and wider Council services.

Food Network - Meeting HFJA Objectives

- 5.39 Better understand the causes and consequences of food poverty in Hackney and use it to create lasting local solutions.
- Increased insight gained that will shape more effective future solutions.
- 5.40 Empower those with the lived experience to contribute to the analysis, design and delivery of HFJA actions, as equals.
- Many food programmes are now led by residents with lived experience who play a vital role in ongoing analysis, design, and delivery.
- 5.41 Map existing food justice actions, information, and resources, and identify gaps. Find Support Services Map and Food Network signposting sheet established.
- 5.42 Improve sharing of information, learning and best practice and strengthen coordination between partners.
- Monthly Food Network meetings, weekly mailing updates, active HFJA email network.
- 5.43 Develop and deliver an inclusive, cross-sectoral Food Poverty Action Plan.
- Increase in culturally and dietary specific provision, increased diversity of HFJA partners.
- 5.44 Chair thanked Strategic Delivery Manager for the presentation and moved onto the next segment of this topic: hearing from representatives of the Hackney Food Network. Chair invited Colette Allen (CEO, Hackney Quest) to present.
- 5.45 Colette Allen advised that Hackney Quest was previously (pre-pandemic) delivering meals to young people in the borough but after the first lockdown they adapted that service into a food bank, partly through partnership working, giving the example of a temple in Slough that provides substantial amounts of food for them to distribute.
- 5.46 It was advised that the small foodbank they operated that distributed 30 meals each Friday was able to increase that number to 90 via their partnership working. This food was delivered to isolated community members.
- 5.47 It was advised that Hackney Quest is now the lead consortia partner within its consortia, noting that the organisation was already working with other members of the consortia prior to COVID-19.
- 5.48 It was stated that she is very impressed with the work of the Hackney Food Network, mentioning Lisa specifically, and noting that the sense of trust was valuable to collaborative working, and working rapidly.
- 5.49 Colette Allen was briefly cut out from the virtual meeting owing to a connection problem, and on her return, the chair asked a question about recommendations going forward.
- 5.50 It was advised that, making sure the recipients of food from Hackney Quest need to be remembered and included to make sure the wider food networks in

the borough can cater to their needs as the situation progresses up to and beyond the end of pandemic/ lockdowns.

- 5.51 Chair thanked Collette and invited Ali Kakande (Founder, Carib Eats) to present.
- 5.52 Ali Kakande advised that Carib Eats has not long been established and was created as a response to a mutual aid call-out message from a vulnerable resident in the borough who'd recently had a lot of their support network fall through. Ali was cooking Caribbean food when she saw the message and decided to deliver food to that person. Since then, the organisation has grown to delivering 72 meals a week.
- 5.53 It was advised that in addition to delivering the meals, the service connects and chats with the recipients (as far as social distancing allows) and conducts a welfare check once a week.
- 5.54 It was advised that working with partners in the network has been of benefit, giving the example of emails sent highlighting services to each other that they may not have been otherwise aware of.
- 5.55 Ali Kakande also spoke to what is lacking in terms of support, stating that she's running Carib Eats alone, effectively, and stating that more accessible funds would be crucial for the organisation to continue in its work. It was noted that the waiting list to use Carib Eats is larger than its current client list and funding applications are very time consuming for someone in her position to regularly complete.
- 5.56 It was advised that some of the referrals are on behalf of residents for whom plant-based food is culturally inappropriate, hence the necessity for her service.
- 5.57 It was advised that the organisation makes use of a space in Lea View house, but on a limited, 1-day per week basis and has a team comprising of: a head chef, a community cook and a young person. It was stated their aim is to bring in more young people from the community to assist with deliveries
- 5.58 In terms of recommendations, it was suggested that micro-organisations like hers should not be forgotten about in terms of funding and support, giving an example of a referral that came to her shortly before the meeting that she unfortunately had to decline. Ali's hope is to be less reliant on funding and more self-sustaining for the long term.
- 5.59 Chair thanked Ali Kakande for their contribution and asked Kome Owusu (Development Manager, African Community School) to present.
- 5.60 Kome Owusu advised the group was initially supporting families with shopping online, but due to COVID-19, since March, the group has been helping families access culturally appropriate food.
- 5.61 Kome Owusu extended thanks to the Food Network for their assistance in the work of ACS but stated that there is a concern around the feasibility of continuing their work in the long term.

- 5.62 Chair thanked Kome Owusu and invited Nicolette Nixon (Director, Morningside & Gascoyne) to present.
- 5.63 Nicolette Nixon advised that Morningside & Gascoyne receives regular supplies from the Felix Project, and they were able to distribute that mainly amongst their estate.
- 5.64 Nicolette Nixon told an anecdote about a resident who'd suffered strokes and a heart attack who had struggled to secure support or food, even with the assistance of their care worker. The resident phoned by chance and the organisation was able to assist him. Stories like this, Nicolette explained, helped focus their efforts.
- 5.65 Nicolette Nixon stressed the importance of involving young people in these efforts, which they did from an early stage. In addition to delivering meals, it's of key importance for the young to engage with older residents, talk to them, and discover what other needs they might have.
- 5.66 Nicolette Nixon observed the benefits of partnership work in the last year, noting that the mutual support has strengthened the network as a whole.
- 5.67 While Nicolette Nixon is of the opinion that sometimes councils can appear to release funding in an uneven manner, the funding for the food network since pandemic has been much fairer.
- 5.68 It was advised that some residents who are in receipt of food are also helping the organisation deliver it, something which has proved fulfilling for them in terms of contributing to the system of food delivery that they benefit from.
- 5.69 In terms of recommendations, it was warned that the borough would likely continue to see food poverty even when lockdown ends, and that further support will almost certainly be needed to continue their work. Nicolette also praised the food hubs, noting that Morningside & Gascoyne is one of 3 in the borough.
- 5.70 Chair thanked Nicolette Nixon and invited Oladapo Awosokanre (Programmes Coordinator, Community African Network) to present.
- 5.71 By way of introduction, Oladapo Awosokanre explained that the community African Network is made up of 11 African-led charities, and the network has focussed on health and wellbeing since its inception in 2016.
- 5.72 Owing to the pandemic, the network has had to adapt and focus on food access, noting that many African service users have been unable to access culturally appropriate food.
- 5.73 It was advised the network is made up of 2 Congolese charities that accommodate French speakers in Hackney, a Somali organisation, 2 organisations that work with Eastern African residents including Swahili speakers, and an organisation that works with Eritrean & Ethiopian residents. Oladapo that many residents within these communities were affected by losing their jobs, and owing to visa issues, many have to recourse to public funds.

5.74 It was advised that around June/ July last year, funding was made available to support undocumented residents. Despite that welcome funding, it proved inadequate, only being sufficient to help a few residents rather than all. As a main recommendation, Oladapo called for continued and greater funding.

5.75 It was noted that the network has been able to serve African and Caribbean residents during pandemic, including food deliveries on Saturday; over 500 families have been supported in this manner in the last 9 months. There has also been support rendered for topping up of utilities and mobile phones.

5.76 It was stated that despite the group receiving funding from DEFRA and the London Community Foundation, partnership networking and funding will be essential to meeting needs beyond lockdown. Oladapo called for more availability of culturally appropriate food, and further support for those with no recourse to public funds and undocumented migrants.

5.77 Chair thanked Oladapo Awosokanre for their contribution and invited Joe Walker (Director, Round Chapel) to present.

5.78 Joe Walker advised that Round Chapel was already rendering food support when the pandemic hit. When the first lockdown was introduced, Round Chapel's response was very reactive, and they utilised their own networks, mutual-aid groups, and partners to try and accurately identify the level of need.

5.79 Working directly with their housing team that speaks with families in temporary housing specifically, Joe observed that supporting these families in terms of food poverty as well as other issues was another focus of their diagnostics. A phone line and an online support portal was established for these families, the purpose of which was to create a safe space for these families to discuss their issues around food poverty and access to other services. Round Chapel is currently working with 29 families which are particularly vulnerable with complex needs. Joe noted that these families are very socially isolated, and that the fear of being able to get outside with their children could've been a hindrance to support. Joe advised that staff members were trained for low-level casework to assist.

5.80 Joe Walker provided a statistic that 23/29 families Round Chapel is working with received support from Round Chapel exclusively. This identifies a gap between services that are in place via the council and what is actually happening in the community. Joe would offer the recommendation of taking the experience of the food partnership network and advancing that work as the country comes out of lockdown and harnessing that work to 'reset' the relationship between statutory services and residents most in need, both in terms of food poverty, but also wider needs. The opportunity to redesign how these services and support networks operate is upon organisations as a result of the lockdown response.

5.81 Chair thanked Joe Walker for their contribution and announced the meeting would break for 5 minutes.

5.82 Chair resumed the meeting and invited Adrian McDowell (Strategic Delivery Officer) to the meeting to present on the Strategic Direction of HFJA and Food Action Plan.

5.83 Strategic Delivery Officer highlighted the positives from the lockdown, namely the networks food response and the power of food bringing people together.

5.84 It was highlighted that the original food Action Plan was incorporated into Hackney's response to the pandemic, noting culturally appropriate food as one way that the original plan featured in the reactive response.

5.85 It was advised that a range of models would be needed going forward, i.e. co-op models, community supermarkets, and other social enterprise models. Food growing was also provided as an example of a potential emerging model.

5.86 Strategic Delivery Officer's presentation on the next 12 months and the Strategic Direction of HFJA Action Plan Contained the Following:

5.87 Key questions:

- What food access landscape do we want to develop in Hackney?
- What is the strategic direction the HFJA wants to go in?
- How do we maintain what has been achieved over the past twelve months and develop this further?
- What can we give more attention to as we head into the summer and beyond?

5.88 Some ideas to test:

- Developing different models for food provision and access (e.g. Food co-operatives, community supermarkets, social enterprise models)
- Food growing schemes
- Connections between food access and other services (e.g. advice, housing and health)
- Specific groups and issues: young people and the strategic approach to FSM (Free School Meals) and food access for older people.

5.89 Strategic Delivery Officer advised that the conversation with the members of the Food Network & Justice Alliance is due to start shortly.

5.90 Head of Policy & Strategic Development wished to expand on Adrian's presentation making a distinction between the direction of the Hackney Food Justice Alliance and the wider goals of the organisation.

5.91 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that two developments have started, one to ways of working (the 'Here to Help' line) which has developed a range of strength-based tools around having conversations with service users. These tools will be applied elsewhere in the council in the future as well as in other organisations. The work on embedding the trust that's developed between organisations and residents will be looked at in terms of how best to preserve it.

5.92 Where the network goes next is another development being considered. While there will be no 'business as usual' immediately after lockdown ends, some of the members of the food network initially based as a youth provider will wish to return to those activities. It therefore will be a necessary piece of work to determine which groups want to remain in this space, and what the core group who remains will need to continue their work. Another example was given as to what extent partnership

working with the council will continue, and conversely, whether in some cases whether the council will step back. Sonia emphasised that this work isn't 'ending' but will continue, and as it does so, the specific needs of people will be addressed in addition to the general needs that have been addressed thus far.

5.93 Chair thanked the Head of Policy & Strategic Development and invited Claire Whitney (Strategic Lead) to present on the advice services update.

5.94 Strategic Lead advised that the council's model for advice has been largely informed by existing systems thinking review which was initiated in 2016. It was important to approach this work with an understanding of advice services from client's perspectives, but also from the perspective of frontline workers. It is also a method by which the council can fully engage with the advice sector rather than imposing a top-down service review.

5.95 Strategic Lead advised that the aim of the approach is to work with partners, learn, and implement learning on an ongoing basis; one benefit of this approach is being able to work together when informing new models for advice.

5.96 There is also a consideration to understand the management thinking that shapes the advice systems in place for everyone working within it, the wider systems, and the complex impacts on advice providers from external sources (local authority, DWP), and how demand coming into the service is being viewed and managed.

5.97 Systems change requires challenging cultural and behavioural system shifts, and longer-term redesign of services is a substantial undertaking. One of the key things we've learned is that 'unlearning' is difficult and challenges existing thought on the subject, but necessary.

5.98 A new framework for advice was launched in November 2018 which had a clear purpose – to help service users solve their problems and regain independence by promptly being given the right advice and support. The frameworks set out the range of measures that the council sought to better understand and learn from. Recommendations were taken to cabinet in March 2019.

5.99 It was advised that this was the point at which there was engagement with scrutiny, and work with approximately 20 organisations which the council wanted to fund and work with following a grant application process was underway.

5.100 Since May 2019, there has been an intensive process of working with providers to put the new service into practice. As a new service, there was substantial investment and commitment to getting it right. Over the first year, regular meetings were held to share learning, address emerging issues in the service, and there was a lot of work that included observing the work, learning together, and peer observations between providers.

5.101 This work has attempted to replace the more traditional performance management approach. The measures of success put in place focus on who was accessing the services, who is unable to access the services, what's driving that demand, and how people's needs are being met. It was important that judgements were not made on advice providers' ability to administer their service but ask how well systems are working and then determining what the council needed to learn and change.

5.102 It was advised that this approach was going well until the pandemic hit, and at that point, the approach had to stop. It wasn't possible to continue to work so closely with advice providers, especially on their premises. As a team, they looked more towards community support.

5.103 Strategic Lead advised the pandemic revealed and made-worse the levels of vulnerability and as such a major focus of their work shifted to supporting protected residents. The traditional processes the team had been trying to move away from fell away as the team tried to wrap their service around vulnerable residents. It was noted that the experience of assisting these residents during the pandemic has helped the team learn the new ways of working that they were aspiring to.

5.104 It was advised that the team went to cabinet in December asking them to extend the advice grant for the 20 partners they're working with, adding that consistency to support and advice services is particularly important at this time.

5.105 It was advised that owing to the increasingly essential nature of the advice services, and the change of work that's taken place since pandemic, this is an important time to look at ways of working analytically to ensure the service is fit for purpose moving forward. It was advised that a major aim is to work through the initiatives that have emerged through pandemic with the advice providers to ensure they're sustainable, and to fully understand how they work.

5.106 Chair thanked Strategic Lead for their contribution and opened the meeting to questions.

5.107 Chair posed a question to the representative from Sustain, asking what their main recommendations for Hackney would be.

5.108 Morven Oliver-Larkin responded by saying strength-based approaches have a lot of value within a wider framework of work, but for certain demographics, in particular older residents and those with disabilities, there is a need for particular service provision. Morven advised Sustain does have a report looking at meals on wheels services during pandemic, and the findings show that there will always be a demographic that relies on this type of support. This was noted to be a key recommendation. Strong referral processes and tendering & funding were listed as recommendations, and so too was the introduction of mapping exercises e.g. seeing if a basket of culturally-appropriate food within 15 minutes of home is affordable.

5.109 Cllr Billington referred to the recommendation in the Sustain report regarding the continuation of 'meals on wheels' services, what the Head of Policy & Strategic Development's opinion is of the loss of the meals on wheels service in Hackney, and what kind of replacement service might be needed going forward.

5.110 The Head of Policy & Strategic Development responded by saying the question would be better posed to decision makers within the council, i.e., cabinet lead, but in terms of pandemic response the need for hot food to be provided to a large group was clearly identified. Further, that need is best served through a culturally appropriate offer,

5.111 Cllr Hayhurst stated the necessity for the cohort of people with no recourse to public funds to be able to comfortably access food & Covid-19 vaccinations, no

questions asked, calling for something firm, and recommending the council approach Hackney Migrant Centre.

5.112 The Head of Policy & Strategic Development responded saying there is full understanding of these requirements, and that a hardship fund was developed over the summer specifically to support residents with no recourse to public funds, adding that alone isn't sufficient. There is ongoing work across council departments to understand how the council can improve the offer for those with no recourse to public funds, it is at the forefront of the council's mind; the complexity of need is driving approaches to a connected response.

5.113 Cllr Snell posed a question about whether the sustainability of government funding for volunteers during cuts is on the council agenda to ensure a continuity of service.

5.114 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised there has been work with Volunteer Centre Hackney on freeing up their existing funds, so not all the funding had been additional. It was stated that feeding the work of volunteers into the upcoming grants review, and that the funding for volunteers will continue to be looked at.

5.115 Cllr Snell asked if there could be more research and outreach into what kind of food is healthy, and also culturally appropriate to ensure funding goes as far as possible.

5.116 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that linking food poverty to healthy living is part of conversations already underway with Public Health, and standards around healthy living will be built in.

5.117 Cllr Patrick raised a concern about vulnerable service users 'slipping through the net' once the pandemic ends and the continuity of support.

5.118 The Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that identifying these gaps and closing them is part of the work looking at ways of working, and part of the learning that is coming out of the pandemic response.

5.119 Strategic Lead added that partnership working with smaller community groups is the best way to reach vulnerable service users that might otherwise be unidentified to the council.

5.120 Cllr Patrick also observed the presence of food deserts in several wards in the borough, asking whether the council could work with local, smaller shops, which are usually more expensive, to work together to increase their buying power and in so doing, lower their prices.

5.121 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that things like community supermarkets and food co-ops are being considered, and as the council's response moves out of the emergency/ reactive phase, this work will continue.

5.122 Cllr Conway expressed concern of members of the partnership network returning to their original functions and whether the cash-first offer could offset the loss of those organisation's contributions.

5.123 Head of Policy & Strategic Development advised that a more enhanced way of working between the council, CCG (Clinical Commissioning Groups) and colleagues in Health will work as a collaborative effort and offset any changes to the activities of the organisations within the food network.

5.124 Strategic Lead added that there was a focus on partnership work, even before the pandemic, and the enthusiasm and transformational qualities of that work means it is unlikely to stop at the end of the pandemic.

5.125 Strategic Delivery Manager advised that their team has started speaking to the Hackney Business Partnership & the manager leading on Inclusive Economy is getting more involved with food poverty work. This work will allow social enterprises and micro-organisations to continue their work, and there is also work looking at galvanising other types of support from local businesses from funding to logistical support. It was also advised that one of the directorate's management trainees will be looking at culturally appropriate food offers over the 6 months specifically.

5.126 Joe Walker stated that the next 2 years will likely be more challenging than the last year due to small organisations surviving on emergency funding that may shortly cease. Joe added that the conversations the council is having will be crucial to resetting partnership working to ensure the work happening is sustainable.

5.127 Cllr Sharman expressed concern over unmet needs across the borough and called for the food network to gather intelligence as much as respond to need. Further, Cllr Sharman observed that this issue is broader than the traditional intradepartmental approaches, and there needs to be work on identifying the size of the problems to ensure that funding understanding is realistic and accurate.

5.128 Chair observed that Hackney's food strategy has to be closely embedded with other council services and thanked Joe for his well-put point.

5.129 Head of Policy & Strategic Development stated to the members present that her team can return to talk about poverty reduction work and added that another £500k has been added to the budget for poverty reduction which demonstrates corporate commitment to collaborative working around the issue.

5.130 Chair closed the item, thanking all participants.

6 Work Programme 2020/2021

6.1 Chair stated that the work programme is in development for the new municipal year, but echoed Sonia's suggestion that poverty reduction should feature.

7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

7.1 Chair advised that, from matters arising, the chief executive is going to confirm the date to launch the new bullying and harassment strategy, and the head of scrutiny ward forums will set up a session with comms officers and scrutiny panel to progress social media training.

7.2 Chair asked members to agree to the previous minutes.

RESOLVED:	That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st February 2021 be agreed as a correct record and that the matters arising be noted.
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8 Any Other Business

8.1 There was none.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00-9.36 pm