



TOWER HAMLETS

# Food Poverty

## Health & Adults Scrutiny Committee



# What is food poverty and who is most at risk

- Food poverty is the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.
- The main cause of food poverty is lack of money and resources. The food environment can also be a risk factor for food poverty.
- Some groups are more at risk of food poverty than others for example people who are unemployed, large young families and older adults.



# What we know - Data



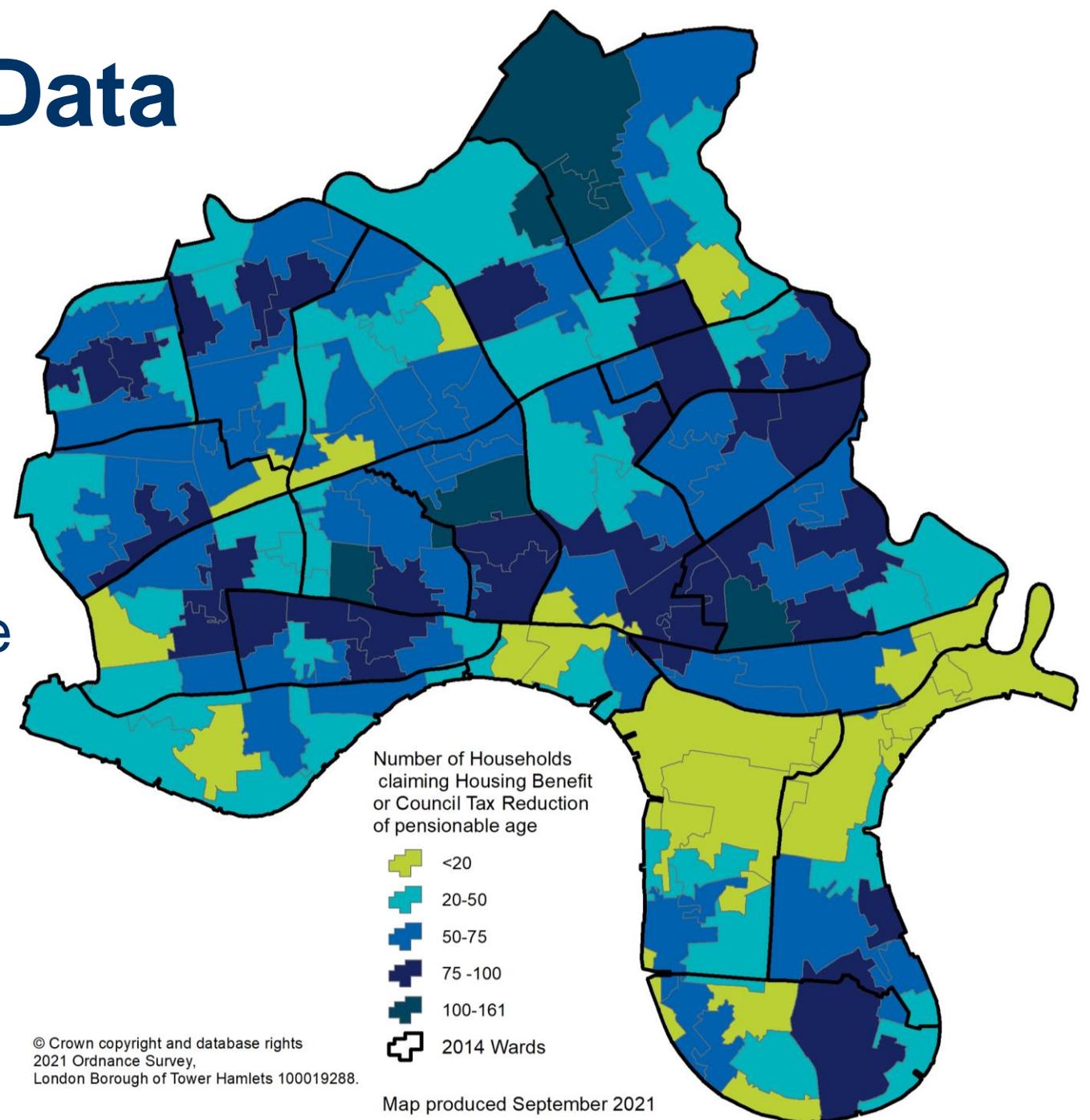
Indicator	Situation in LBTH
<b>Households living in food poverty</b>	4,393*
<b>Single parents with school age children eligible for Free School Meals</b>	4,545*
<b>Couples with school age children eligible for FSM</b>	6,292*
<b>Debt</b>	31% of LBTH residents were indebted in 2018.
<b>Pensioners in receipt of benefit</b>	51% of all pensioners in the borough are in receipt of some form of benefit (8,060 pensioners)  Of those 8,060 pensioners, 1,837 are in council tax arrears, totaling £738,379. Which is an average of £400 per person.
<b>Density of fast food outlets</b>	The density of fast-food outlets in local authorities in England ranges from 26 to 232 per 100,000 population. In Tower Hamlets the rate is 133.6 fast food outlets per 100,000 population.

\* Sept 2020 data. Likely to be an underestimate as data based on residents on Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction



# What we know - Data

This map shows the number of Households claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction of pensionable age by LSOA and Ward.



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2021 Ordnance Survey,  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets 100019288.

Map produced September 2021

# Food Poverty and Older People

## Causes:

- Increased digitalization of welfare benefits
- Cuts in adult health and social care provision and confusion in older people about this provision
- Increasing community stress levels from reduced support from local authorities and volunteer groups
- Imminent increases in pensioner poverty – e.g., changes to Pension Credit entitlement
- Growing financial exclusion among older people
- Bereavement
- Changes in household situation/income/community transport
- Loneliness and social isolation
- The diminished availability of Meals on Wheels services
- Inadequate social care packages.

## These risk factors make older people more vulnerable to food poverty:

- A chronic disease
- A progressive neurological disease
- An acute illness which leaves them unable to eat for consecutive days
- Mobility issues
- Social difficulties



# Covid-19, food and older people

The Covid-19 Pandemic has shone a light on issues that were ever present before for older people.

Discussions with local community organisations have identified the following key issues:

- Access
- Digital Exclusion
- Transport
- Mobility
- Information



# Access to food provision for older people

*One of the top 10 recommendations in the Food Poverty JSNA is to 'explore and ensure the food poverty needs of older people are met'.*

The following initiatives are currently in progress:

- Pension Credit Campaign to increase income
- Lunch Clubs
- Meals on Wheels Alternatives
- Meal Delivery Provision
- Click and Collect
- Food Banks/Food Pantries



# Access to food provision for low-income families



- Universal Free School Meals
- Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021
- Healthy Start Vouchers
- Food Banks
- Hot Meals (walk-in/delivery)
- Food Pantries pilot and plans for additional pantries
- Fruit and Vegetable voucher schemes
- Cash-First Approaches
- Food for Health Programme



# Emergency Pandemic Food Work



- Through the early stages of the pandemic the Tackling Poverty team set up processes by which those residents in need were able to access support quickly. This included both those in need directly due to the requirement to self-isolate, and those affected by hardship due to the impact of the pandemic.
- The process was set up from scratch, with an online form and a phone line, set up to identify those most in need, what their needs are, and offering food support alongside support with medical supplies, debt, financial wellbeing and social isolation.
- Initially we fulfilled food requests through the PDC, but this shifted to a referral to a local food bank (supported by us).
- In all, in 2020 we delivered over 6,000 food parcels directly to residents.



# Support for food banks and other voluntary organisations



- As the Tackling Poverty team moved away from directly fulfilling food requests in-house (in July 2020), they established a **food hub** to bring in large quantities of high-quality food from a variety of sources and delivered it to local food banks and other voluntary organisations.
- The food hub is currently operating from **Granby Hall**, having previously been at the New City College.
- Redistributed surplus food is brought in from The Felix Project, while corporate support has also been received in the past.
- A crowd-funder has been established to bring in donations and enable the Tackling Poverty team to purchase supplementary goods.

Through the Food Hub, the Tackling Poverty team have:

- Provided over 800 tonnes of food to local organisations
- Supported 37 organisations, including five schools



# Covid-19 Local Support Grant



- The Covid Local Support Grant (an extension of the Covid Winter Grant) is a grant from the Department for Work and Pensions to provide direct assistance to residents for food and fuel.
- The Council received approximately £3m, including administration.
- This has been spent to provide supermarket vouchers to FSM-eligible children and those at risk of food insecurity through schools, as well as making some available to other services such as hostels, Children's Centres, Homelessness team, Leaving Care Team, Linkage Plus and many more.
- We also added some funding to the Resident Support Scheme crisis grant programme to allow multiple food claims in a year, and purchased food to support VCS organisations through the food hub.



# Sustainable Food



## Food Growing and Production

*Food growing and production have been identified by Sustain as a key area councils can tackle to reduce food poverty and LBTH were identified by Sustain as a leader in this area in 2020.*

## Tree planting on council owned land and parks

- Tower Hamlets **Food Growing Network**
- The council has committed to work with WEN to develop and implement the Climate Action Fund work. **Just FACT** (Just Food and Climate Transition) is WEN's 5-year programme to co-create a just transition to a low-carbon food system with communities, which began in 2021.

## Climate and Nature Emergency

- Climate Emergency
- Love Food Hate Waste Campaign
- Fairtrade Procurement Policy/Procurement Across London
- Food Waste
- Bio-Solar Project
- Bronze Sustainable Food Places Award



# Partnerships and collaborative approaches



## TOWER HAMLETS FOOD PARTNERSHIP

- Over 150 people from over 80 organisations have become members or attended an action group meeting. Around 50% of these organisations are from the voluntary sector, 40% are from the public sector and 10% are from the private sector.
- Principles for a Just and Sustainable Food Recovery were developed by the Food Partnership, to focus specifically on the Partnership's response to the pandemic. Partnership members agreed to work towards these collective aims and include them in policy-making and operations.
- Tower Hamlets Food Partnership has a [webpage](#) on lead organisation Wen's website. Wen's local food team publishes regular newsletters featuring blogs, events and ways to get involved in local food action, which goes to almost 2,000 people. The team also promotes local food work through Wen's Twitter and Instagram pages.



# Partnerships and collaborative approaches

The Food Partnership have established **action groups to tackle key food issues** more effectively:

- **Fair Food for All** was established in May 2019 to coordinate work on food insecurity. The group is a Food Power alliance and meets quarterly. The aim of this group is to collectively tackle issues specific to food poverty.
- **Just FACT Forum**: This is part of Wen's 5-year Just FACT (Just Food and Climate Transition) programme to co-create a just transition to a low-carbon food system. This group comprises local strategic partners and thematic experts and aims to bring together local conversations on climate and promote the programme work beyond Tower Hamlets.
- **The Community Food Network**: This is an emerging group bringing together Wen's food grower network with food educators, shared meals providers and other food projects to build power and share resources.



# Examples of what more we could do

## Cook Together, Eat Together

- Cook Together Eat Together is a project delivered in Coventry by Groundwork West Midlands. The project is funded by the National Lottery Community fund and was developed to tackle social isolation and poor nutrition amongst residents aged 55 and over.

## Screening for food poverty at primary care level

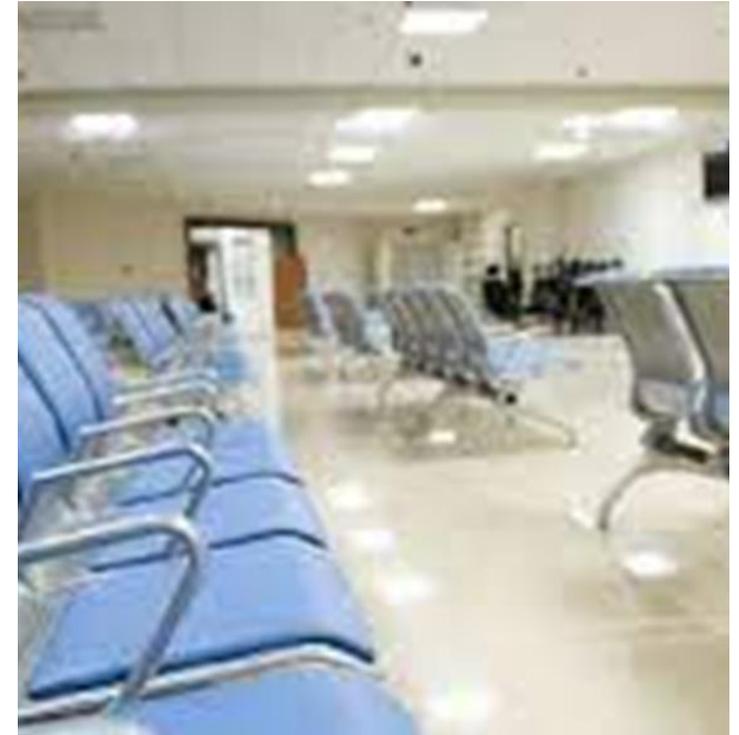
- Elderly individuals often access GPs more frequently than the younger population. Screening for food poverty at primary care level might highlight issues before they get worse. GPs could signpost to appropriate services when necessary.

## Kitchen Kings

- Kitchen Kings is an Age UK project sponsored by the City Bridge Trust in London, aimed at helping older men to prepare and cook wholesome food.

## Home from Hospital

- Sustain are currently collecting examples of innovative practice exploring what helps or hinders people's access to food when they are discharged from hospital and as they recover and adapt.



LBTH works collaboratively with stakeholders including the Food Partnership to lead the Food Poverty agenda. Collectively, the following **recommendations** have been identified from the JSNA and subsequent engagement and prioritisation from the Food Partnership.



The proposed recommendations will be delivered by the Food Partnership and its members in collaboration with LBTH.

- Explore opportunities to keep the Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Service (VCS) Support Hub open.
- Explore opportunities to expand the number of food pantries in Tower Hamlets and potential ways to improve access to some of them specifically for older people.
- Continue to support and collaborate with the Food Partnership.
- Deliver a big push, if needed, to get all lunch clubs open again post the Covid-19 lockdown.
- Review options for current food support service for those who cannot leave the house (this is currently only being offered at weekends).
- Explore piloting a “cook together, eat together” type project.
- Consider how best to promote services to older adults that might be digitally excluded.
- Develop an up-to-date directory of services easily accessible to everyone and provide useful information on the Tower Hamlets website including signposting.
- Work with the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) to explore screening for food poverty at primary care level.
- Raise awareness of the Home & Settle project at the Royal London Hospital (a service which can provide food support to people leaving hospital).
- Explore fruit and vegetable prescription schemes.
- Explore further food voucher opportunities, such as the Alexandra Rose Voucher Scheme.

