

Summary of Southwark's progress against the London Food Poverty Profile 2019

Southwark Public Health Division

Place and Wellbeing

July 2019

Local authority policy can influence the wider determinants that lead to food insecurity

THE LONDON FOOD POVERTY PROFILE

The London Food Poverty Profile (a joint initiative of the Greater London Authority and Sustain) is a regional measure for tracking efforts made by London's councils to tackle food insecurity and its wider determinants.

Local authorities submit data on 10 policy areas under council control which can improve equality and food security if acted on. These measures span many different sectors, showing that food insecurity is a multifaceted problem requiring collaboration from a broad range of partners.

The 2018 results ranked Southwark joint 5th in London with a score of 60% (the highest score of 76% went to Tower Hamlets). Year on year, Southwark has improved since 2016 when we scored 40% (coming in 19th). Southwark won an award for improvement in 2017 with a score of 57% (7th overall). The chart below shows performance alongside neighbouring boroughs. The darker the shading is under each heading, the greater the progress is in this area.



A summary of progress against each of these 10 areas is available on the following pages.

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link

Food Poverty Action Plan: Southwark Council and partners seeking a food secure future for all

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Policy area and progress to date	Gaps and opportunities
<p>Develop and Implement a Food Poverty Action Plan: The borough appointed a public health officer in 2018 to co-ordinate the research and production of an action plan. This JSNA forms part of the groundwork for the plan. Several stakeholder events have been held to inform potential actions. The plan will provide a strategic and coordinated way forward, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The Council has been working closely with the Southwark Food Action Alliance (SFAA) to prepare the shared action plan for a two-year period initially. This will allow for the establishment of relationships, embedding of priorities and a better understanding of how existing resources can best be used to support this work.</p>	<p>Strengthening the core SFAA membership, alongside providing longer-term sustainability and co-ordination for the partnership will be vital to maintain momentum with the action plan.</p> <p>As a living document, the plan needs to be regularly monitored, with new actions being added, as appropriate.</p> <p>There will be further opportunities to align efforts and resources over time as new partners come on board with the agenda.</p>

Healthy Start: Low income families failed to access £134,650 of free food-aid vouchers during 2017-2018

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<p>Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers: The Southwark take-up rate for this national food welfare scheme for low-income pregnant women and young children is 71% (Aug 2018). This compares to a national average of 66% and the nationally recommended 80%+. This translated into £134,650 of unclaimed vouchers for the borough in 2017-18.</p> <p>1,658 mothers and children under 4 in Southwark are entitled to the voucher as of August, 2018. This does not include asylum seekers or those without recourse to public funds, who are ineligible for the voucher but are groups at high risk of food insecurity. The markets team will do a small-scale pilot with one stall holder at East Street Market accepting the vouchers in 2019.</p>	<p>The lack of co-ordination of the Healthy Start scheme in the borough led to the formation of a cross-sector, multi-agency Healthy Start task and finish group which formed in March 2019.</p> <p>More education and training is needed for maternity and early years staff across sectors to raise awareness of the vouchers and how to administer them and signpost to them.</p> <p>Joint promotion of Healthy Start with Alexandra Rose vouchers could double the weekly food allowance for up to 1,000 low-income families.</p>

Up to 1,000 low-income families in Faraday Ward, Camberwell Green and North Walworth can double their food aid with the Rose Vouchers on a pilot scheme, currently funded until May 2022.

In 2018, Guys and St Thomas' Charity began piloting an additional voucher scheme for low-income families in Faraday ward as part of its research into a whole-systems approach to tackling childhood obesity. The pilot has now been extended to two other areas in the borough and includes families with NRPF and those seeking asylum. The Rose vouchers, worth £3 per child or pregnant woman and £6 for an infant in its first year, are exchanged for free fruit and vegetables at East Street Market.

References

1. Internal document. Sustain. 2019.
2. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
3. Department of Health – Healthy Start Issuing Unit Cycle 199 – August 2018

Baby Friendly Initiative: Southwark is working towards level 2 of this UNICEF initiative to support breastfeeding

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Policy area and progress to date	Gaps and opportunities
<p>Promote breastfeeding to boost health of infants and mothers: Southwark has currently achieved level 1 accreditation of the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative and is working towards level 2. This internationally recognised standard enables public health services to better support families with feeding and bonding.</p> <p>Breast milk provides an infant with food security as it contains the essential nutrients and energy needed for the best start in life. It protects against infection and breastfed babies are less likely to be obese in later life. It is free and no access is needed to sterilising equipment. However, food insecure mothers are less likely to persevere with breastfeeding due to the stress and social isolation of their situation. Many will have to return to work early for financial reasons. With formula costing up to £32 per week, ‘formula poverty’ has been identified. To cope, food insecure parents may resort to unsafe practices such as skipping feeds, watering down the formula, adding cereal or introducing cow’s milk too early.</p> <p>The borough is promoting breastfeeding by inviting local venues to participate in the Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme which welcomes breastfeeding on the premises. This is in addition to Breastfeeding Cafes where mothers can feed in a supportive environment.</p>	<p>It takes several years to work through all three levels of the accreditation process. The borough has a breastfeeding steering group and achieving full accreditation is part of the borough’s Healthy Weight Action Plan.</p> <p>Make food aid providers aware of the First Steps Nutrition guidance around formula milk and foodbanks.</p>

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
2. Orr et al – Relation Between Household Food Insecurity and Breastfeeding in Canada – Canadian Medical Association Journal – March 2018
3. Cost of Infant Formula Negatively Impacting Family Budgets – SUSTAIN – www.sustainweb.org Nov 2018

Children's Services: Children's Centres and childcare are important assets for tackling food insecurity

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Policy area and progress to date	Gaps and opportunities
<p>Provide high quality affordable childcare and maximise the value of children's centres: Adequate provision of statutory childcare helps parents to work, improving family incomes. Following a pledge in the 2018 manifesto, the Council is committed to extend healthy, free school meals to school nurseries. A gold standard will be established for nursery meals that considers the nutritional content of the meals and the eating environment.</p> <p>Local Children's Centres have a wide reach with 21,900 individual children and adults in Southwark having had at least one contact with a Children's Centre in 2016-17. Children's Centres help with food insecurity by offering early years cooking and nutrition classes taught by the local Dietetics team (e.g. Cook & Taste classes, targeted six-week Cook and Eat Well classes). Additionally, there are sessions with snacks, breastfeeding support and family workers who can pick up on food insecurity and signpost/ refer to foodbanks. Peckham, Peckham Rye and Nunhead Children's Centres reported growing needs around foodbanks, benefit/financial issues and no recourse to public funds in their 2017 report.</p>	<p>Providing free, healthy meals at nurseries could have health benefits, including reducing food insecurity and tackling childhood obesity.</p> <p>Ensure professionals are referring families to Children's Centres, so that they can access support and services. There are opportunities to increase partnership working with Children's Centres in areas such as: promoting Healthy Start vouchers, referring families to holiday provision schemes and teaching skills, such as how to shop and cook on a budget.</p>

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
2. Annual Review For Southwark Children's Centres Report 2017 – C. Rhodes
3. Southwark Locality Children's Centre Annual Review 2017 – Peckham, Peckham Rye and Nunhead

Holiday Provision: Southwark needs a more systematic approach to providing free meals during school holidays

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Policy area and progress to date	Gaps and opportunities
<p>Secure children's access to food during the holidays: The Council's public health team co-ordinated a pilot school holiday meal provision project in 2018, with Mercato Metropolitano, Central Southwark Community Hub and Guys and St Thomas' Charity.</p> <p>A network of holiday food providers in the borough has been established over 2018/19 and has been working towards a more coordinated approach across providers, supporting shared interests around improved evaluation, funding support, sharing best practice, volunteer management and stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>A pilot scheme, which was run with support from the Council across two sites in the borough in 2018, showed the need to work with schools, social services and other partners to strengthen the referral system.</p> <p>Local providers have spoken of the need for provision in half terms and the Easter holidays, not just during the long summer break.</p>

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
2. School Holiday Meal Provision Project - Cabinet Member Briefing (Unpublished) – Southwark Council – Nov 2018

Free School Meals: All primary school children in Southwark receive a free meal at school

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Policy area and progress to date	Gaps and opportunities
<p>Improve the implementation and uptake of free school meals: Overall, 9,517 Southwark schoolchildren are eligible for free school meals (Jan 2018). This is 23.6% of all school-aged children living in Southwark (n. 40,388).</p> <p>Primary school: Due to these high percentages, Southwark provides free school meals to all primary school children, regardless of need. This goes beyond the government's offer of universal free school meals only to those in reception, year 1 and year 2. Over 92% of Southwark primary school pupils take up this offer.</p> <p>Secondary school: 25.1% of secondary school children in Southwark meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals – which is double the English average of 12.4%. This figure excludes students whose families have no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>Nurseries: The Council Plan 2018-2022 commits to extending free, healthy meals to school nurseries. 62 nurseries will be part of the Free Healthy Nursery Meals (FHNM) programme.</p>	<p>There is interest in whether a more coordinated procurement and commissioning approach could be taken across schools to achieve better value for money and drive up the quality of meals.</p> <p>There is an interest to explore water only and dessert-free menus to support the Council's Sugar Smart pledge and healthy weight strategy.</p> <p>There is interest to better understand how school meals are working in secondary schools and to audit provision with support from Guys and St Thomas' Charity.</p> <p>More understanding is needed about secondary school students whose families have no recourse to public funds, the impact of not being entitled to free school meals, and how they are best supported.</p>

References

1. The implementation of Free Healthy Nursery Meals - Cabinet paper – Southwark Council – Jul 2019
2. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
3. Schools, Pupils and Their Characteristics – Local Authority Tables Department for Education (Jan 2018)
4. ONS Population Figures (mid 2017)

Meals on Wheels: Gaps may exist in protecting older and less mobile adults against food insecurity

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Policy area and progress to date	Gaps and opportunities
<p>Support and enhance Meals on Wheels provision: The borough decommissioned its Meals on Wheels service in 2018 due to cuts from Central government and does not directly fund any lunch clubs.</p>	<p>The withdrawal of Meals on Wheels means that potential is lost for add-on services, such as nutritional advice, befriending and signposting. This may leave a gap in protecting older and less mobile adults against food insecurity.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for social enterprises and commercial solutions to fill this gap.</p> <p>Offering befriending and social activities alongside food provides a way to tackle loneliness as well as food insecurity/ malnutrition.</p>

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link

Physical access: easy access to good food is about shops, homes, transport and food growing opportunities

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<p>Ensure residents have physical access to good food:</p> <p>Planning and regeneration: The draft New Southwark Plan looks to restrict takeaways from opening within 400m of secondary schools. Both planning and regeneration policies advocate healthy food environments.</p> <p>Retail: Southwark are working with Tesco and the Consumer Goods Forum to drive an improved offer of affordable, healthy food in supermarkets, and with convenience stores to look at how this can be made viable for small local stores. The markets team are currently supporting roll out of the Healthy Start and Alexandra Rose Vouchers in some markets.</p> <p>Housing: As landlord to 55,000 households, the Council is refurbishing all kitchens which are over 20 years old and has been trialling a 3-week cooking course to tenants to enhance cooking skills. The Council does not supply white goods for its tenants, so if a tenant has a broken fridge or cooker which they can not afford to replace, this will impact a tenant's ability to prepare food for themselves. Some social landlords including the Council can offer grants to support white goods.</p>	<p>The regeneration efforts planned for the borough offer tremendous potential to ensure good access to healthy food. The Place Plans for each of these areas should consider their potential to support food security.</p> <p>A more coordinated approach is needed to support Southwark's edible landscape (e.g. community growing spaces and orchards) and how this can be better planned for and utilised to support those in need.</p> <p>Potential food deserts have been located in the borough where it is harder to access affordable, healthy food. Many are in the more deprived parts of Southwark and residents with mobility problems, such as the frail, ill and disabled require good transport to access affordable food. How we harness business and enterprise solutions to improve access is worth exploring further.</p> <p>Providing basic cooking facilities, including cookers and fridges, could be an area for social landlords to consider as an offer for low-income tenants.</p>

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link

Promote the London Living Wage (and Fuel Poverty Relief)

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<p>Become a London Living Wage employer and promote the London Living Wage: Southwark has been a London Living Wage employer since 2011. Currently, 137 employers in the borough, including the Council, offer the London Living Wage. The borough is working as a pilot location with the Living Wage Foundation to become a 'Living Wage Place'. This is a geographical zone where communities and businesses are working in partnership to tackle low pay.</p>	<p>It can sometimes be difficult for smaller employers to commit to paying the Living Wage and there may be ways of helping them along this journey, such as offering business rate incentives.</p>
<p>A cross sector approach is required to tackling fuel poverty in Southwark: the proportion of households suffering from fuel poverty has increased from 5% (5,500 households) in 2011 to 8.8% (just over 11,000 households) in 2016. This often leaves people with the 'heat or eat' dilemma, as they are unable to afford both. An inability to afford fuel will impact on people's abilities to use cookers and kettles for warm food, along with fridges and freezers for storage. Older adults are particularly vulnerable.</p>	<p>This is not a heading in the Food Poverty Profile but is seen as another key wider determinant of food insecurity.</p> <p>The South East London Fuel Poverty project is an example of an outreach service working in the borough to help vulnerable residents access energy advice, Warmer Homes funding and to stay warm over the winter. However, there is potential to significantly improve participation and service uptake in Southwark.</p>

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link
2. Public Health Outcomes Framework – Wider Determinants – Fuel Poverty - 2016

Council Tax Reduction: Keep minimum payment rates low and protect existing statutory support for those in need

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<p>Set low minimum payments for residents qualifying for Council Tax Reduction: Southwark's local scheme set a minimum Council Tax payment for 2018-19 of 15%. This minimum contribution has not changed since 2013 and will remain the same for 2019/20.</p> <p>Since April 2018, 19-24 year olds who had been in Southwark Council care have been exempt from paying Council Tax. The borough does not use bailiffs to recover Council Tax debt.</p> <p>Additionally, in 2012, the Council created a discretionary hardship fund for vulnerable residents who might suffer hardship if required to meet the 15% minimum Council Tax contribution, in full. That scheme will continue to be funded until 2022 at the earliest.</p>	<p>It is important to protect the minimum payment rate at 15%, if it can not be lowered further, alongside the exemption for young people who have left care.</p> <p>The hardship fund also needs to remain protected as it provides a valuable safety net for residents. Demand on the fund may increase due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The possibility of Brexit affecting food prices and the economy▪ A projected further 25,000 households who are yet to transition to Universal Credit.

References

1. Beyond The Foodbank – London Food Poverty Profile 2018 – Sustain/ GLA/ Trust For London/London Food Link