

A FOOD ACTION PLAN FOR ENFIELD



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1. Introduction

Access to adequate food is internationally recognised as a basic human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care.”¹

Definition of food poverty

Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g. without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies).

1.1 PREVALENCE OF FOOD POVERTY

There is currently no systematic measure for food poverty in the UK and therefore the true scale of the problem is not known, COVID-19 has almost certainly made the scale of food poverty worse.

Even before the pandemic the number of Londoners experiencing extreme hardship was on the rise. In 2019, 440,000 Londoners, including 60,000 children, were destitute at some point – meaning they had gone without two or more essentials like food, shelter, heating, or clothing in a single month. This was an increase of 28 per cent since 2017 and those most at risk of destitution include those who have been worst hit by the economic and health consequences of the pandemic².

The study also found that in Enfield, one in five adults had low or very low food security, which was similar to the London average of 21%.³ Foodbank usage is not a good overall measure of low food security⁴, however, the North Enfield Food Bank, Enfield’s largest and most established foodbank, has seen a year-on-year increase since it opened in 2012.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

² https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/44268032/Destitution_2020_London_Findings.pdf

³ <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/survey-of-londoners-headline-findings>

⁴ According to the Food Foundation, some people who are food insecure do not use emergency food aid for a variety of reasons: stigma, access, or they may think their situation is not as bad as it could be and the service should be reserved for those who are even worse off.

1.2 THE IMPACT OF FOOD POVERTY

Food Security is essential for physical and mental health. Poor diet has the potential to impact every stage of the life spectrum, increasing risk of illness, reducing a person's quality of life and reducing their life chances. Children in food insecure households are more likely to develop asthma, depression and other chronic conditions. Their growth and development are impaired and their learning is poorer. The long summer holidays are estimated to result in weeks of learning loss from some children through a combination of social isolation, low levels of stimulation and activity, and poor diets⁵.

The nature of the UK's food system means that people who are struggling to afford enough to eat are dependent on inexpensive but less nutritious and more caloric food. Fruit and vegetables are often too expensive. The combined consequence of these factors is that food poverty and unhealthy diets are interrelated, which can lead to diet-related disease and obesity.⁶ Enfield has some of the highest obesity rates in London, which in turn has some of the highest in Europe.

1.3 DRIVERS OF FOOD POVERTY

Hunger in the UK is mainly driven by people not having enough money to pay for essentials. Low levels of benefit income are a key factor driving this, as well as the operation and adequacy of the benefits system, low wages and insecure work, and the rising cost of living. During Covid, isolation was also an issue with people unable to get to the shops. Local foodbanks have confirmed that these factors are also the main reasons for people accessing their services.

Often food poverty and economic poverty are linked with rent, tax and debt being a fixed expense whereas food can be viewed as being a flexible budget item that can easily be compromised.⁷

⁵ <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/improving-child-food-insecurity-in-london-with-the-childrens-right2food-charter-and-the-childrens-food-watchdog-2/>

⁶ https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Affordability-of-the-Eatwell-Guide_Final_Web-Version.pdf

⁷ <https://www.foodethicscouncil.org/society/food-poverty.html>

2. About the action plan

The independent [Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission](#) (EPIC) made 27 recommendations to address the issues of poverty and inequality in the borough. One of the recommendations of the EPIC report is that the *voluntary and community sector, supported by the Council, should create a Food Action Plan for Enfield, to ensure all families have access to healthy food; to include a 'holiday hunger' programme and a 'Kitchen for all' at a community venue in the East of the Borough.*

The Enfield Food Alliance has played a central role in the development of the action plan, with support from the Council. The Alliance is a network of over 40 local organisations who are working together to strategically address household food insecurity in the borough. It is committed to taking a whole systems approach to tackling food poverty and will work collaboratively to address the priorities outlined in the action plan. The action plan is dynamic and will adapt to changes in need over time.

The action plan has been informed by various workshops, focus groups, surveys and interviews with people who have lived experience of household food insecurity, food aid project managers, other frontline staff and stakeholders. Findings from the Enfield Food Poverty Profile have been taken into account, as have recommendations and best practice from expert resources such as [Food Power](#).

It is recognised that food poverty is an acute form of poverty that cannot be addressed through food alone. It can only be solved in the longer term through tackling the root causes of food poverty such as fair and reliable income and good, secure housing. Issues like these are being addressed through the implementation of the recommendations from the independent EPIC report. There are other strategies and action plans in place that will also help tackle some of the underlying causes of food poverty and create a more sustainable food system. These actions will not be repeated in the Food Action Plan but can be accessed through the links below:

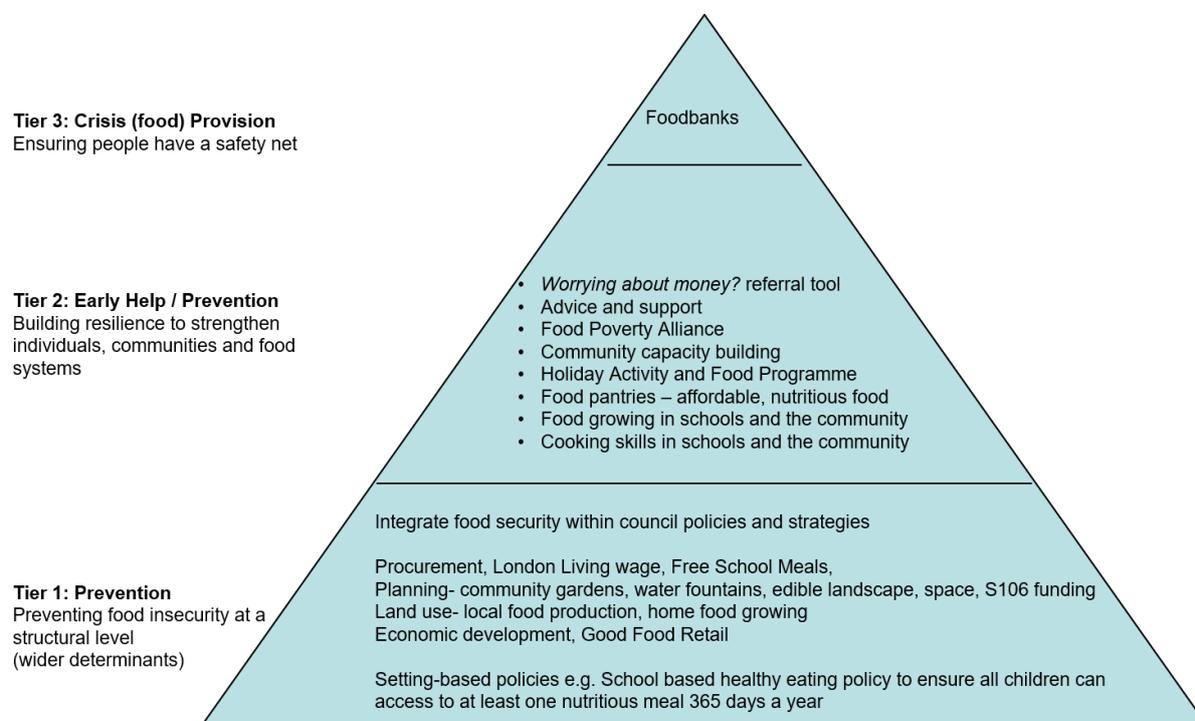
- Key objectives from [A Progressive Approach to Managing Debt and Income in Enfield](#) strategy are to protect vulnerable and low income households and to increase the provision of co-ordinated debt, benefit and other advice

- The [Enfield Climate Action Plan](#) sets out actions to increase local food production and opportunities for using land for growing; reduce food waste and increase food composting
- Enfield is currently developing the Local Plan, which must be in general conformity with the [London Plan](#). The London Plan seeks to create healthy food environments and reduce the proliferation of hot food takeaways.
- The [draft Enfield Blue and Green Strategy](#) seeks to build capacity and support for food growing and production in the community

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3. Building food security in Enfield

The Enfield Food Action Plan is devised around three tiers of action; prevention, building resilience and emergency provision. Our goal is that *Everyone living in Enfield can afford and access suitable, nutritious food to meet their needs, with dignity and without resort to emergency food aid*



The action plan recognises that a lack of financial resources to buy food is a primary problem. Therefore, in the shorter term, the main focus of the action plan is supporting people to access financial support and advice so that they have enough money to buy food for themselves rather than having to rely on a food bank.

It also seeks to build resilience and create a healthy food environment that can reliably provide nutritious, affordable, socially acceptable and culturally suitable food within easy reach of communities and neighbourhoods with a particular emphasis on reducing inequalities.

PRIORITIES

1. Prevent food insecurity at a structural level
2. Build resilience at an individual, community and food system level
3. Ensure children's access to nutritious food 365 days
4. Adopt a cash first approach
5. Improve crisis (food) provision
6. Monitoring and evaluation

ENFIELD FOOD ACTION PLAN – DRAFT

- **PRIORITY 1: Prevent food insecurity at a structural level**

The Alliance recognises that rather than responding to the immediate need for food, more needs to be done at a strategic level to prevent people from facing food insecurity. We will therefore create local policies that will increase food security, and ensure a strategic, collaborative and joined up approach is taken with a particular emphasis on strengthening the Enfield Food Alliance.

We aim to

- strategically address food poverty across Enfield taking a collaborative, co-ordinated and consistent approach
- Integrate food security within council policies and strategies

As a result of doing this

The Enfield Food Alliance will grow in strength and be sustained

A named Council Officer in collaboration with the Enfield Food Alliance will ensure the Food Action plan is implemented and expanded. Funding and resources to implement the action plan are secured.

Preventative measures that seek to address household food insecurity and inequalities are in place, largely reversing the need for crisis intervention

- **PRIORITY 2: Build resilience**

We will build local food resilience by adopting a long-term, preventative approach to strengthen individuals, communities and local food systems. We will give individuals and communities opportunities to develop their cooking and growing skills. We recognise that the provision of free or affordable food from surplus or donated food is not a long-term solution to household food insecurity. Therefore, at the core of all projects will be financial, social and health and wellbeing support, in order to tackle the underlying causes of food poverty.

We aim to	As a result of doing this
<p>Individual resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give residents opportunities to increase their household income and access low cost nutritious food ○ Increase access to cooking and growing skills 	<p>More people can access and fully use low cost, nutritious food. Stigma is reduced.</p>
<p>Build community resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure information, opportunities, resources and expertise are shared across the Enfield Food Alliance ○ Develop food growing and cooking skills ○ Identify funding opportunities for community food projects or projects that seek to address the underlying causes of food poverty 	<p>An increase in the number of community-led solutions to food insecurity Communities are growing, cooking and sharing.</p>
<p>Build Food Systems Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure people have good physical access to nearby sources of affordable healthy food, including fresh fruit & vegetables ○ Develop a coordinated plan for the use of surplus foods 	<p>People have good physical access to nearby sources of affordable healthy food.</p> <p>Quality surplus food is redistributed effectively and impactfully.</p>

- **PRIORITY 3: Ensure children’s access to nutritious food 365 days**

Eating well is essential for children in their early years to help them grow and develop properly and establish good eating patterns. In primary school, free school meals are a critical safety net. For 10% of children, school lunch can be their biggest meal of the day, which leaves these children at risk of food insecurity during school holidays. Furthermore, almost three-quarters of teachers nationally reported seeing children arriving at school hungry. We will therefore take a number of actions to ensure children have access to nutritious food every day.

We aim to

- Support healthy eating in the early years by promoting breastfeeding, increasing the uptake of healthy start vouchers and improving healthy eating standards in early years
- Work with schools to make the “Worrying about money?” leaflet available to families; maximise uptake of free school meals; coordinate provision during the school holidays; and ensure families and care-leavers have access to support

As a result of doing this

Breastfeeding rates will increase

Uptake of Healthy Start will increase

Children and young people can access nutritious food 365 days a year, including during the school holidays

- **PRIORITY 4: Adopt a cash first approach**

We will maximise support available to those in financial hardship through embedding a cash first approach and ensure this approach is the first course of action. Financial support and advice should be offered to people before a referral is made to a food bank or equivalent. It is important that people are claiming what they are entitled to and are supported to access appropriate services to help them towards financial resilience. Pathways need to be clear, simple and reliable to ensure people know where to go and can be confident that support will be provided.

We aim to

- Increase knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise the key drivers of food poverty, to enable timely access to self-help, early help and preventative services
- Develop and widely promote the *Worrying about money* referral pathway leaflet
- Ensure that the first course of action for anyone requiring food aid, is to support them to access financial advice and support via the ‘Worrying about money?’ referral tool

As a result of doing this

People will receive financial support and advice.

- **PRIORITY 5: Improve crisis (food) provision**

We recognise that some people may be in receipt of full benefits and still don't have enough to survive on due to the cost of living in London and Enfield. Therefore, it's important to ensure everyone has a safety net and make it easy for people to access the support they need

We aim to	As a result of doing this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure people receive the right support at key points when they may be more vulnerable and / or isolated, for example, older people ○ Explore opportunities for providing supermarket vouchers over food parcels in a crisis situation ○ Develop an accessible referral pathway for food support services taking into account cultural needs ○ Ensure food provision is culturally responsive and nutritionally-balanced 	<p>People will receive culturally appropriate, nutritious food in a crisis situation.</p>

- **PRIORITY 6: Monitoring and evaluation**

Food insecurity is not routinely measured nationally or locally, yet accurate data is necessary to identify need, inform action and measure progress. We will therefore seek to systematically collect, report and monitor food insecurity data. We will also monitor the impact of the action plan according to the indicators required by the annual [Good Food for London and Beyond the Foodbank](#) reports, which shine a light on which boroughs are leading the way in creating a better food future for all Londoners. The Enfield Food Alliance steering group will be responsible for monitoring the action plan and will report to the Enfield Health and Wellbeing Board annually.

We aim to	As a result of doing this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Systematically collect, report and monitor food insecurity data 	<p>Indicators of food poverty are monitored over time and reported each year</p>