

Beyond the Food Bank

London Food Poverty Profile

2016





Foreword by Matthew Ryder

Deputy Mayor, Social Integration,
Social Mobility, Community Engagement

London's food culture – its range of cuisines; its shops, street markets, food stalls and pop-up restaurants – is every bit a sign of our city's vibrancy and dynamism as are tourist numbers or levels of inward investment.

To be denied the opportunity to benefit from and participate in that food culture due to a lack of resources is to be denied an entitlement that all Londoners should enjoy. But to be forced to rely on food banks for basic sustenance is, as Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has made clear, inexcusable.

I have been appointed with a brief on social integration and social mobility to help ensure that London's incredibly diverse communities don't just live side-by-side but live truly interconnected lives. And it is clear that we cannot have effective social integration or social mobility when four children in ten live in poverty.

Poverty in a city as prosperous as London – and child poverty especially – simply cannot be accepted.

Yet we know that poverty, driven by high housing costs, is more prevalent in London than any other region in the country. Nor is this simply an inner London phenomenon - at 34% (after housing costs), the poverty rate in outer London is higher than that of any other English region.

We know that the number of children living in poverty is likely to increase in the next few years. And we know that employment is a necessary but increasingly insufficient route out of poverty, with the majority of working-age Londoners – and two-thirds of children - in poverty living in working households.

With such levels of deprivation comes the stark truth that a large and growing number of Londoners lack the resources to meet their basic needs, never mind to take full advantage of the opportunities and experiences that London has to offer.

But what we don't know is perhaps more worrying than what we do. Recent reports suggest that outright destitution is a growing issue – specifically in parts of London – but we lack accurate and specific data to really understand who suffers in this way and what the triggers are that push people into destitution.

Similarly, the volume of emergency food supplies given out via food banks – more than 110,000 packages last year according to the Trussell Trust – paints only a partial and inadequate picture of the true prevalence of hunger in London.

Behind the numbers and the trends lie the lived realities of the large number of people who lack the resources to meet their basic needs, let alone to fully participate in London's rich culinary culture.

- The reality of parents having to decide between heating their homes or feeding their children.
- The reality of waking up each day to feelings of stress, uncertainty and insecurity.
- The reality of the wasted human and economic potential.
- And the reality of children struggling to pay attention at school because they feel hungry, or of a school lunch being the only substantial meal of a child's day.

Children living in poverty are more likely to be exposed to stresses and difficulties that can have lasting, scarring effects on health outcomes and life expectancy through to educational attainment and long-term prospects for prosperity. In fact it is to the great credit of our educators, carers and local services that the effect of this disadvantage on London children is at least partially compensated for, with those in free school meals doing better at GCSE than their peers in the rest of England.

There is positive evidence of a link between children's diet and improved concentration and attainment. And that providing a healthy free school meal can help boost attainment for the poorest children.

So I commend all those boroughs that have engaged with this important issue and responded to the survey which sits at the heart of this report. I also commend those that are doing important work such as issuing Health Start vouchers or providing universal free school meals to all primary school children.

But I know there is much more that government at all levels – local, regional and national – needs to do and can do. So I know I speak for the Mayor and all in City Hall in saying that the GLA looks forward to being an active and ambitious partner in tackling this hugely important issue.

**Matthew Ryder, Deputy Mayor,
Social Integration, Social Mobility,
Community Engagement**

Notes

The statements and opinions expressed in this report should not be attributed to any individual or organisation unless explicitly connected by quotation with that person or organisation.

The London borough maps of actions that are shown in this report are correct to the best of the evidence available to us at the time of publication. We have made every effort to ensure that we highlight good practice of London boroughs. Boroughs should contact Sustain if there is any relevant data or information which have not been included.

The organisations that run the various accreditation schemes highlighted in the chapters and maps in the body of this report are sometimes referred to collectively as ‘Sustain’s partners’ or ‘our partners’ for the purposes of this publication. Sustain’s expertise is in food and farming, including food poverty. Where analysis and recommendations are included that touch on matters such as income, benefits, social services and local authority responsibilities, we have taken the expert advice of our partners and others.

Download this report at www.sustainweb.org/publications

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Introduction

London is often seen as an affluent city, and an engine of wealth-creation for the rest of the UK. But this perception masks high levels of deprivation and extremes of inequality. More than a quarter of Londoners live in poverty, and of these the majority live in families with at least one person in paid work. In the past decade, as wages have fallen in real terms and living costs have risen, the number of people in working poverty has increased by 70%. Almost a fifth of jobs in London pay below the London Living Wage, the amount needed to live a modest but decent life.¹

Food poverty is part of this darker picture. Food poverty can be defined as the inability to afford, or to have access to, the food needed for a healthy diet.² It is also important that people can access food in a way which is dignified and socially acceptable.³ When people struggle to feed themselves adequately and nutritiously, it undermines health and educational attainment and ultimately adds to pressure on services. Food insecurity is an alternative term, which in particular illustrates people's uncertainty about being able to provide for themselves and their families.

While there is no official measurement of food poverty or food insecurity (and we think there should be), a range of data indicates the scale of the problem. 110,000 food aid packages were given out by Trussell Trust food banks in London during the last financial year, but this is often described as the tip of the iceberg given the high number of households in poverty and likely to be experiencing food insecurity. For example, 9% of children in London say they sometimes or often go to bed hungry.

Food poverty has many, interlinked causes. A sudden illness, an unexpected bill, a benefit sanction or the death of a parent or partner can tip a family into a food crisis. Low pay, inadequate welfare support or long-term illness, combined with high housing and travel costs, can condemn families to chronic hunger, poor nutrition and anxiety. Shockingly, parents – usually mothers – go hungry to feed their children, or have to prioritise calories over nutritional value when shopping for food.⁴

There is a clear need for national government to address many of the drivers of food poverty and monitor the situation at a national

level. However, there are many things London boroughs can do to avert or ease food poverty. Boroughs can promote uptake of national programmes, including Healthy Start vouchers, Baby-Friendly accreditation, free school meals and financial support for people in difficulty. Boroughs can also maximise the impact of commissioning and oversight, for example by working with local partners to tackle hunger during the school holidays; finding new ways to provide meals on wheels cost-effectively; fostering local access to affordable healthy food; and expanding the London Living Wage. A clear food poverty action plan, or equivalent, is central to ensuring these efforts are coordinated, accountable and achieve the best possible impact.

We realise that London boroughs face continued pressure on their budgets and need to make difficult choices. The actions outlined in this report can make a very real difference to the health and wellbeing of vulnerable Londoners and reduce pressure on public services in the long-term.

1 Trust for London / New Policy Institute (2015) *London's Poverty Profile 2015*

2 Department of Health

3 E. Dowler (2012) *The Future of UK Household Security*, University of Warwick

4 Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty (2015) *Hungry for Change: Final report*



8.4 million people in the UK struggle to get enough to eat



700,000 children in London live in poverty



110,364 three-day emergency food packages were given to Londoners in 2015-16



18 London boroughs are not accredited Living Wage employers



1/5 of jobs in London pay below the London Living Wage



25,000 households are missing out on Healthy Start vouchers



1/3 of London boroughs are not accredited through the Unicef Baby-Friendly Initiative



22 London boroughs do not have a specific plan to address food poverty



Which boroughs are leading the way in tackling food poverty in their areas?

Boroughs were scored according to their responses to our survey and data provided by our partners. While 5 boroughs did not respond to our survey, data from partners has meant we have awarded points where possible. The stars are awarded to highlight additional activity; this is explained in the respective chapter.

	Healthy Start	Baby-friendly	Children's centres	Childcare	365 days	Living Wage	Food access	Meals on wheels	Action plans	Total
Lambeth								★		79%
Greenwich				★						77%
Islington					★					76%
Tower Hamlets					★			★		71%
Hammersmith & Fulham								★		67%
Lewisham								★		65%
Kingston upon Thames								★		59%
Croydon								★		53%
Hackney								★		49%
Waltham Forest					★			★		47%
Barking & Dagenham				★						46%
Redbridge								★		46%
Camden										45%
Ealing								★		45%
Sutton					★			★		44%
Haringey				★				★		43%
Harrow								★		43%
Hounslow								★		41%
Southwark					★					40%
Brent								★		39%
Westminster								★		39%
Merton				★						38%
Richmond upon Thames										37%
Kensington & Chelsea								★		36%
City of London										32%
Wandsworth										30%
Havering										20%
Enfield										18%
Bromley*										7%
Bexley*										7%
Barnet*										4%
Hillingdon*										4%
Newham*										4%

*no data provided

Recommendations for action

By 2018 all London boroughs should have a comprehensive plan to reduce food poverty. This plan should include the following elements, details of which are given in the body of this report:

- Having a designated Healthy Start coordinator and leading an integrated programme of activities to reach the national target for uptake (80%)
- Working towards full Baby Friendly accreditation
- Harnessing the value of children's centres, delivering concrete actions to tackle food poverty
- Providing food within free childcare entitlements
- Working with partners to tackle hunger amongst children throughout the year
- Becoming an accredited London Living Wage employer and contractor as well as championing the London Living Wage with local employers
- Leading a set of concrete activities to improve physical access to good food by working with planners, retailers, caterers, manufacturers and advertisers
- Fostering reinvigorated provision of meals on wheels, as part of a comprehensive community meal plan for London
- Maximising uptake of emergency support and wider support services for those in poverty



About this report

Sustain has worked to alleviate food poverty and improve food access since the alliance was first founded in 1999. Sustain worked with national and local partners on the Food Poverty Project, Food Access Network and Buywell programmes, seeking changes in local and national policies, and running demonstration projects. More recently, Sustain coordinated a national food poverty campaign in 2015-16 as part of the UK-wide Sustainable Food Cities programme.

Last year, Sustain also launched the London food poverty campaign, which focuses on what London's local authorities and public services can do to reduce long-term food poverty. The name of the report illustrates our motivation in doing so. We want people to look 'beyond the food bank' to long-term solutions to the food poverty that is undermining the health, enjoyment and life chances of so many of our fellow citizens. Food banks are a worthwhile and charitable response to the immediate crisis of hunger faced by so many. However, food banks should not be used as a sticking plaster to mask the underlying causes of hunger. Charitable food handouts should not – as has happened in the United States and elsewhere – become permanently embedded into our social infrastructure as the means by which millions of people get their food. At every life stage there are opportunities to help people be fed well, or improve their incomes so that they can afford to feed themselves well – whether this be through breastfeeding promotion, vouchers for fresh food for new parents, healthy meals for children in schools and in the holidays, low-cost food in local street markets, a living wage, or a dignified, friendly and nutritious meals on wheels service. Such interventions weave London's social fabric and safety net, and hence deserve systematic support.

This is the second *London Food Poverty Profile* Sustain has produced. The aim is to record what London's 33 borough councils – together responsible for the welfare of more than 8.5 million people – are doing to combat food poverty, and to measure the progress they make over time. Building on last year's report (which focused on six themes), we have identified ten practical steps that boroughs can take to improve the diets and health of their poorest and often most vulnerable residents.

Working with London boroughs, researchers and civil society organisations, we developed a questionnaire to assess the level of activity by boroughs on each of these measures. This questionnaire was sent to all London boroughs, and we gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the 28 that took the time to respond. The results provide a composite picture of what boroughs are doing to identify those at risk of food poverty, and how they intervene to reduce it. The report should enable boroughs to monitor their own performance and learn from each other.

There are also a large number of charities, community organisations, social enterprises, faith groups, private sector organisations, advocates and others taking practical action to address food poverty in the capital. We acknowledge the value of this work, but underline that this report focuses on the role that boroughs can play in supporting such organisations.

This report sits alongside the *Good Food for London* report, also published by Sustain, which documents local authorities' performance on and commitment to measures supporting a food system that helps people and planet.

A list of recently published resources is included at the end of this report. A more comprehensive list of partner contact information and further resources can be found on the Sustain website here: www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/.





RVLBL/4925

Fruit & Veggie Vouchers

Veggie VOUCHER

VIA CHERRY
18 x mm
2017



Actions London boroughs are taking to reduce food poverty

Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers

Healthy Start is a passported government benefit offered to eligible women and families on other means-tested welfare benefits. Pregnant women and families with children under the age of 4 on low incomes, as well as all pregnant under 18 year olds are eligible. The scheme provides vouchers that can be used to purchase cows' milk, first cows' milk based infant formula,

and fresh and frozen plain fruit and vegetables. In addition, vouchers are provided that can be exchanged for vitamins for pregnant and lactating women, and children in the first 4 years of life. The aim of the scheme is to offer a nutritional safety net for vulnerable women and children and to help families to make healthier food choices.

CASE STUDY: Boosting Healthy Start in Kingston

Following a 'boost' campaign launched in February 2015, Healthy Start has remained a key issue across Kingston, despite having a relatively small number of people eligible compared with most London boroughs. New flyers have been distributed widely, via children's centres, health clinics and numerous other settings, highlighting the availability of food vouchers, in response to a local survey which identified low awareness and a decline in uptake. The borough also uses social media to promote Healthy Start.

To keep key partners informed, Kingston uses established strategic networks such as the Community Sport and Physical Activity Network (CSPAN), Maternal Obesity Action Group, and Infant Feeding Partnership to promote Healthy Start to a range of health professionals. Healthy Start has also featured in the 2015 *Annual Public Health Report* and is embedded into training sessions provided to health and social care professionals. Evidence-based practice is essential. Kingston's Healthy Start Lead ensures this is maintained, with support from organisations such as Sustain and the Healthy Start Alliance.

The next stage is to step up retailers' engagement in order to increase food voucher use. A mapping exercise has been carried out to help focus resources where they are needed. Kingston has also registered its interest to be part of a small-scale pilot project with Department of Health to increase uptake of Healthy Start vitamins.



"Healthy Start is an excellent initiative which assists in improving nutrition in young and low income pregnant women and families with children under the age of 4 years. This therefore contributes to ensuring all local children have the best start in life. The initiatives describe how Kingston Council is working with partners to maximise uptake of the scheme."

Dr Jonathan Hildebrand, Director of Public Health,
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Healthy Start vouchers provide valuable financial support for low-income families. Based on current household food spend, Healthy Start food vouchers could increase the weekly food spend by 14% for a two-parent household with a baby and toddler, and by almost 25% for a single mother with a baby and toddler.¹

Rates of uptake vary across the country, and between London boroughs. The national average uptake by eligible households is around 70%, but this rate is declining. London is below average and the third-worst performing English region; uptake averaged at just over 67% over the last 12 months. To benefit from Healthy Start, women must have their pregnancy or family status confirmed with a health professional who signs the initial application form, making local health workers the gatekeepers of the system. There are also a number of boroughs which make vitamins universally available. Importantly, the Government recommitted its support for Healthy Start in *Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action*.

Key findings

An estimated average of 25,000 eligible households in London are not claiming their Healthy Start vouchers. This is a loss of £6,170,000 (if there was 100% uptake), or over £2,413,000 (if London met the national average of 80% uptake).

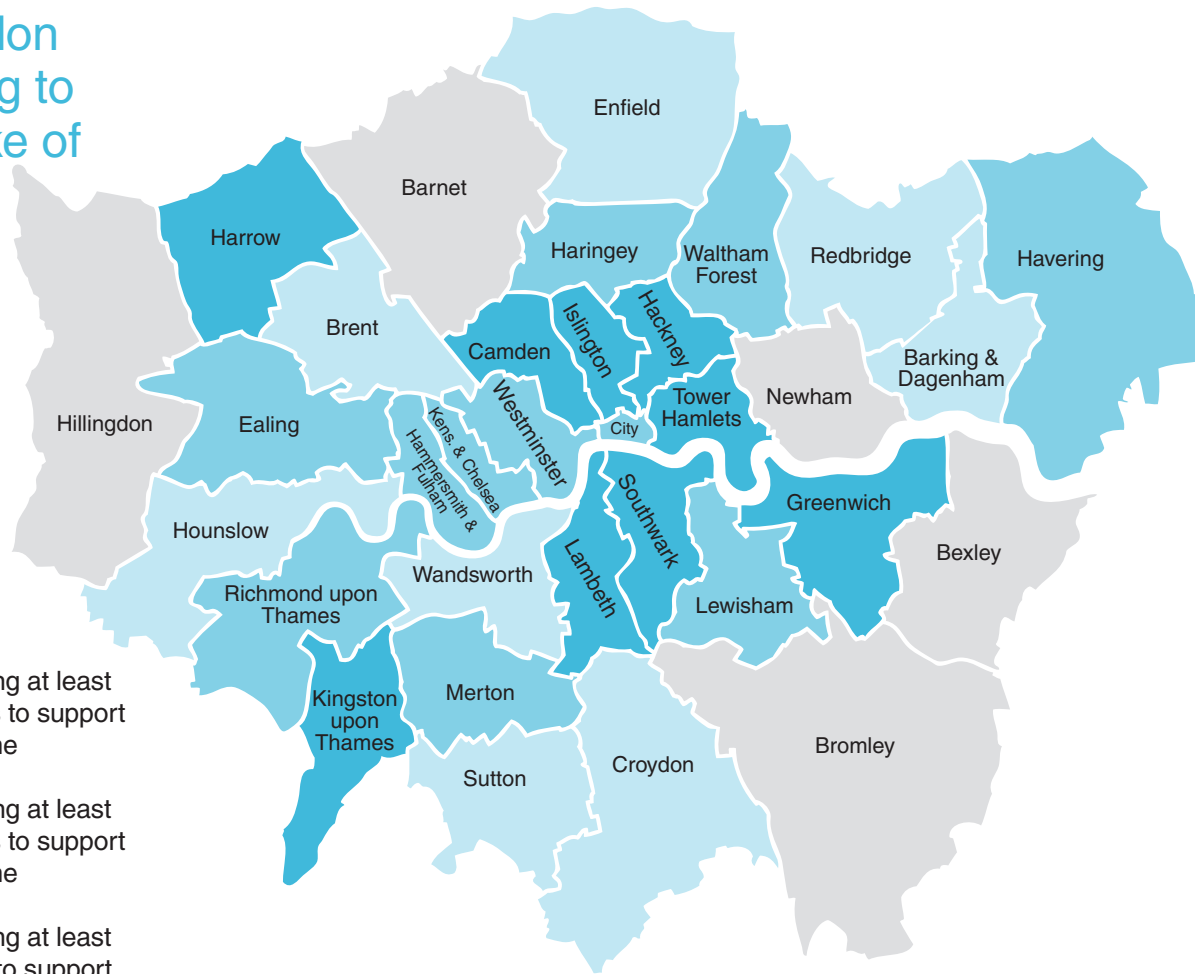
There are, however, examples of good practice across the capital. For example, Tower Hamlets, with a 72% uptake, provides dedicated training sessions to health professionals, and provides information to potential recipients at Community Health Promotion stalls. In Hackney, also with 72% uptake, Ridley Road market (a large food market in the centre of the borough) is registered to accept vouchers, as is East London Food Access, a mobile service running fruit and veg stalls at children's centres, schools and on housing estates.

What are London boroughs doing to increase uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers?

2016

Map key

- Local authority taking at least **5** significant actions to support Healthy Start scheme
- Local authority taking at least **3** significant actions to support Healthy Start scheme
- Local authority taking at least **1** significant action to support Healthy Start scheme
- No information provided

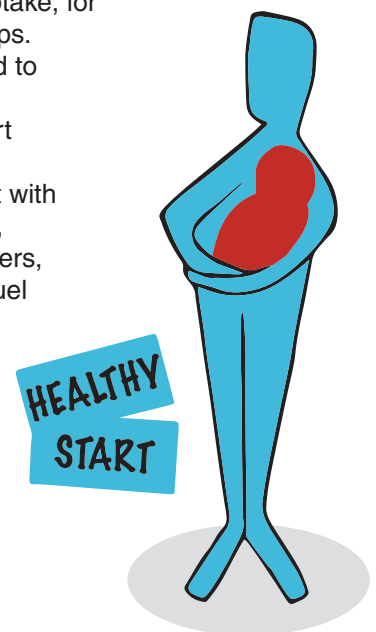


Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to the number of actions they are taking to increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers. These steps include (but are not limited to): appointing a coordinator for the scheme; providing training to midwives and other health professionals; promoting the scheme in communities; ensuring application forms are readily available; recording information made available by the Department of Health on the eligibility and uptake of vouchers in each borough; monitoring the diversity of retailers accepting vouchers; and working to boost the number and diversity of participating stores.

What can London boroughs do?

- Where not already in post, appoint a responsible officer for both Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins who can act as central point of contact for collecting and sharing information.
- Set a target of at least 80% uptake by monitoring and supporting uptake. Where uptake is significantly lower than 80%, boroughs could aim to meet the national average for uptake as a first step (70%).
- Conduct a local audit of food retailers that accept the vouchers, asking for their views on how to increase uptake, for example by making leaflets available in shops.
- Support local markets to become accredited to receive Healthy Start food vouchers.
- Consider universal provision of Healthy Start vitamins.
- Make sure all groups that come into contact with potential beneficiaries – such as foodbanks, schools, children’s centres, childcare providers, Citizens Advice Bureaux, local libraries or fuel poverty groups – are aware of the scheme and know how to promote it and support parents and carers to obtain the benefits.
- Refer eligible households to the Rose Vouchers scheme (in applicable boroughs), which can boost the promotion and value of Healthy Start vouchers.

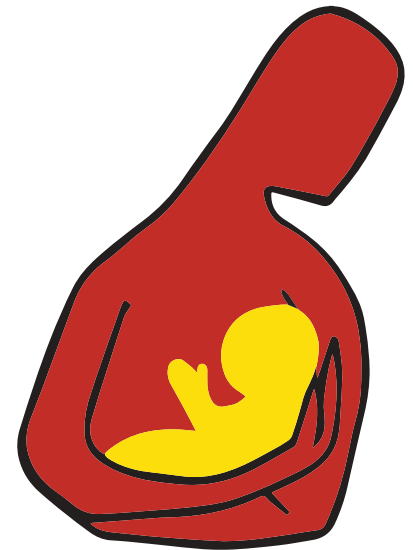


¹ These estimates are based on Office for National Statistics estimates of weekly household food expenditures for families in the lowest quintile of income.

Promote breastfeeding to boost the health of infants and mothers

Women living on low income or in deprived areas, as well as young mothers, are least likely to breastfeed and most likely to have the worst health and social outcomes for themselves and their babies.¹ Encouraging breastfeeding is an important step

boroughs can take to boost the health of disadvantaged infants and their mothers. Breastfeeding provides protection against a range of childhood illnesses, including ear, chest and gut infections. The benefits continue well into adulthood, for example reducing



CASE STUDY: Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust signed up to work with the Baby Friendly Initiative standards to ensure that every mother and baby can receive high quality support and advice, irrespective of financial circumstance or location within the local boroughs. The aim is to ensure a comprehensive approach to help the Trust reduce health disparities, resulting in substantial short and long term health benefits for mothers and babies. In 2016 the Trust has already obtained a certificate of commitment and stage one accreditation.

Barking and Dagenham Council funds a project manager role through its public health budget. The project manager leads the maternity and neonatal services in implementing the standards in a staged approach over a number

of years. The infant feeding strategy group, which includes representatives from the three boroughs, oversees this work.

The programme to date has included developing a training curriculum for health professionals and conversation tools which enable professionals to provide holistic support. There is also a now a centrally coordinated standardised system for collecting and disseminating infant feeding data, quality outcomes and practice audit. Each month this information is presented on an infant feeding dashboard, which provides an accessible and up-to-date summary of progress. Audits are also carried out frequently. These include interviewing new mothers, giving them an opportunity to be able to comment on current services provided.



“It is important to make a good start in life by providing positive support through the Baby Friendly Initiative which is one part of the health and social care jigsaw that supports families to help themselves. We are proud of the positive changes that the people who have gone through this programme have made to their lives.”

Matthew Cole, Director of Public Health,
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

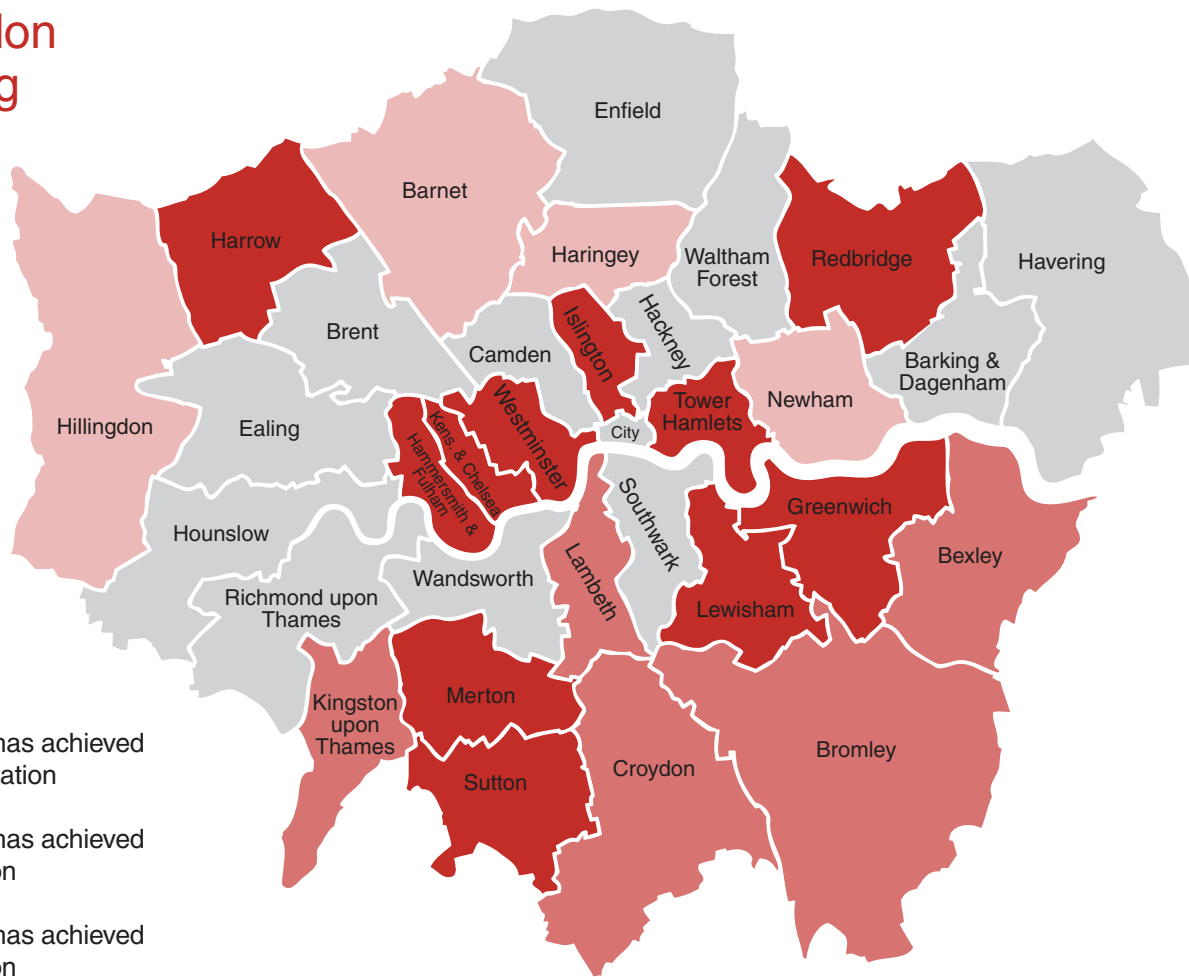
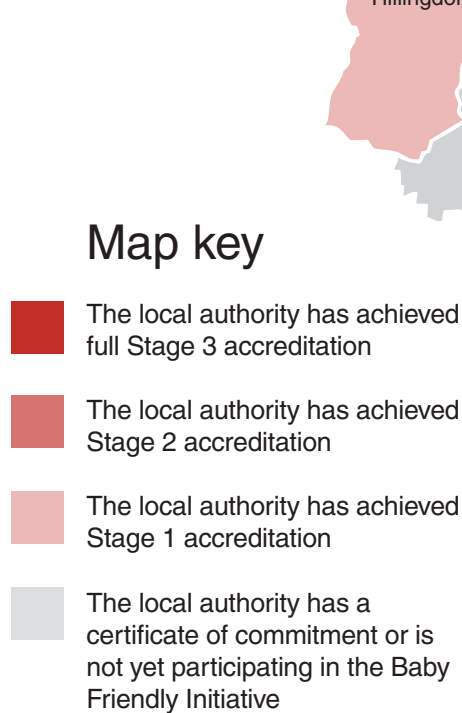
the incidence of overweight and obesity later in life.² Government now recommends that local authorities use the Unicef UK Baby Friendly standards to guide and improve their activities to encourage breastfeeding.

Improving care in the NHS has led to more women starting to breastfeed, but a lack of support across community settings means that many breastfeeding mothers encounter problems that force them to stop before they want to. An understanding of breastfeeding, improved access to well-trained health professionals and good-quality social support can help to create a supportive environment for mothers, and help breastfeeding to be accepted as normal within the community. This is the ‘whole system’ approach the Unicef UK Baby Friendly standards are designed to develop.

The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative is an externally evaluated programme for improving infant feeding and the health and wellbeing outcomes for all infants. Uptake of the standards is recognised by the Department of Health, Public Health England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, and will help to ensure good quality support is available across the community for all mothers and babies, whether breastfeeding or bottle feeding. This year new commissioning guidance,³ including a useful toolkit,⁴ has been published by Public Health England and Unicef UK, with advice for local commissioners on supporting this work.

What are London boroughs doing for infants?

2016



Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to the level of accreditation they have achieved.

The programme has three stages:

- Stage 1 assesses how the team plans to implement the standards
- Stage 2 assesses staff knowledge and skills
- Stage 3 assesses parents' experiences when the Baby Friendly standards have been implemented

Accreditation can be achieved within maternity, neonatal, health visiting/ specialist public health nursing and children's centres. Neonatal units and children's centres can work towards Baby Friendly accreditation in partnership with their maternity unit or separately.

Key findings

The number of boroughs reaching the top level of accreditation – Stage 3 – rose from eight to 11 over the past year. In all, 20 boroughs have now achieved some level of accreditation. However, this still means that over one third of boroughs are not Baby Friendly accredited in any way.

What can London boroughs do?

- Work towards full Baby Friendly accreditation for health visiting and public health nursing and within children's centres, including ensuring access to required training.
- Join the National Infant Feeding Network for London.
- Make contact with existing infant feeding leads to discuss how to move forward with Baby Friendly in their community.
- Advocate a coordinated adoption of the standards across and between boroughs.

¹ Health and Social Care Information Centre, IFF Research (2012) Infant Feeding Survey 2010, available at http://www.esds.ac.uk/doc/7281/mrdoc/pdf/7281_ifs-uk-2010_report.pdf

² PHE (2014) *Evidence into Action: Opportunities to Protect and Improve the Nation's Health*. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366852/PHE_Priorities.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-of-public-health-services-for-children>

⁴ <http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/News-and-Research/News/Launch-of-Commissioning-Guidance-for-Infant-Feeding/>

Harness the value of children's centres

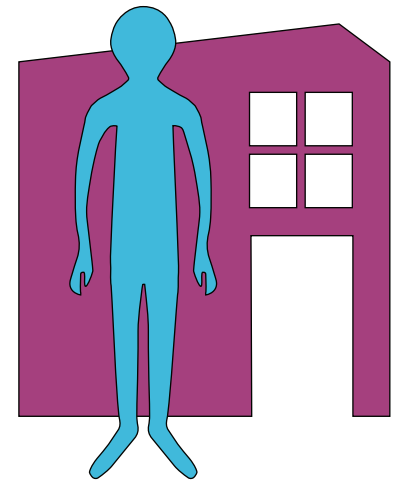
Children's centres can play a critical role in supporting families at risk of food poverty. Their purpose is to give disadvantaged children the best start in life, by improving their health and readiness to learn, helping parents to find work, promoting wellbeing and reducing inequalities. They provide a valuable one-stop shop for the services parents and young children may need.

Ensuring that families have access to adequate, nourishing food is central to the objective of improving a child's start in life. Children's centres are well placed to help avert and mitigate food poverty by prioritising the issue and coordinating access to relevant services. For example

they can provide information on Healthy Start vouchers, distribute Healthy Start vitamins, help families find spaces where they can grow vegetables, or organise workshops on food shopping and cooking. They can also help parents claim the benefits they are entitled to, and find the childcare, training or work they need in order to be able to escape poverty.

Key findings

Thirteen boroughs had seen funding for children's centres decline between 2015 and 2016, and in eight of these, the number of children's centres had also fallen. However, we know of at



least four boroughs (Ealing, Havering, Redbridge and Richmond upon Thames) that have maintained the same number of centres even in the face of funding reductions.

Most boroughs required children's centres to take basic steps to address food poverty, for example by providing debt advice and information on Healthy Start vouchers. In boroughs where the Rose Vouchers scheme is available,

CASE STUDY: Children's centres distribute Rose Vouchers for fruit and veg in Lambeth

Rose Vouchers help families on low incomes to access fresh fruit and vegetables from street markets across Lambeth. This enhances the value of Healthy Start vouchers and makes healthy food more culturally appropriate and locally accessible. Funded as a part of Lambeth's Food Flagship initiative, the project supports 150 families across the borough, working in partnership with seven children's centres. Children's centre workers identify families at risk of food poverty and diet-related ill health and issue them with the vouchers, which can be redeemed at Brixton Market and a market stall in West Norwood. So the project not only supports families but also local street markets – maintaining their position as sources of healthy, low-cost food in areas that often suffer from poor food access.

Importantly, participating families have to be eligible for Healthy Start, or be in need and have no recourse to public funds. By linking to Healthy Start, the project supports uptake of this important benefit and gives families access to extra fruit & veg.

94 per cent of participating families have reported increased fruit & veg consumption. Families feel that the vouchers give them the confidence to experiment with new foods they have not tried before. One participant said "The more my children see, the more they want to eat it!" Also, markets have benefitted from the additional income from vouchers passing through the tills while seeing new customers introduced, increasing footfall and overall vibrancy at the market.

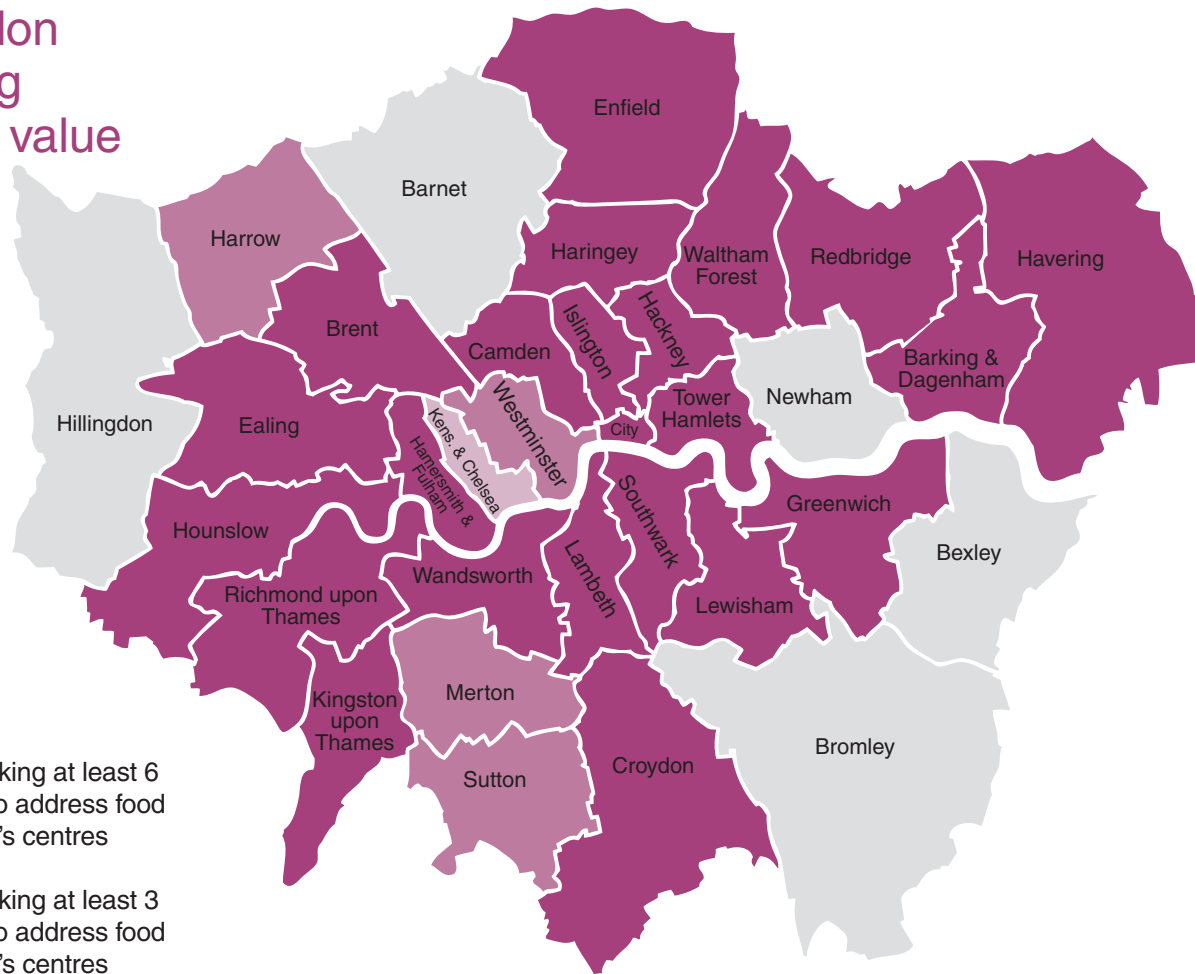


"We want every child in Lambeth to have the best start in life – and eating healthily is absolutely key. There are a range of factors that can affect how much fresh fruit and vegetables some families eat, but the Rose Voucher scheme helps overcome those, supporting families to buy local, fresh produce and eat a more balanced diet."

Councillor Lib Peck, Leader,
London Borough of Lambeth

What are London boroughs doing to harness the value of children's centres?

2016



Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to the number of actions they are taking to protect funding for children's centres, and to harness their value as hubs for tackling food poverty. These included (but were not restricted to) providing cooking skills and/or healthy eating classes; advising on benefits, debt and employment services; providing information on Healthy Start vouchers and breastfeeding support services; participating in the Rose Voucher scheme; and providing low cost or free meals during school holidays.

What can London boroughs do?

- Protect funding for children's centres, as unique providers of integrated care for vulnerable families.
- Ensure that measures to avert and mitigate food poverty are part of children's centres' work programmes.
- Use children's centres to provide food-related activities, such as cook-and-eat sessions or weight management classes, as well as to distribute Healthy Start vouchers, Healthy Start vitamins (as well as Rose Vouchers in boroughs signed up to this scheme) and advice on breastfeeding or local food-growing opportunities.
- Integrate food poverty activities with other measures to combat poverty, such as advice on debt, benefits, employment, training and childcare.
- Use food-related activities to engage with groups at risk of all forms of poverty.

enhancing the value and accessibility of Healthy Start, children's centres also promoted this to parents. But we were impressed by a few boroughs that are harnessing the true value of children's centres as hubs for coordinating work on food and poverty. High scorers provided a range of food-related services. For example Kingston upon Thames ran six Cook and Eat programmes a year from its nine children's centres. And two boroughs (Hammersmith & Fulham and Islington) used children's centres to provide low-cost or free meals during school holidays. At the other end of the spectrum, a few boroughs reported that they use children's centres to provide financial advice or help with finding work, but did not take the opportunity to provide help with food or healthy eating.

Ensure low-income families have adequate access to childcare

High childcare costs have a critical bearing on low-income families' ability to meet household expenses, stay in work or engage in the training they need to escape poverty, including food poverty.

Parents in London face the highest childcare costs in the country, 23% above the national average.¹ However, parents in London generally require *more* hours of childcare than parents elsewhere, due to longer commute times, a lack of informal care provided by family members and the increasing number of jobs with evening and weekend hours.²

Apart from the cost, parents can have trouble just finding childcare. The level of provision in London is lower than the England

average, and there is considerable variation between boroughs, with more children per available childcare place in Inner than in Outer London.³ Take-up of the Government's current 15-hour free entitlement in London is below the national average.⁴ There is also variation in whether boroughs include free food provision in the 15-hour entitlement – a key opportunity to ensure these children have a nourishing meal at some point in the day.

Research by the Daycare Trust (now Family and Childcare Trust) found that low-income parents had cut back on household essentials, including food, in order to pay for childcare.⁵

Boroughs have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare provision for the needs of working parents in their area. They must also carry out a childcare sufficiency assessment every three years, to ensure the level of provision remains appropriate. If it is not, they must draw up an action plan to remedy any deficiencies.⁶

Key findings

Only four boroughs (Barking & Dagenham, Greenwich, Haringey and Merton) reported funding some kind of food provision as part of the local free childcare entitlement. While acknowledging the financial pressures, this appears to be a much underused opportunity to combat food poverty.

Most boroughs had completed a childcare sufficiency assessment within the past three years, but in only six cases (Barking & Dagenham, City of London, Croydon, Hackney, Redbridge and Waltham Forest) was provision found to be sufficient in all parts of the borough. Of the others, only a few had published action plans or agreed actions to improve provision. These detailed plans include actions to address shortcomings, including improving the availability and diversity of childcare providers.

We are also aware of a number of boroughs which are currently reviewing their childcare sufficiency assessments.

CASE STUDY: Childcare with a free meal for 2-year-olds in Barking & Dagenham

The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham provides a number of free childcare places for eligible 2-year olds. This entitlement provides for the most disadvantaged families, so a decision was made to restrict providers from charging for extras such as lunch for this group.

With the universal childcare offer for 3- and 4-year-olds, childcare providers can charge for additional items such as lunch. However, as 2-year-olds attract a higher hourly rate for care, the council felt justified in specifying that no extra charge could be made for lunch.



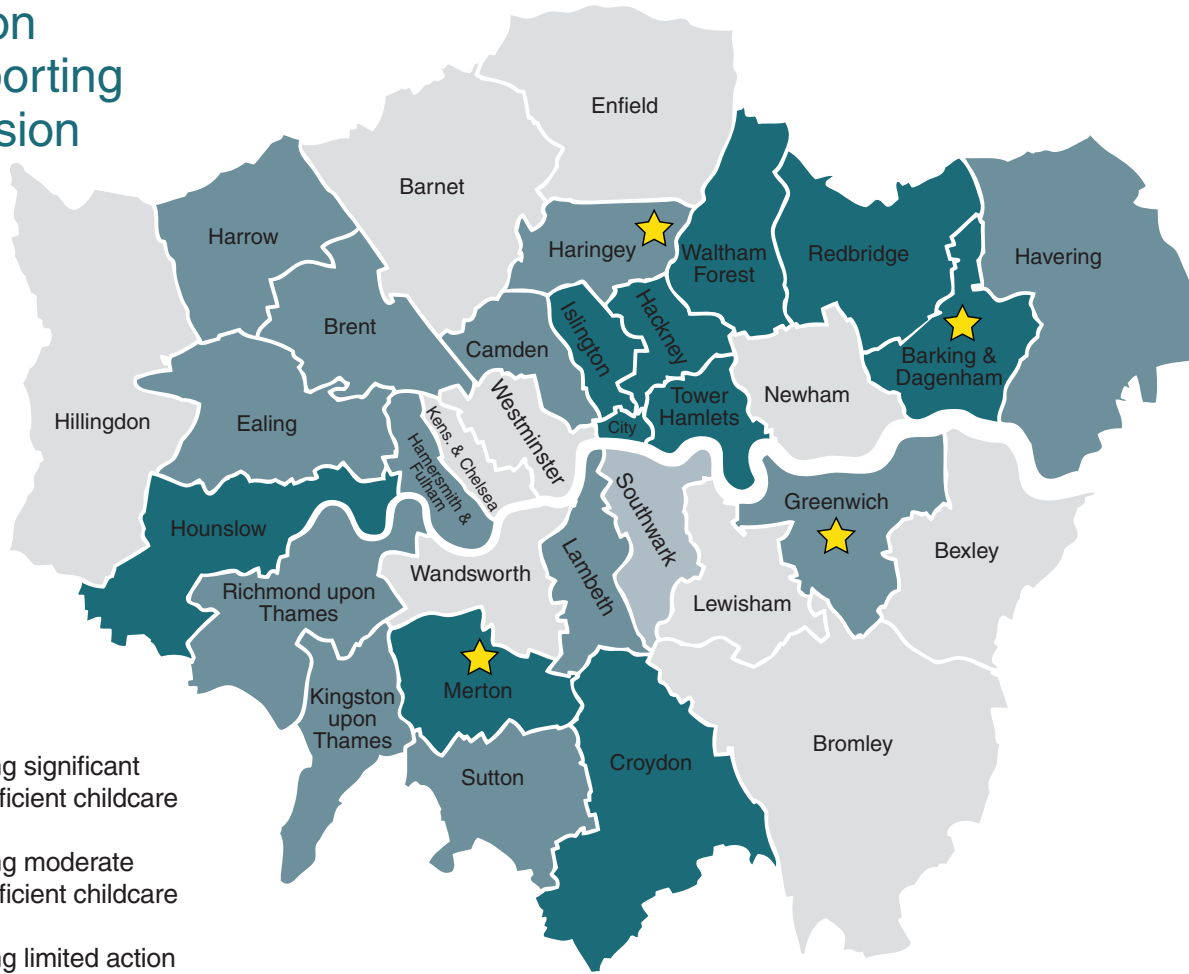
"It's really important we provide as much support as possible to the vulnerable and poorest families within the borough, helping increase their life chances, ensuring no-one is left disadvantaged. A free lunch with free childcare places would certainly help."

Councillor Evelyn Carpenter, Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham

- 1 Daycare Trust and Save the Children (2011) *Making Work Pay: the Childcare Trap*
- 2 Mayor London / London Assembly (2016) *Expanding childcare provision in London*
- 3 Trust for London (2015) *London's Poverty Profile*
- 4 Mayor London / London Assembly (2016) *Expanding childcare provision in London*
- 5 Daycare Trust and Save the Children (2011) *Making Work Pay: the Childcare Trap*
- 6 UK Parliament *Childcare Act 2006*

How are London boroughs supporting childcare provision for low income families?

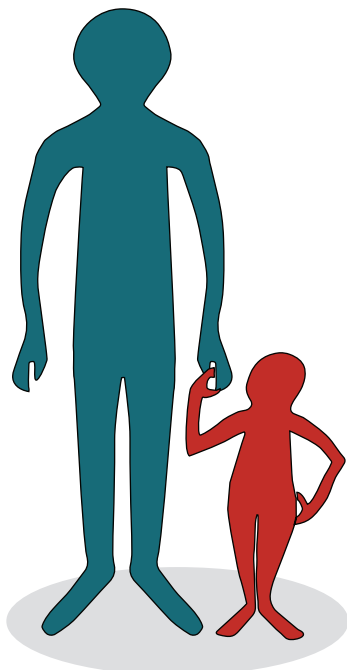
2016



Map key

- The borough is taking significant action to provide sufficient childcare
- The borough is taking moderate action to provide sufficient childcare
- The borough is taking limited action to provide sufficient childcare
- No data provided

★ Star: Boroughs provide some level of food provision within free childcare entitlements



Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to whether they had produced a childcare sufficiency assessment since 2014; whether their most recent childcare sufficiency assessment found that their provision was adequate; if not, whether there is an action plan; and also whether food is funded as part of the free childcare entitlement for 2-,3- and 4-year-olds.

What can London boroughs do?

- Monitor levels of provision across the borough by compiling regular childcare sufficiency assessments.
- Draw up an action plan to ensure appropriate provision is available throughout the borough.
- Include food provision in job specifications for childcare providers: all children cared for over mealtimes should be provided with a healthy meal, and all children should be provided with healthy snacks and drinks while in childcare.

Ensuring children's access to food 365 days a year

London has the highest child poverty rates in the country – almost four in ten children grow up below the poverty line.¹ This has a direct impact on what they eat. Across London, 9% of children say they sometimes or often go to bed hungry,² and many more live in families that struggle to provide healthy meals on a daily basis. Poor diet impairs children's ability to concentrate at school and affects

their physical and mental health. Ensuring access to free, healthy meals for all children is one of the most effective steps boroughs can take to mitigate the impact of food poverty.

Free school meals are a critical safety net. For 10% of children, school lunch can be their biggest meal of the day.³ Meals boost attainment and help parents reduce

the cost of living. Regrettably, not all low-income families qualify, and of these not all apply due to a range of factors. Universal free school meals offer an opportunity to increase uptake for both children who are and are not eligible for free school meals.

But children may need more than lunch. Nationally, almost three-quarters of teachers nationally reported seeing children arriving at school hungry.⁴ School breakfast clubs can help improve concentration, behaviour and educational outcomes. The School Food Plan, supported by the Department for Education, recommended breakfast clubs for schools with the highest levels of deprivation.⁵

Finally, those children in receipt of school meals who depend on school for their main meal are left at risk of food insecurity during school holidays, contributing to a 'learning slump' over the holiday period. Having to find extra money for meals during the holidays, sometimes on top of additional childcare costs, stretches the budget of the poorest families. The UK All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger recommended programmes to address the holiday hunger gap. Also, the APPG on School Food Holiday Hunger Task Group has produced the *Filling the Holiday Gap* guide for organisations wishing to set up holiday food provision, as well as calling for government action.

CASE STUDY: Monitoring year-round food for children in Islington

As well as voluntarily offering universal school meals in nurseries and to all primary school children, Islington is taking a strategic lead in monitoring other food-related provision in the borough.

The borough does not provide funding for breakfast clubs, but it does provide advice and support. For example, if a school indicates they want to set up a breakfast club, the borough supplies information about possible funders or providers.

The borough collects information on breakfast clubs (as well as tuck shops and after-school club food provision) on the health and wellbeing forms that schools fill in when they apply for Healthy School status. Therefore the borough has a register of what is happening where, enabling it to ensure that the clubs meet the statutory standards for

school food. The borough also sends out a survey every couple of years to find out more detailed information about the service.

The borough also tracks the location of holiday meal schemes or activity programmes that offer free meals in the borough, and publicises them. These include youth services which include food preparation as part of their activities in adventure playgrounds and youth hubs, with the food eaten by the young people. The Islington Play Association offer two healthy cook-and-eat sessions a week over the summer in five of Islington's adventure playgrounds. The borough also works with schools and other agencies to coordinate referrals of children judged to be at risk of holiday hunger.



"Our vision is to make Islington fairer: to create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. Getting enough food to eat, that is appropriate, healthy and affordable is fundamental in giving our children the best start in life."

Councillor Joe Caluori, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Families, London Borough of Islington

Key findings

Five boroughs have extended universal free meals to all primary school pupils. While there is welcome recognition that morning hunger and holiday hunger are important issues across many boroughs, responses are still patchy.

1 Trust for London (2015) *London's Poverty Profile*

2 Ipsos Mori for GLA (2013) *Child Hunger in London: Understanding food poverty in the capital*

3 Ipsos Mori for GLA (2013) *Child Hunger in London: Understanding food poverty in the capital*






4 NASUWT (2016) *The impact of financial pressures on children and young people*

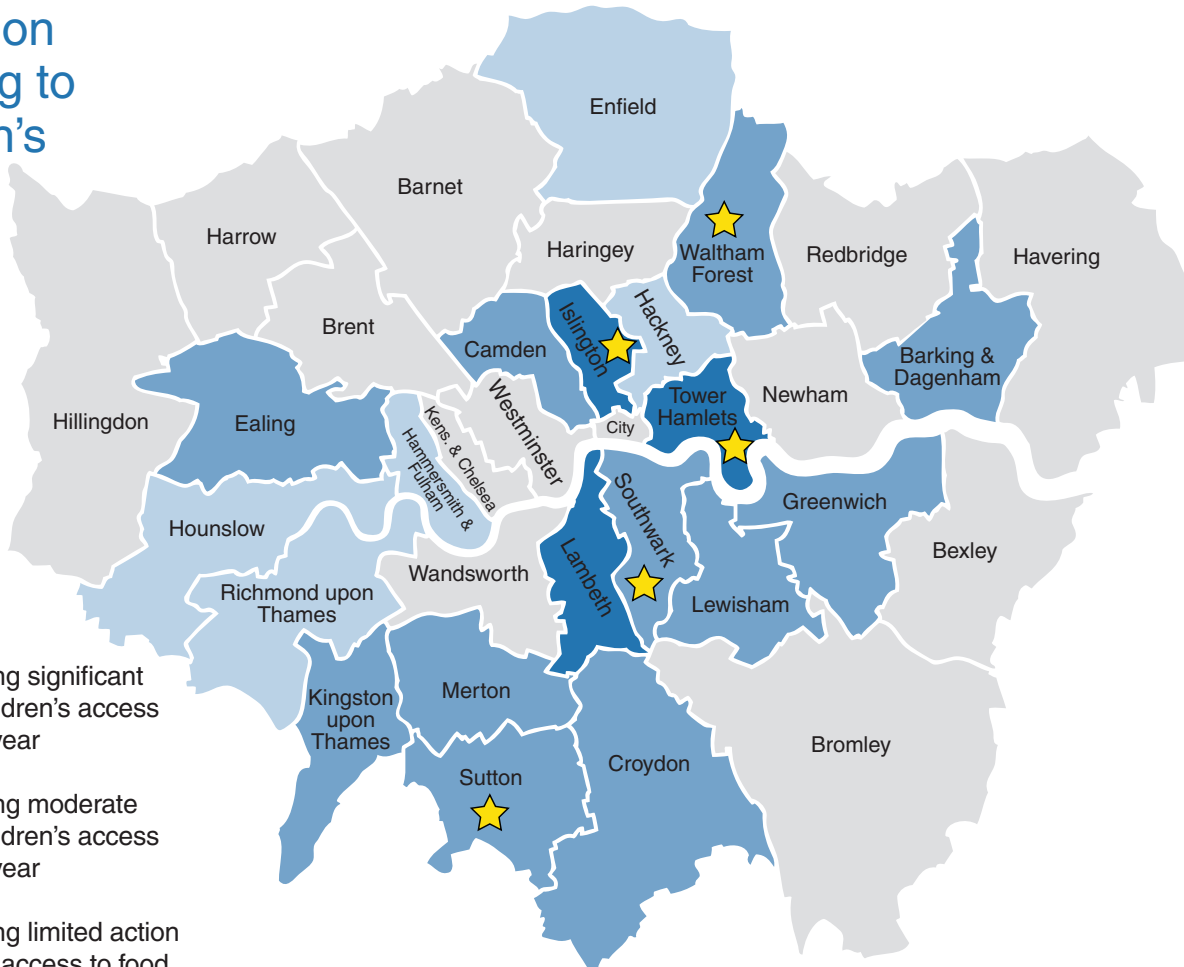
5 www.schoolfoodplan.com/the-plan/

What are London Boroughs doing to ensure children's access to food?

2016

Map key

-  The borough is taking significant action to ensure children's access to food 365 days a year
-  The borough is taking moderate action to ensure children's access to food 365 days a year
-  The borough is taking limited action to ensure children's access to food 365 days a year
-  No reported actions or no data provided
-  Star: Borough provides universal school meals for all primary school pupils



Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to whether they provide funding for *universal* free school meals to primary pupils; provide support of any kind to breakfast clubs; or take any other actions to support food provision to children out of term time (which could include funding holiday meal schemes; engaging with businesses, faith or other community groups to provide support for holiday meal schemes; mapping and publicising the location and hours of holiday meal schemes; or working with schools and other partners to coordinate referrals of children to holiday meal schemes).



Funding for breakfast clubs is very diverse. For example, charities such as Magic Breakfast as well as private sector sponsors support breakfast clubs. In Lewisham, the school-meals provider Chartwells now supplies free porridge to all pupils. Some boroughs also reported how several offer telephone advice to schools wanting to set up a breakfast club.

On school holiday provision, the situation is greatly varied. Only one borough reported funding holiday food provision and only four reported taking steps to track holiday food provision. The Mayor's Fund for London worked across several boroughs and 14 locations to pilot a holiday meals scheme during summer 2016. There is also a wide range of non-statutory organisations offering food as part of their school holiday provision.

What can London boroughs do?

- Ensure all eligible children are registered for free school meals (FSM) and monitor the number of entitled children not claiming the benefit.
- Provide a universal free school meals service for all primary school children.
- Offer free school breakfast to pupils eligible for FSM and provide universal free school breakfast in schools with greater than 35% FSM eligibility.
- Take the strategic lead to audit and foster provision of breakfast clubs and holiday food schemes.
- Work with schools to establish or enhance a referral policy for identifying pupils at risk of hunger and provide training for frontline employees to ensure appropriate referrals.
- Work with partners from children services and youth organisation in the public, private and third sectors to offer food as a part of school holiday enrichment activities at a range of venues.
- Promote free school meals, breakfast clubs and holiday meal schemes to parents, including offering school meal taster days to parents.

Become a London Living Wage employer and promote the London Living Wage

Despite London being a rich city, thousands of its citizens have too little money to buy nourishing food. For low-income households, food is often the only flexible budget item, so when money is tight, diet and health suffer. This is particularly worrying for groups such as pregnant women, young children and older people, disabled people or people with mental health problems. London boroughs can strengthen the safety

net, and help people on a low income to eat well, by paying and promoting the London Living Wage.

The London Living Wage is calculated annually by the Resolution Foundation and overseen by the Living Wage Commission. Before 2016 the London Living Wage was calculated by the Greater London Authority. The London Living Wage is £9.75 an hour.¹



CASE STUDY: The London Living Wage in Southwark

Southwark has been accredited with the Living Wage Foundation for four years. It pays all employees the London Living Wage and ensures all contractors and sub-contractors do so too. Now the focus is on promoting London Living Wage across the borough through partnerships with local employers.

Southwark's Business Forum provides space to discuss issues such as pay and living costs with large employers, raising the profile of the Living Wage debate locally. And in March 2016, Southwark assembled key voices for a Living Wage Symposium at the House of Commons.

Southwark makes special efforts to promote the London Living Wage for traditionally lower-paid roles. For apprentices, the Southwark Apprenticeship Standard promotes the London Living Wage as part of an improved quality standard. The council's Ethical Care Charter makes sure home-care suppliers pay the London Living Wage, resulting in more responsive services and a provider culture that better values home-care staff. And in the construction industry, the council's Aylesbury Estate and Elephant Park regeneration projects are both entirely Living Wage schemes.



"The Living Wage is important to us because we believe a 'fair day's work deserves a fair day's pay'. We see the impact of low wages across our residents' lives. People in low-paid employment can struggle in maintaining healthy diets, heating their homes properly and living fulfilled lives. That's why we're committed to paying the London Living Wage and encouraging others to do the same, as part of our vision to create a fairer future for all of Southwark."

Councillor Johnson Situ, Cabinet Member for Business, Employment and Culture, London Borough of Southwark

Key findings

Fifteen London boroughs are leading the way as accredited Living Wage employers, up from 12 last year. Of these 15, 12 also promote the Living Wage to local employers. Islington and the City of London's City Bridge Trust are also Friendly Funders, supporting charities to pay the London Living Wage through their grant-making.

There has been welcome progress in implementing the Living Wage in social care provision, where pay rates are notoriously low, despite the challenging funding situation faced by local authority care providers. For example, Camden has applied the Living Wage to 96% of social care contracts awarded since it adopted its London Living Wage policy in 2012. Based on this experience it has identified specific challenges when implementing the Living Wage in social care, which it will work on with suppliers and the Living Wage Foundation.

¹ The London Living Wage is set at a higher rate than the Living Wage set for the rest of the country, both of which are higher than the National Living Wage (minimum wage) set by government. The London Living Wage reflects the cost of living, and is updated annually to take account of changing circumstances.

What are London Boroughs doing for low paid workers?

2016



Map key

Borough is an accredited Living Wage employer, is actively promoting the London Living Wage in the local community or in the supply chain, and is a Friendly Funder

Borough is an accredited Living Wage employer and is actively promoting the London Living Wage in the local community or in the supply chain

Borough is an accredited Living Wage employer

No reported actions or no data provided

Notes

This measure awards points according to whether or not boroughs are accredited Living Wage employers and whether, beyond this, they are taking actions to promote the London Living Wage to local employers and in supply chains. These actions may include, but are not limited to, providing a business rate incentive to London Living Wage employers, holding events to promote the London Living Wage, and implementing the London Living Wage in social care provision, as well as whether they are Friendly Funders.

There has also been some creative thinking by boroughs to promote the Living Wage locally. Several boroughs offer business rate incentives to companies paying at least the London Living Wage. A number of boroughs also prioritise discretionary support services to employers paying at least the London Living Wage. Several boroughs hold annual Living Wage Weeks to publicise the rate to staff, the public and stakeholders. Lambeth offers peer-to-peer support to other councils wishing to become accredited Living Wage employers.

What can London boroughs do?

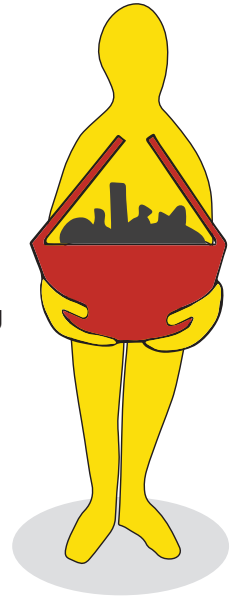
- Pay the London Living Wage to all those directly employed and contracted staff.
- Offer incentives, such as the business rates discounts, to employers who are accredited with the Living Wage Foundation.
- Use civic leadership to encourage other businesses to become accredited Living Wage employers. This could include holding Living Wage awareness events for local employers and suppliers and outreach to help local businesses understand the benefits and process of becoming a Living Wage employer.
- Become a Living Wage Friendly Funder, such as Islington and the City of London, supporting charities to pay the Living Wage through their grant-making.

Ensure all residents have physical access to good food

London is home to a wide variety of food shops and restaurants, but many Londoners struggle to find affordable, healthy food near where they live. For many, the choices are limited, with food availability skewed towards less healthy options. Even a 10-minute walk (about 800m) can be difficult for people such as older or disabled people or parents with young children.

Those on low incomes often live in areas where convenience stores (with a limited range of goods) or fast food outlets predominate.¹ Journeys to shops offering a wider variety, and often more affordable foods can involve complicated and costly journeys by public transport.² An objective of health and anti-obesity policy is 'to make the healthy choice the easy choice', but this can

be thwarted where shopping journeys are difficult, shopping areas unattractive, the range of goods limited, healthy options unaffordable, or where one type of outlet predominates to the exclusion of others.³ A report in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) showed that exposure to takeaway food outlets was associated with higher consumption of takeaway food and greater chances of obesity, and increased where there was exposure near home, at work and along commuting routes.⁴ This was also reflected in recent work with young people in a London borough.⁵

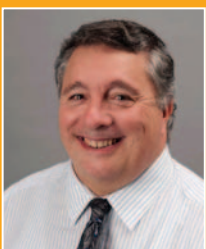


CASE STUDY: Tackling the number of hot-food takeaways in Sutton

Sutton is overall one of the least deprived London boroughs. However, there are wide variations within the borough and pockets of deprivation. The council and Health and Wellbeing Board support a number of initiatives to promote access to good food through the Local Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, particularly for lower-income residents. One current priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board is the link between an environment with ubiquitous fast-food outlets and poorer health, including increased obesity. The borough approaches this issue from a number of angles, including using the planning system and engaging local communities.

The borough has adopted a policy to regulate the number and concentration of hot-food takeaways in the borough. Through the Sutton Local Plan Issues and Preferred Options document, Sutton has proposed to limit new hot-food takeaways, and plans to take the proposal forward to a policy in the draft Local Plan in December 2016.

Alongside this work, the Sutton People's Kitchen project has helped people to cook and eat healthily via pop-up stalls, after-schools cook clubs and community workshops. There are also plans to use the Healthy Schools London framework to help schools to discourage takeaway use and inspire young people to cook.



"We took forward the recommendation to our Health and Wellbeing Board to produce a food poverty needs assessment. We have commissioned a range of organisations to help people eat healthily. We know that healthy weight is not just about food, it is also about ensuring everyone in the borough has access to good food, is motivated to choose and cook healthy food, as well as lead active lifestyles."

Councillor Colin Stears, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, London Borough of Sutton

Key findings

Our questionnaire uncovered a variety of ways in which boroughs are actively supporting better access to good food. Boroughs support local markets, mobile food units and other initiatives to improve availability of affordable fruit and vegetables in areas where provision of fresh produce is otherwise poor. The Mayor of London is also supporting

- 1 Dowler, E. et al (2001) Poverty Bites: Food, Health and Poor Families, Child Poverty Action Group
- 2 Bowyer, S. et al (2009) 'Shopping for food: Lessons from a London borough', *British Food Journal*, Vol 111
- 3 Public Health England (2015) Obesity and the environment: regulating the growth of fast food outlets
- 4 Burgoine, T. et al (2014) Associations between exposure to takeaway food outlets, takeaway food consumption, and body weight in Cambridgeshire *BMJ* 13(348)
- 5 Caraher, M. et al (01 Aug 2016) Secondary school pupils' food choices around schools in a London borough: Fast food and walls of crisps. *Appetite*, Vol 103
- 6 Caraher, M. et al (01 Jan 2014) The "School Foodshed": Schools and fast-food outlets in a London borough. *British Food Journal*, Vol 116(3)

What are London boroughs doing to improve access?

2016

Map key

- Borough is taking at least 8 significant actions to improve physical access to good food
- Borough is taking at least 5 significant actions to improve physical access to good food
- Borough is taking at least 3 significant actions to improve physical access to good food
- No reported actions or no data provided



Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to whether they are monitoring access to healthy, affordable food in their areas, and attempting to ensure diverse provision. Steps include: mapping food in relation to transport routes, levels of deprivation or proximity to schools; providing business incentives to shops or street markets to stock healthy options; helping food co-ops or box schemes to reach low-income families; taking part in the Rose Voucher scheme (or similar) to boost purchases of fruit and veg; working with local caterers to adopt a sugary drinks levy; participating in the Healthier Catering Commitment; or using policies such as the Local Development Plan or Supplementary Planning to encourage healthy food provision.

the establishment of three ‘community shops’ in Haringey, Enfield and Lambeth where members can shop for food at reduced prices, as well as gain access to professional and personal development programmes which aim to address the underlying drivers of their difficulties.

Several boroughs have also taken steps to limit the number of takeaways near schools including community consultation and supporting healthier fast food takeaways.⁶ Issuing of supplementary planning guidance and other planning mechanisms have been used to drive this. In many boroughs, work with fast food outlets continues to ensure that at least some of the food on offer uses healthier ingredients and cooking methods, and is promoted and priced attractively. Some boroughs are also taking action to safeguard allotments and encourage food growing and to commission communal cooking and dining activities, with an objective to reach lower income groups.

What can London boroughs do?

- Map food access, checking how easy it is for people, including those with mobility issues, to get to shops that sell a variety of healthy, affordable foods.
- Consider using rate reductions to encourage shops selling fresh foods.
- Encourage local businesses to use existing schemes such as the Healthier Catering Commitment and the London Healthy Workplace Charter.
- Encourage retailers and markets to accept Healthy Start vouchers.
- Help markets to continue to sell fresh foods, for example by keeping pitches affordable, offering lower pitch rates, and through better promotion of the market as a whole.
- Support community food projects for example lower cost box schemes, social supermarkets and co-ops.
- Embed food access and public health concerns in planning strategies, including consulting Directors of Public Health or other health bodies from the earliest stages.

Support and enhance meals on wheels provision

Nationally more than 1.3 million people over the age of 65 are malnourished. Malnutrition makes people more susceptible to physical and mental ill-health, extends hospital stays and makes re-admission more likely.¹ There is no one solution to reducing malnutrition among older people. Valuable activities include lunch clubs or other forms of shared meals, improving care and hospital provision, influencing people's eating habits.

Meals on wheels can provide a lifeline to people struggling to feed themselves in their own homes. The recipients are mainly older, but may also include disabled people and other people with health conditions. Ideally, the meals on wheels service provides a freshly delivered hot meal every day, although in many cases the meals are now pre-frozen and delivered weekly. But a meals on wheels service is about more

than just food – the drivers and other staff can provide regular social contact, and make sure the most isolated and vulnerable people are receive safety and wellbeing checks.

Yet as pressure on budgets for social care services builds, meals on wheels services have been at risk or cut across the country. However, a number of local authorities are trying to protect these services and in some cases develop innovative models. For example, in Camden the London Independent Living Service (an off-shoot of Hertfordshire Independent Living Service), is currently running a small-scale meals on wheels pilot in partnership with commercial caterer *apetito* and housing provider One Housing.

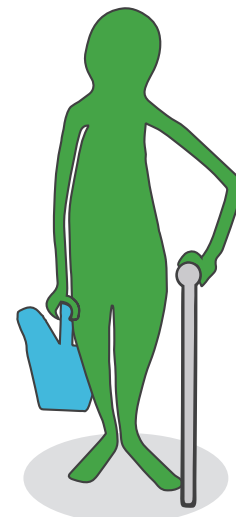
CASE STUDY: Meals on wheels in Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is the only London borough to cook its own meals fresh each day, and provide a 365-day-a-year delivered hot meal service. The service is run by Contract Services, an arm of the council that provides school meals, meals on wheels and lunch clubs. Every day the borough delivers 200 hot meals a day to older people and other residents in Tower Hamlets, as well as a further 100 to residents in neighbouring Hackney. The service also provides 1,500 frozen meals, which include special diet meals in all categories. This amounts to more than 92,000 meals per year.

The service is subsidised by the council, meaning that those who are eligible pay £1.40 per meal. The service reduced its costs by £120,000 in the last financial year. This was achieved by reducing staffing levels and reducing the delivery rounds from six to five, in turn saving staffing and vehicle costs. The service also works with Barts NHS Health Trust to provide people with temporary access to meals on leaving hospital. Staff delivering the meals also check on clients' welfare.

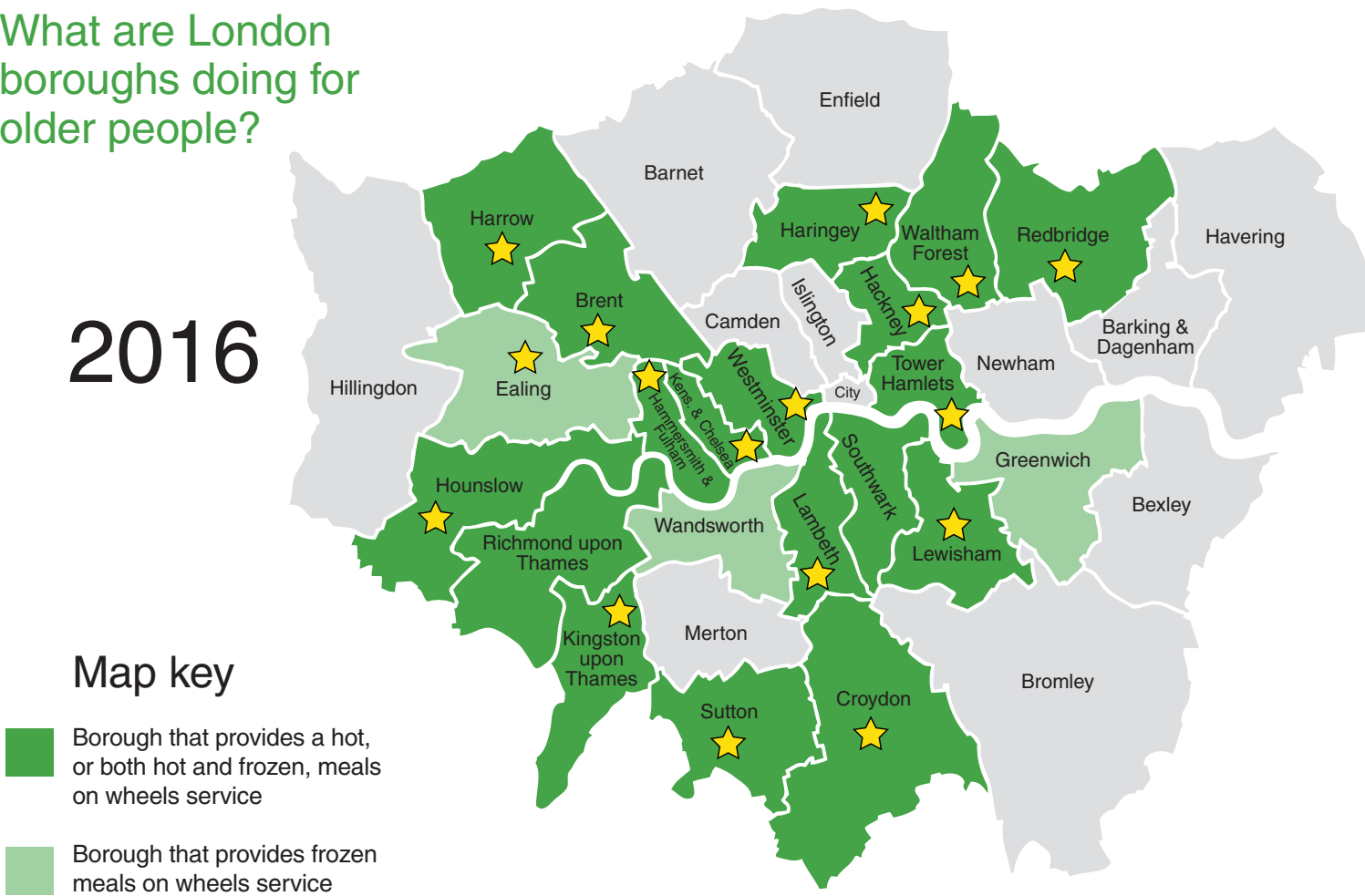
The service provided by the council was recognised with a sustainability award by the National Association of Care Catering in October 2015. The judges described the service as 'a model for others to follow'. The service was also awarded the Food for Life Catering Mark Bronze award in January 2016. This rewards caterers who serve fresh, sustainably and ethically sourced food, and champion local producers where possible. Tower Hamlets is the only borough in the country to achieve this award for its community meals on wheels service.

Examples from around the UK demonstrate how the value of the meals on wheels can be extended well beyond the actual meals. There is an opportunity here for boroughs to use food provision to link isolated adults to other services and avert escalating health and social care costs through early intervention. Sustain and the National Association for Care Catering have produced a set of case studies of different models of provision from across the UK.



What are London boroughs doing for older people?

2016



Map key

- Borough that provides a hot, or both hot and frozen, meals on wheels service
- Borough that provides frozen meals on wheels service
- No borough service or no data provided
- Star: Borough subsidises the cost of a meal

Notes

This measure awards points to boroughs according to whether they provide a frozen, hot and frozen, or hot meals only service. A star is awarded where a borough is subsidising the costs of meals for eligible residents.

Key findings

Several London boroughs are taking welcome action to protect their meals on wheels service, with 21 boroughs providing a service of some sort. Of these, 17 are subsidised by the borough. The charge to individuals varies, as does the level of subsidy and whether the meals are fresh or frozen.

A number of boroughs also recognise the value of a number of initiatives including lunch clubs and targeted support for older people.

What can London boroughs do?

- Foster reinvigorated provision of meals on wheels, as part of a comprehensive community meal plan for London.
- Provide signposting and other publicity to increase uptake of meals on wheels.
- Ensure Health and Wellbeing Boards regularly assess and take action to address the food needs of older people and other vulnerable groups.

1 BAPEN, *Introduction to malnutrition*, available at www.bapen.org.uk/

Develop an action plan to tackle food poverty

The wide range of measures this report has covered shows that food poverty has many causes, and affects people in different circumstances, either as a temporary crisis or in the form of long-term hardship. Some of the drivers

require action at national level, but London boroughs are well-placed to intervene in a range of areas to avert or mitigate food poverty, in order to ensure their residents have reliable access to a range of affordable and nourishing foods.



CASE STUDY: Coordinating food poverty work in Lewisham

In 2015, Lewisham realised it was facing an array of pressing food issues and decided to explore a collaborative and coordinated approach. A Food Summit brought together a range of organisations, including voluntary and community sectors, food banks, education, charitable and social enterprises, Lewisham Council and health agencies. The aim was to identify the next steps to securing a healthier and sustainable food future for the borough.

At the Food Summit, it was agreed to use the Sustainable Food Cities approach and form Lewisham Food Partnership (LFP). This approach was endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The partnership is using Sustain's food poverty framework as a basis to monitor progress and improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of local Food Poverty Action Plans. Since the formation of the Lewisham Food Partnership, progress has been made in several areas, including increased awareness among partners of national and local schemes such as Healthy Start vouchers, local vitamin D scheme and free porridge to all pupils as part of the school catering contract. Increased collaboration among partners has resulted in joint bids for school holiday hunger projects and planned joint training, and better understanding of the food bank provision offered in the borough. The Lewisham Food Partnership is also exploring how to share data on food poverty related work, and is sharing good practice through networking and participation in Sustain's food poverty webinars.



"As a council we have long recognised the importance of food and its impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents, with our first food strategy published in 2006. The collaborative work of the Food Partnership and a more coordinated approach to tackling food poverty has the potential to make a real difference.

The Mayor's manifesto commitments included developing comprehensive local food and nutrition policies to tackle food poverty."

Councillor Chris Best, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Older People, London Borough of Lewisham

Our London food poverty profile survey has shown that London boroughs are already taking many actions, and it is hoped that the report will inspire them to learn from each other. But this report also shows that the necessary actions cross many policy boundaries, calling for collaboration both within councils and between councils and a host of other stakeholders. This is where a food poverty action plan can help.

Local food poverty action plans allow local authorities and their partners and associates to work together to identify risks, assess current provision and coordinate action. The plans allow information to be shared, enable partners to learn from each other, make effective use of available funds and other resources, and avoid duplication. Those involved can achieve more by acting together than they could by acting separately.

There are different approaches to creating food poverty action plans. The extent and reach of actions within a plan vary according to local ambitions and available resources and other support. A short guide to developing food poverty action plans is available on the Sustain website. The GLA and Sustain will be providing support for boroughs to develop action plans during 2017.

What are London boroughs doing to develop an action plan?

2016



Map key

- Boroughs that have a food poverty action plan or equivalent
- Boroughs that are developing a food poverty action plan or equivalent
- Boroughs that do not have a food poverty action plan or did not provide data

Key findings

One third of London boroughs (11) either have a food poverty action plan in place or are developing one. Four boroughs (Greenwich, Hammersmith & Fulham, Lambeth and Lewisham) are those that already have plans, with seven others having plans in development.

Two thirds of London boroughs (22) do not have a food poverty action plan in development.

Notes

This measure awards points according to whether boroughs have or are developing food poverty action plans, and whether there is a designated, cross-sectoral group responsible for overseeing implementation.

What can London boroughs do?

- Trigger the process of developing a food poverty action plan, by leading this in-house or commissioning a local partner.
- Establish a cross-sector steering group to oversee development of the plan and regularly monitor progress.
- Involve all relevant organisations, departments and agencies, such as public health, social care, children’s, education, environment, housing and planning functions, community food groups, as well as finding ways to meaningfully engage local residents experiencing food poverty.

Support financial advice services

In this year's questionnaire we also asked about the direct financial support and financial advice that boroughs provide to people on low incomes. Poverty and low income are root causes of food poverty. Boosting people's incomes - either directly for example through council tax reduction, or indirectly through information and advice on tax, benefits and debt - is a vital strand in any food poverty reduction strategy. Despite the very significant squeeze on local government finances, boroughs have a number of levers at their disposal. These include direct financial support through council tax reduction, emergency or hardship grants and other financial provision, as well as funding welfare and debt advice services to maximise household incomes.

For each borough, our survey asked:

- How much each council spent in the previous financial year on direct welfare benefit, in the form of goods or grants to residents.
- How much council tax support each council offers.
- How much each council are planning to spend on direct welfare benefits and debt advice services (either in-house or contracted) in the financial year 2016-2017.

We received varying levels of data from boroughs, meaning that scores for this measure could not be fairly allocated, especially given the proportional differences in need and resources among boroughs. We chose not to score the measure in this year's report. The measure will be refined for next year's report, and use data from this current year to inform comparisons and commentary on any changes in approach.

Key findings

Local welfare provision

Initial findings show that the amount of financial support varies widely from very small amounts being spent to very significant ones. Most of the other boroughs which provided data reported spending £200,000 to £300,000 in 2015/16.

Council tax support

Since 2013, every council has been required to produce its own scheme to reduce council tax liability for people in financial need, so rules differ from borough to borough. This was accompanied by a 10% cut in funding from central government. Our survey findings mirror the recent Child Poverty Action Group and Z2K (Zacchaeus 2000 Trust) report, which highlighted how only seven London boroughs still offer 100% support (City of London, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Tower Hamlets and Westminster). Encouragingly, Camden has decided to increase its level of support to 100% for 2017-18. Eight London boroughs increased their minimum payments for 2016/17. Two London boroughs introduced charges for disabled and/or unemployed households for the first time for 2016/17. While the overall number of claimants has fallen since localisation, council tax arrears have risen, with increasing numbers of claimants being charged court costs on top of arrears, as councils use the courts to enforce payment.¹

Welfare and debt advice

Projected expenditure welfare benefits and debt advice services in 2016-17 varied widely among the boroughs that supplied information. Unsurprisingly, boroughs commission these services in different ways. However, eight boroughs reported that they are not planning to provide any financial support to welfare benefits and debt advice services in 2016-17.

What boroughs can do

- Continue to maintain and/or establish an emergency or hardship fund and proactively promote it, including to people who are unable to pay council tax, and roll any underspend into the following year's budget.
- Reduce or keep the minimum payment for council tax under 10 per cent, or at a level where it can be repaid through deductions from benefits.
- Introduce or broaden council tax exemptions to include those in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support, as well as claimants affected by other aspects of welfare reform, such as the social sector size criteria or benefit cap.
- Start or continue to financially support local welfare and debt advice services.

¹ CPAG and Zacchaeus Trust (2016) *Still too poor to pay: Three years of localised council tax support in London*

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 working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level, and work with hundreds more on local initiatives to improve the food system.

Sustain's work on food poverty fits within these wider strategic objectives, alongside a number of complementary work streams and projects. It is advised by a project working party drawn from Sustain's membership and other organisations interested in promoting social justice and improving public health, and chaired by a member of Sustain's Board of Trustees.

London Food Link is the umbrella network for all of Sustain's London-focused initiatives. Our **Good Food for London** report

and league table comparing every borough's support for good food initiatives covering procurement, catering, partnerships and food culture. Nationally, Sustain is also one of three lead partners in the **Sustainable Food Cities** Network, with Food Matters and the Soil Association, (now with over 40 local food partnerships operating in towns and cities around the UK) which helps people and places share challenges, explore practical solutions and develop best practice on key food issues.

Better food and food teaching for children in schools, and protection of children from junk food marketing are the aims of Sustain's high-profile **Children's Food Campaign**. We also want clear food labelling that can be understood by everyone. Sustain hosts the **Children's Health Fund** which was set up by the Jamie Oliver Foundation and Sustain in August 2015. The aim is to get restaurants and cafés to volunteer to put a 10p sugary drinks levy on non-alcoholic soft drinks on their menu that have added sugar. The Fund's most recent funding

round was open to organisations providing good food to children from low-income families during school holidays. We are also working with London boroughs to develop and promote the **Local Authority Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food**.

The **Campaign for Better Hospital Food**, also coordinated by Sustain, represents a coalition of organisations calling on the central government to introduce mandatory nutritional, environmental and ethical standards for food served to patients in NHS hospitals, and to improve standards for the millions of workers and visitors who eat food provided on NHS hospital premises every day.

Capital Growth is London's Food Growing Network, with over 2,000 members and coordinated by Sustain. We are also building a network of community **food co-ops** and food buying groups across the UK to help new groups get off the ground and existing groups to thrive, currently with a special focus on student co-ops.

Recently published resources

Sustain's food poverty action plan fact sheet

www.sustainweb.org/publications/

Sustainable Food Cities: Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill health and access to affordable healthy food

www.sustainablefoodcities.org/keyissues/tacklingfoodpovertyandaccesstohealthyfood/resources

Information for food banks: Supporting pregnant women and families with infants

www.firststepsnutrition.org/pdfs/Food_Banks_Toolkit_final.pdf

Filling the Holiday Gap: Guiding key points for organisations in UK providing community holiday time meals for children

www.fillingtheholidaygap.org/

National Association of Care Catering (NACC) and Sustain case studies of good practice in meals on wheels provision

www.sustainweb.org/publications/

Living Wage Friendly Funders

www.livingwage.org.uk/friendly-funders

Beyond the Food Bank

London Food Poverty Profile

A Sustain publication

November 2016

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