



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.