Introduction

- Food poverty is the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.

- The main cause of food poverty is lack of money and resources. It is also a factor of the food environment.

- The United Kingdom is said to have amongst the highest levels of food poverty in the developed world, although descriptions of food poverty’s prevalence are inconsistent due to a lack of data collection.

- Food poverty has been reported to damage children’s physical and mental health.

- The most common health consequence of food poverty is likely to be obesity and its related conditions. It also causes other dietary deficiencies, social isolation, as well as stress and anxiety.

- Food poverty can hinder a child’s ability to learn and participate socially.

- An expert enquiry highlighted the importance of maintaining dignity within a food poverty response. Food poverty is best prevented by addressing the root causes. However, where mitigation is necessary it should: involve beneficiaries in decisions; give people a choice; offer people a chance to contribute; and embrace the social value of food.
### What are the key stats?

It is difficult to accurately estimate food poverty but the following stats give an indication of the challenges people face.

- **1 in 5 adult Londoners** have low or very low levels of food security*.
- **1 in 6 parents** in London have children living in low or very low food security—around 400,000 children.
- **Trussell Trust (food bank)** usage, often used as a measure of acute food poverty, is up 284% since 2012. In 2017, 10% of its 1,332,952 food packages were distributed in London.
- Due to rising costs, **42% of 500 surveyed London parents** reported cutting food purchases; **30% reduced fruit and veg**; and **21% skipped meals for their child to eat**.
- The **UK's poorest 11yr olds** are 16% more likely to be underweight and 132% more likely to be obese than the richest.
- Families in severe food poverty may cost their health service 76% more than those who aren’t. Those in moderate food poverty may cost 32% more.
- **One third of elderly people admitted to hospital in the UK** are malnourished or at risk of it.
- In **2018, 31% of Tower Hamlets residents** were over indebted compared to the national average of 17.6%.

*Being food insecure means ‘that at times a person’s food intake is reduced and their eating patterns are disrupted because of a lack of money and other resources for obtaining food’.

### Who is affected?

Information from various sources tell us that the people most at risk of food poverty include:

- Poorer, larger, younger families.
- Single parents and their children.
- Adults who live alone.
- Londoners in the lowest income quintile.
- Londoners who are unemployed.
- Londoners who are Black or from a mixed ethnic background.
- Londoners who have a disability and people with certain physical, dietary and mental health conditions.
- People who are homeless or in temporary accommodation.
- People with no recourse to public funds.
- The reasons people give for using food banks also helps us understand who experiences acute food poverty: low income (28% of visits); insufficient benefit (24% of visits); benefits changes (8% of visits); indebtedness (9% of visits); homeless (5% of visits); ill-health (2.8% of visits); no resource to public funds (2.6% of visits); victim of domestic abuse (1.4% of visits).
In Tower Hamlets, activity includes but is not limited to:

- Provision of breastfeeding support & promotion of Healthy Start vouchers.
- Provision of healthy school meals (universal free meals are provided to infant and primary school aged children, means tested for secondary school aged children.)
- Funding of catered holiday hunger programme interventions.
- Healthy Families Programme.
- Option of council tax reductions.
- Tackling Poverty and Inequality action plan being implemented.
- Welfare advice provided at Poplar foodbank.
- Provision of breakfast clubs in some schools.
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets is a Living Wage employer.
- Crisis grants provided and local social welfare advice funded.

- Healthy eating becomes possible when healthy food is made available and is affordable and easily accessible.
- The Tower Hamlets Food Partnership was established in 2018. It is a multi-sector partnership that aims to bring organisations together to create a food system that protects social, physical and emotional wellbeing. It also aims to; share data and knowledge to better understand our food system; form action groups to deliver projects (including an action group focused on reducing food poverty); communicate and support activities celebrating healthier food; and improve accountability for delivering progress against objectives.
- We also need to protect what exists, incrementally improve services, and scale-up provision.
- See ‘Priorities’ section for recommendations.
What is food poverty?

Food poverty is the inability to afford, or to have access to food to make up a healthy diet. There has been a dramatic rise in the UK’s food poverty over the last ten years. This rise is personified by increased reliance on food banks - up 284% since 2012. Food poverty is described as acute when it forces a household to skip meals. It is described as chronic when financial constraints act to worsen the nutritional quality of ones diet.

Who suffers from food poverty?

The main way food poverty differs from the relative measures of poverty traditionally tracked by the government is that it is linked both to a household’s income and a household’s expenditure requirements. As a result it is poorer, larger, younger families that are more likely to suffer food poverty. Single parent families are also particularly at risk; as too are adults who live alone. Some pensioners will suffer acute food poverty, however they seem less likely to experience it than younger age groups. Households and families at particular risk of food poverty include:

a. Households with someone whose physical, dietary or mental health conditions either increases their food expenditure requirements or curtails their earning potential.

b. Households in temporary accommodation. For example, a Scottish study found half of those housed in temporary accommodation had no access to kitchens or fridges and most said this deprivation caused them to regularly skip meals. Others said it led them to eat more expensively and less healthily than they would like. In Tower Hamlets, we suspect our problem in the area relates mainly to the B&B’s used as temporary accommodation.

c. Families with no resource to public funds.

When considering responses, it is important to realise how prevalent chronic food poverty is. The minimum cost of meeting the UK’s Eat Well Plate in 2018 was £49.93 per week for a household’s first adult; £26.81 per week for a partner; and an additional sum ranging from £6.19 to £24.75 for each child depending on their age. Any household that cannot meet such a bill for each of its members once they’ve covered other fundamental needs will suffer a degree of food poverty.

Furthermore, an investigation into the Minimum Income Standard in London estimates that all our households reliant on working aged benefits are likely to suffer a degree of food poverty; so too will a significant proportion of our borough’s in-work residents.
Setting the scene: what is food poverty? 2

What are the consequences of food poverty?

It is important to feel safe in our ability to access a healthy diet in a socially acceptable way. Food poverty denies a person this security, and therefore has multiple negative impacts on an individual’s physical and mental health. The most common health consequence of food poverty is likely to be obesity and its related conditions. Indeed, the UK’s poorest are 132% more likely to be obese than the richest. Food poverty also causes: stress and anxiety; micronutrient deficiencies; heightened rates of malnutrition amongst the elderly; incidence of child underweight, and stunting. It also hinders a child’s ability to learn and participate socially. Food poverty can also carry a high financial cost to society. For instance, evidence from Canada suggests families in severe food poverty cost their health service 76% more than those who aren’t, and those in moderate food poverty cost 32% more. Food poverty can also have a negative effect on mental health; a recent survey of Londoners found that 45% of Londoners living in low food security are socially isolated, and 22% of Londoners living in food insecurity often or always experience loneliness.

How many people suffer food poverty?

It is difficult to accurately estimate how many people suffer from food poverty in the UK. However from April 2019 the Family Resource Survey, completed by the Department of Work and Pensions, included 10 questions which measure household food insecurity, with data available before March 2021. Currently completed in Scotland, this will provide a more accurate estimation of the rates of food poverty supporting work in this field.
Setting the scene: what is food poverty? 3

What causes food poverty, and harms to people’s health?

Food poverty has been caused by falling real wages, high cost of basic goods, welfare reform and fluctuating healthy food prices. To understand the causes of acute food poverty, it is useful to look at the main reason for a person’s food bank usage. The Trussell Trust found 28% users cited low income (of whom 15% were employed); 24% cited benefit delay; 18% cited benefits changes; 9% cited debt; 5% cited homelessness; 3% cited ill health; 3% cited no recourse to public funds; and 1% cited domestic abuse.

Moving beyond the individual and household, the food retail environment influences what people buy. Price is the single greatest driver of British people’s food purchases. Untamed, the economy produces unhealthy and environmentally damaging food that, per calorie, is three-times cheaper than healthy foods. This can make it easier for people with limited resources to eat an unhealthy diet.

As well as price, availability of food is an important factor. Literature refers to a poverty premium (having to pay more for essential goods and services), induced by living in food deserts, as well as a health trap caused by living in food swamps. Food deserts are residential areas, usually low income areas, where people lack the opportunities to buy affordable fruit and vegetables and as a result have to spend more time and/or money either buying or preparing their food. Food swamps are areas where energy-dense foods of low nutritional value are so readily available that they too easily cater for people’s predominantly habitual and impulsive snacking behaviours. Unhealthy shops tend to concentrate in areas of deprivation. This is a concern because exposure to areas with a high density of take away outlets is associated with excess body weight.

Other factors to consider

The negative effects of food poverty can be exacerbated by issues such as the advertising of unhealthy food and drink to adults and children. Our logical desire for time-saving or convenience can also disproportionately risk the health of someone in food poverty. Although convenience need not be unhealthy, people living in poverty often lack the opportunity others have to mitigate their time scarcity in ways that are healthy. For example, research in the UK showed food cooked at home declined most sharply amongst the poorest members of the public. In Tower Hamlets the most convenient and affordable food tends to be the most unhealthy.
International

- The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** aim to end poverty and tackle inequality and climate change. There are 17 goals and the second is to achieve ‘Zero Hunger’ by 2030. Under this goal, targets include but are not limited to challenges on: ending hunger; increasing access to nutritious food; ending malnutrition; ensuring sustainable food production systems; and increasing agricultural productive capacity.

National

- The **Fair Society, Healthy Lives** 2010 report sets out a framework for action to address health inequalities. One of the key policy objectives is to ‘create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities’ and this includes a policy recommendation to ‘improve the food environment in local areas across the social gradient’. Available here: [http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pd.pdf](http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pd.pdf)

- **National Free School Meal offer**: Free school meals are provided for infant school children (reception, years 1 and 2) across the country, with the Council resourcing free school meals to years 3-6 in addition to this. In secondary school (years 7-11), free school meals are offered to all disadvantaged pupils based on household means tested benefits. Residents must apply for the meals, and changes to the system for universal credit claimants are expected to have a detrimental impact on larger households where one or both parents are working, meaning more young people may be vulnerable to food insecurity.


Regional (London)

- The Mayor of London’s 2018 Food Strategy provides a framework to help all Londoners, London boroughs and London Food Board partners adapt London’s food system to ensure a better future and healthier and sustainable food for all Londoners. The six key settings include: good food at home, and reducing food insecurity; good food economy, shopping, and eating out; good food in community settings and public institutions; good food for pregnancy and childhood; good food growing, community gardens and urban farming; and good food for the environment. Available here: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_london_food_strategy.pdf

- Sustain’s Beyond the Foodbank 2018: London Food Poverty report tracks what London’s 33 local councils are doing to improve household food security, scoring them on a variety of measures, and includes ten recommendations for action. In 2018 Tower Hamlet’s response was judged to be the best in London. Available here: https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/BeyondTheFoodBank_2018.pdf


- The Mayor of London’s Takeaways Toolkit provides tools, interventions and case studies to help local authorities combat the issue of fast food takeaways. Available here: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/takeawaystoolkit.pdf

Local (Tower Hamlets)

- LBTH has signed up to the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food, which aims to achieve a public commitment to improve the availability of healthier food and drinks and to reduce the availability and promotion of unhealthy options. Available here: https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/BoroughDeclaration_SupportPack.pdf
Policy context: current guidelines

- **The Food for Life Served Here** accreditation rewards caterers for using locally sourced and ethical ingredients that support the economy and protect the environment. It consists of a set of standards set by an Independent Standards Committee. Currently 82 schools and 9 Early Years settings in Tower Hamlets hold the silver level accreditation. Standards available here: [https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/catering/food-for-life-served-here](https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/catering/food-for-life-served-here)

- **The London Borough of Tower Hamlets school meals offer**: The borough has extended universal free school meals provision to include primary school aged children (years 3-6) who are residents of the borough. Extending the free school meals offer to all primary schools currently happens in three other boroughs Southwark, Newham and Islington.

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets is accredited as a **Breastfeeding Friendly Borough**, an evidence based, staged accreditation programme which supports maternity, neonatal, health visiting and children’s centre services to transform their care. [https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/](https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/)

- **Tackling poverty** is a Mayoral priority and funding has been set aside for a tackling poverty programme. [https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2018/October_2018/Mayor_announces_new_programmes_to_tackle_poverty.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2018/October_2018/Mayor_announces_new_programmes_to_tackle_poverty.aspx)

Other Tower Hamlets strategies and partnerships will play a crucial role in shaping the local food system and reducing the risk of people experiencing food poverty. These include but are not limited to:

- **Tower Hamlets Food Partnership**: Brings together businesses, charities and statutory services with a concern for food. They use this shared interest to drive positive social, economic and environmental change.

- **London Borough of Tower Hamlets Local Plan**: Sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used and what will be built. Includes policies which will help create a healthy food system, such as a restriction on new applications for fast food outlets and a Health Impact Assessment policy which will enable us to, for example, encourage more community food growing spaces.

- **London Borough of Tower Hamlets Tackling Poverty Action Plan** which includes actions to help tackle food poverty.
What works: effective interventions 1

Because of food poverty’s complexity and our need to limit the scope of our recommendations, this Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been structured against the following conceptual framework promoted by the United Nation’s (Fig 1)

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework – Linkages between food systems, food environment and diet quality (United Nations, 2017)
What works: effective interventions 2

• In the following slides, we have taken each conceptual domain and used the best available evidence to identify interventions against this conceptual framework.

• We have selected those with the greatest likely impact as our priority recommendations, see ‘Priorities’ from slide number 46.

• To skip the evidence section and find out what food poverty looks like in Tower Hamlets, see ‘Local Picture’ from slide number 34.
### What works: effective interventions 3

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<th>Conceptual domain</th>
<th>Evidence base</th>
<th>Recommended activity</th>
<th>Likely outcomes</th>
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| Purchasing Power – increasing a family’s disposable income | Increasing a family’s disposable income: Recommendations to improve a family’s disposable income are amongst the most sustainable responses to food poverty.  
A comprehensive evidence base for this type of activity is presented in other council documents, including the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.  
The evidence in the Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment covers effective interventions on topics such including: social protection programmes; under claiming of entitlements; enterprise schemes; period poverty; education; childcare; affordable housing; strengthening communities; volunteering; collaborations and partnerships; community resources; and health outcomes and access to care. | A council and its partners can increase a family’s disposable income through the following actions:  
- Improve a vulnerable population’s employment prospects.  
- Pay the real London Living Wage.  
- Procure only from organisations that pay the real London Living Wage.  
- Continue to provide emergency welfare support to families in need, and social welfare advice provision from the voluntary and community sector.  
- Make sure they do not reclaim debt to point of destitution.  
- Improve welfare, debt & benefits advice given to residents – including expanding the communications channels.  
- Reduce the price premiums encountered by those living in poverty. | Other Indicators:  
↑ Income  
↓ Debt  
↓ Expenditure |

**Other Indicators:**

- Income
- Debt
- Expenditure
### What works: effective interventions 4

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| Purchasing Power – increasing a family's ability to buy healthy food | Universal Free School Meals:  
Healthy free school meals can improve children's educational attainment, social skills and behaviour, support the development of long term healthy eating habits, and help families with the cost of living.  
Studies have shown provision of universal free school meals can lead to significantly increased uptake (60%-90%), children more likely to try new food, progress in attainment, as well as parents saving money. Evidence suggests the increase in uptake could be partly due to reduced stigma. | A council and & partners can increase a family's ability to buy healthy food if they:  
- Encourage uptake of free school meal entitlement, particularly for those who are means tested but not claiming.  
- Maintain an enhanced free school meal provision for younger children and groups at risk of food poverty. | Public Health Outcomes Framework:  
↑ Dietary quality  
Other indicators:  
↑ Proportion of food expenditure spent on healthy food categories  
↑ Expenditure on healthy food  
↑ Availability of healthy food  
↓ Price of healthy food  
↑ Entrepreneurial activity  
For holiday clubs:  
↑ Readiness to learn  
↓ Learning loss  
↑ Confidence  
↑ Aspirations  
↑ Fruit and veg intake  
↓ Skipped meals  
↓ Sugar intake  
↑ Physical activity |
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<tr>
<td>Purchasing power – increasing a family’s ability to buy healthy food</td>
<td>Healthy Start Vouchers: Evidence shows food vouchers act as a nutritional safety net, increases intake of fruit and veg for voucher beneficiaries, can have positive long term impacts on nutrition of mothers and young children. Healthy Start Vouchers can act as a financial safety net to some extent but alone are not sufficient to outweigh the negative effects of poverty. Further Food Voucher opportunities: There is clear evidence that it is advantageous to increase a family’s relative ability to afford healthy food. For example, a recent, systematic review concluded that 10% decreases in the price of healthier food are associated with a 12% increase in consumption, and 14% increases in the consumption of fruit and vegetables. These findings are supported by robust modelling exercises in the USA, that concluded the nationwide role out of a fruit and veg incentive scheme could have reduced prevalence of Type II diabetes by 1.7%; heart attacks by 1.4%; stroke by 1.2% ; and obesity by 0.2%.</td>
<td>-Increase uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers. -Explore further food voucher opportunities (e.g. Alexandra Rose scheme).</td>
<td>See above</td>
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## What works: effective interventions 6

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<tr>
<td><strong>Purchasing power – increasing a family's ability to buy healthy food</strong></td>
<td><strong>Holiday Hunger provision:</strong></td>
<td>-Provide ‘holiday hunger’ provision that ensures all children in food poverty have daily access to healthily catered, edifying activities throughout school holidays.</td>
<td>See above</td>
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<td>An evaluation of Tower Hamlets’ holiday response in 2018 found that for £3 per day per child the in-school summer clubs could feed children 2 healthy meals; increase their fruit and veg uptake for all attendees; raise aspirations and confidence in up to 50% of attendees; reduce skipped meals; increase activity and reduce sugar consumption.</td>
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<td>In specifications for holiday hunger provision bids, the Department for Education require coverage to be at least four hours a day, for four days a week, for four weeks, to ensure children access a good ‘dose’ in terms of frequency and duration.</td>
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<td><strong>Fruit and Veg prescription scheme:</strong></td>
<td>-Explore a fruit and vegetable prescription scheme for patients at risk of food poverty.</td>
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<td>Evidence exists only as a case study of excellence, for example, efforts in America to prescribe fruit and vegetable.</td>
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## What works: effective interventions 7

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| Purchasing power – increasing a family's ability to buy healthy food | In Tower Hamlets, the proportion of older people is expected to rise (from 16,700 people aged 65 and over in 2015 to 26,700 by 2030), with the greatest increase among the 90 years plus age group. Half of older people live in income deprived households and are therefore at risk of experiencing food insecurity. | -Ensure the food poverty needs of older people are met | ↑Diet quality  
↑ Nutrient intake  
↓ Food insecurity  
↓ Anxiety  
↓ Loneliness  
↓ Hospital admissions  
↑ Wellbeing |
### What works: effective interventions 8

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| Purchasing power – increasing a family’s ability to buy healthy food | **Breakfast Clubs:**

Studies show that breakfast clubs can have a positive impact on health, diet and behaviour, including pupils feeling less hungry, improved concentration, feeling more settled and eating more healthily. They can also lead to improvements in attainment and fewer absences.

Evidence from the studies referred to in the previous paragraph shows the 3 main factors associated with successful implementation of breakfast clubs are: awareness sessions with parents; an established school breakfast routine; and a well functioning delivery team. The main challenges to overcome are catering for specific pupil numbers to avoid food waste.

- Build a strategic map of Breakfast Club provision in Tower Hamlets and explore further options

See above
### What works: effective interventions

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| Knowledge         | **Sugar SMART campaign:**  
This campaign is part of a wider initiative called the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction, which aims to achieve a public commitment to improve the availability of healthier food and drinks and to reduce the availability and promotion of unhealthy options. Numerous studies have demonstrated that in order to tackle obesity and to help the poorest people in society in particular, action needs to be taken to address the structural drivers of obesity including advertising, marketing, price promotions, sugar levels in food and food availability.  

**Children & parents to improve food know-how:**  
It is thought that food skills are being lost from society generally. No evidence suggests the loss of skills is more pronounced in low-income households. However, because healthy convenience is often expensive, the consequence of loss of food skills can be greater for those in poverty.  
Cooking courses have been shown to attract people in food poverty. The short-term benefits are proven but the long-term benefits remain unsubstantiated. | -Implement healthy eating campaigns (eg Sugar SMART).  
-Improve prevalence of healthy food messages on business displays & menus.  
-Provide regular opportunities for children & parents to improve food know-how. | **Public Health Outcomes Framework:**  
↑ Dietary quality  
**Other Indicators:**  
↑ Passion for food  
↑ Cooking confidence  
↑ Prudent purchasing  
↑ Nutritional knowledge  
↑ Fruit and veg consumption  
↓ Saturated fat consumption  
↓ Cost of diet |
### What works: effective interventions 10

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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Breastfeeding:</td>
<td>-Provide life course appropriate healthy eating advice (e.g. promoting breastfeeding).</td>
<td>See above.</td>
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<td>Junk food advertising:</td>
<td>-Protect children from out-of-doors junk food adverts in the Borough.</td>
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**Breastfeeding:**
Breastfeeding is among the most effective ways to promote child and maternal health, and to promote healthy early growth and optimal development in early childhood. A systematic review of the Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative shows that it increases breastfeeding rates up until the age of 6 weeks.

**Junk food advertising:**
Most foods and beverages being promoted to children are high in fat, salt or sugar. Studies show consistent evidence of a causal relationship between food promotion and food behaviours, determinants of behaviours and diet-related health. For example, one study found food promotion was one of the main factors in the environment that significantly impacts the dietary determinants of obesity in young children.
## What works: effective interventions

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| **Preference**    | These recommendations are primarily informed by the consultations others have done with people in food poverty. | - Increase shared meal opportunities for those likely to be in food poverty.  
- Explore how to add cooking and eating together to existing services, (interested organisations)  
- Consider pay as you feel option in catered projects.  
- Make facilities available for others to carry out food poverty projects (asset owners).  
- Incorporate healthy redistributed food into projects wherever suitable.  
- Include people experiencing food poverty in decisions and the volunteer rota in food projects. | **Other Indicators:**  
↑ Passion for food  
↑ Social connectedness  
↑ Life skills  
↓ Cost of diet  
↑ Fruit and veg consumption  
↓ Loneliness  
↑ Cooking confidence  
↑ Sense of control over ones life |
|                   | Consultations with those in food poverty conclude it necessary to add principles of dignity into any alleviation programme.  
People in food poverty desire responses that: a) gives them a chance to input into decisions; b) build upon a community asset that they cherish; c) gives them a chance to reciprocate; d) affords them a choice.  
Case studies that have embraced these principles report the blurring of food poverty response boundaries. Community projects start to behave more like a food bank (e.g. offering pay what you feel meals).  
Meanwhile, food banks become ‘food hubs’ & do things other community services might do (e.g. offering courses, volunteer opportunities, income maximisation, counselling, shared meals etc.) | | |

- Increase shared meal opportunities for those likely to be in food poverty.
- Explore how to add cooking and eating together to existing services, (interested organisations)
- Consider pay as you feel option in catered projects.
- Make facilities available for others to carry out food poverty projects (asset owners).
- Incorporate healthy redistributed food into projects wherever suitable.
- Include people experiencing food poverty in decisions and the volunteer rota in food projects.

**Other Indicators:**
- ↑ Passion for food
- ↑ Social connectedness
- ↑ Life skills
- ↓ Cost of diet
- ↑ Fruit and veg consumption
- ↓ Loneliness
- ↑ Cooking confidence
- ↑ Sense of control over ones life
## What works: effective interventions 12

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<td>Preference</td>
<td><strong>Food projects as gateway to other services:</strong></td>
<td>-Assess how food projects (including food banks) can act as a gateway to other support services.</td>
<td><strong>Other Indicators:</strong></td>
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<td>It is likely that people who require support with housing and financial issues may also be vulnerable to food poverty. It therefore makes sense for services addressing these needs to be linked up, so that services can act as a gateway to other support services.</td>
<td></td>
<td>↑ Access to support services</td>
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<td>↑ Disposable income to buy healthy food</td>
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### What works: effective interventions

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| **Time**          | Our logical desire for time-saving or convenience can disproportionately risk the health of someone in food poverty. Although convenience need not be unhealthy, people living in poverty often lack the opportunity others have to mitigate their time scarcity in ways that are healthy. For example, research in the UK showed food cooked at home declined most sharply amongst the poorest members of the public. Work by Shift, commissioned by the Tower Hamlet’s Public Health Team, highlights the importance of convenience locally. We mitigate our time-scarcity by spending less time on preparing and consuming food. This is not inherently a problem. However, people in poverty lack the same opportunity to mitigate their time scarcity in healthy ways. Healthier, affordable choices need to become the easy choices. | - Account for people’s time scarcity in our responses to food poverty. - Make shopping, preparing or consuming healthy food easier and quicker through food related interventions. | **Other Indicators:**
|                   |               |                      | ↑ Availability of food that is simultaneously healthy, cheap and convenient.  
|                   |               |                      | ↑ Ability to buy healthy food.
|                   |               |                      | ↑ Ability to prepare healthy food
|                   |               |                      | ↑ Ability to easily eat healthy food

Our logical desire for time-saving or convenience can disproportionately risk the health of someone in food poverty. Although convenience need not be unhealthy, people living in poverty often lack the opportunity others have to mitigate their time scarcity in ways that are healthy. For example, research in the UK showed food cooked at home declined most sharply amongst the poorest members of the public. Work by Shift, commissioned by the Tower Hamlet’s Public Health Team, highlights the importance of convenience locally. We mitigate our time-scarcity by spending less time on preparing and consuming food. This is not inherently a problem. However, people in poverty lack the same opportunity to mitigate their time scarcity in healthy ways. Healthier, affordable choices need to become the easy choices.
### What works: effective interventions 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual domain</th>
<th>Evidence base</th>
<th>Recommended activity</th>
<th>Likely outcomes</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Physical access to food      | **People in temporary accommodation and access to food:** An investigation into households in temporary accommodation found half lack access to a kitchen and most said this deprivation caused them to regularly skip meals. | - Ensure people placed in temporary accommodation (particularly B&B’s) have access to adequate kitchen facilities, food storage, and dining space or are given means through which to mitigate the lack of. This will require an audit of people placed in temporary accommodation to understand their living conditions.  
- Ensure decent kitchen and dining facilities are a feature of our landlord licencing scheme and planning policy.  
- Ensure hospital discharge procedures include a ‘nutrition and hydration’ check to ensure appropriate food arrangements are in place.  
- Explore the utility of giving vulnerable people ‘food to go bags’ upon hospital discharge. | **Public Health Outcomes Framework:**  
  ↓ Dietary quality  
**Other Indicators:**  
  ↑ Home cooking  
  ↑ Family dining  
  ↓ Fast food consumption |

**Hospital discharge procedures and access to food:** One third of elderly people admitted to hospital in the UK are malnourished or at risk of it.
**What works: effective interventions 15**

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| Nutrient quality and taste of food | **Supporting convenience stores and shops:**  
There is a rationale for action, but limited evidence for what works.  
Progress would be best achieved by ensuring a concern for health is at the heart of the borough’s relevant strategies. | -Support our convenience stores and markets – as the shop types that best serve our low-income neighbourhood (appendix 1) – to stock food that is healthy, desirable, affordable and convenient. (Note this is a long term aspiration). | Other Indicators:  
↑ Availability & price of healthy food, desirable, convenient food  
↑ Entrepreneurial activity |
| Food labelling                  | **Nutrition labelling:**  
Nutrition labelling, with energy info, reduces energy purchased.  
**Food for Health:**  
An evaluation of the Food for Health award programme in Tower Hamlets found that Food for Health outlets provide particularly calorie dense foods and made various recommendations for this programme going forward. | -Continue to support businesses to introduce healthier practices to their take-aways and restaurants through the Tower Hamlets Food for Health award. | Other Indicators:  
↑ Expenditure on healthy food  
↓ Expenditure on unhealthy food  
↑ Awareness of healthy portions |
## What works: effective interventions 16

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food promotion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Online directory:</strong> Improving communication will do much to help all stakeholders working on food poverty.</td>
<td>-Make an online directory of ‘good opportunities’ within the Borough (or something similar). This includes information about where one can access free or affordable food and where one can take part in enjoyable food experiences.</td>
<td><strong>Other Indicators:</strong> ↑ Referrals of people into food opportunities ↑ Attendance of food opportunities ↑ Food opportunities ↑ Partnership working ↑ Redistributed food</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Redistributing food:</strong> In Tower Hamlets, there is currently no single portal for aspiring suppliers, distributors and users for redistributed food to use to spot opportunities. Evidence exist only as a case studies of excellence, for example, the Food Stop in Croydon. This is London’s first combined welfare and membership food stop. A member run scheme, it offers residents around £20 worth of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and other food for £3.50 each week. Between September 2017 and July 2018 it has helped families save a combined £22,553 on their food shopping bills. Peckham Pantry is another food pantry where for a small weekly subscription of £4.50, members are able to buy food, including fresh fruit and vegetables, to the value of £15. <a href="https://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/peckham/">https://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/peckham/</a> The People’s Fridge in Brixton allows people and businesses to leave spare edible food for people who need food to take. <a href="https://www.peoplesfridge.com/">https://www.peoplesfridge.com/</a></td>
<td>-Agree a simple method for aspiring suppliers and users of redistributed food to do so, eg through a community fridge or a food pantry project.</td>
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| Food promotion    | Hospital discharge procedures and access to food: One third of elderly people admitted to hospital in the UK are malnourished or at risk of it. | -Explore how to work with partners to ensure people leaving hospital and who are at risk of food poverty have food.  
-Provide information about local food options at discharge point of services that may regularly encounter people at risk food poverty, for example hospitals, social prescribers, Ideas Stores, Children’s Centres etc. | Other Indicators:  
↑ Referrals of people into food opportunities  
↑ Attendance of food opportunities  
↑ Food opportunities  
↑ Partnership working  
↑ Redistributed food |
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<td><strong>Food price</strong></td>
<td>There is evidence that the relative price of healthy vs. unhealthy food changes food purchases.&lt;br&gt;Correcting the price imbalance between healthy and unhealthy food would be one of the best things to do.&lt;br&gt;However, it is almost entirely beyond a local actor. That said, there is a chance to enforce existing and forthcoming national policy.</td>
<td>Explore opportunities for food business owners to:&lt;br&gt;-Pass on price differential of sugar sweetened beverage levy (i.e. building on existing national policy).&lt;br&gt;-Rebalance their price promotions so that incentives are placed on healthy food instead (i.e. building on forthcoming national policy).</td>
<td><strong>PHOF Framework:</strong>&lt;br&gt;↑ Dietary quality&lt;br&gt;↓ Sugar consumption&lt;br&gt;<strong>Other Indicators:</strong>&lt;br&gt;↑ Price of unhealthy food&lt;br&gt;↓ Expenditure on unhealthy food</td>
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### What works: effective interventions

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<tr>
<td><strong>Food retail and provisioning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy, convenient, affordable food economy:</strong> The United Nations recommends governments prevent the unhealthiest excesses of the food system through; polices such as sugar taxes and food safety standards; supporting the healthy food economy; and enhancing the quality of food provided by institutions. However, there is extremely limited evidence for what works. More evidence is needed as to what is likely to work, and this would require considerable resource.</td>
<td>We can explore how to support a healthy, convenient, affordable food economy. Any local approach should be informed by our food price study (see Appendix 1) which found that because of our numerous convenience stores we are unlikely to have many food deserts in Tower Hamlets. An ideal approach locally would: -Ensure a concern for health is at the heart of the Borough’s Growth Strategy; Town Centres Strategy; Enterprise Strategy; and Employment Strategy. -Work with local convenience stores. Perhaps by encouraging greater convenience amongst their healthy and affordable stock. -Curate markets as a provider of healthy affordable food and an incubator for food entrepreneurs. -Encourage healthier options in our restaurants and take-aways. (Our local Food for Health Award encourages healthier take-aways and restaurants and continues to develop and improve). -Enhance employment rates and skills within marginalised groups. -Support food cooperatives that support low-income communities.</td>
<td>Public Health Outcomes Framework: ↑ Dietary quality Other Indicators: ↑ Proportion of food expenditure spent on healthy food categories ↑ Expenditure on healthy food ↑ Availability of healthy food ↓ Price of healthy food ↑ Entrepreneurial activity</td>
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</table>
### Food retail and provisioning

The majority of research in this conceptual domain focuses on schools. As schools provide a significant proportion of a person’s diet, it is important to direct attention to the healthiness of school meals.

**Healthy food in schools:**

There are many proven school-based interventions. However, school food policies risk not being implemented, even when they’re mandatory. Support mechanisms help implementation, but it is not clear which.

An assessment of the catering capacity within Tower Hamlets primary and secondary schools was conducted between February-April 2018. It found there are schools where children enjoy well cooked, nutritionally balanced meals alongside schools where children chose unbalanced choices or who hardly eat anything from their plate. As well as canteen food, it also identified an opportunity to improve the food choice in school tuck shops to include items which provide more fibre, vitamins and minerals.

Other regularly consumed services are also important, for example, the quality of nursery food and the quality of prison food.

**Recommended activity**

- We can improve the nutritional quality of the food sold by public sector institutions by:
  - Build healthy food stipulations into the Council’s contracts as they come up for retender.
  - Support schools to run policies and practices that guarantee healthier food in-school.
  - Ensure LBTH in-house caterer provides meals that meet, at a minimum, the School Food Plan nutritional standards and align to Sugar Smart principles.
  - Continue to offer support to schools to achieve Healthy Schools status.

**Likely outcomes**

**Public Health Outcomes Framework:**

- Dietary quality
- Fruit and veg consumption
- Sugar consumption

**Other Indicators:**

- Proportion of food expenditure spent on healthy food categories
- Availability of unhealthy food

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### What works: effective interventions 20
## What works: effective interventions 21

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<tr>
<td>Food retail and provisioning</td>
<td>Protecting children from unhealthy retail environment:</td>
<td>To progress we recommend:</td>
<td>Public Health Outcomes Framework:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The evidence for protecting children from the unhealthy food retail environment is published in documents that support our local plan.</td>
<td>- Implement the health impact assessment policy as per the 2019 London Borough of Tower Hamlets Local Plan.</td>
<td>↑ Dietary quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There are numerous, high-quality systematic reviews proving adverts contribute to a child’s food preference, purchase requests and food consumption patterns. The case for action is sufficiently compelling for the World Health Organisation to say that settings where children and adolescents gather should be free of adverts for unhealthy foods and sugar sweetened beverages.</td>
<td>- Abide by take away restrictions as per the 2019 Local Plan planning policy.</td>
<td>↑ Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards (AHAH) Index</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Take action to restrict a child’s exposure to junk food advertising as they travel.</td>
<td>↑ Prevalence of unhealthy out of door advertising</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Working with the unhealthy retail environment to improve the healthy food offer, such as through the Food for Health award.</td>
<td>↑ Distance to nearest fast food outlet</td>
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</table>
### What works: effective interventions

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<tr>
<td>Agricultural production</td>
<td><strong>Food growing:</strong> Gardening projects are effective in building community around food. These projects create the feeling of a place where people choose to go, rather than have to. In this way, food growing has a useful role within food poverty alleviating partnerships. Their inclusion has the propensity to safeguard the dignity of someone experiencing food poverty. They can make food poverty support more acceptable. There is strong evidence that food growing encourages fruit and veg consumption in children and adults. There is strong evidence that access to green spaces has a positive relationship with healthy life expectancy. Some evidence shows this is stronger for lower income groups in large cities. There is case study evidence that British urban agriculture can help food poverty responses.</td>
<td>We have over 100+ growing spaces in our community gardening sector. The sector yields benefits beyond its production and supply of local, healthy, sustainable food. Increasingly the sector works alongside those experiencing food poverty. To enhance these emerging relationships we recommend that stakeholders: -Support groups that want to produce local food sustainably through the Tower Hamlets Food Partnership and Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network. -Compile a list of different maps which are already running eg Capital Growth map of community gardens, Poplar HARCA map of activities, Google’s recommendations, and share links to these pages.</td>
<td><strong>Public Health Outcomes Framework:</strong> ↑ % of people using outdoor space for exercise/health reasons ↑ Social connectedness ↑ Dietary quality ↑ proportion of physically active ↑ Self-reported well-being ↓ Excess weight in adults ↓ Proportion of inactive adults <strong>Other Indicators:</strong> ↑ Dignity of people in food poverty ↑ Sustainability of diets ↑ Air quality ↑ Access to green spaces</td>
</tr>
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**Key facts**

**Setting the scene**

**Policy context**

**What works?**

**Local picture**

**Local actions**

**Impact on indicators**

**Public perspective**

**Knowledge gaps**

**Priorities**

**Key contacts & Appendices**
### What works: effective interventions

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</table>
| **Food storage, transport and trade** | The rationale for taking action on food storage, transport and trade is outlined by the United Nations. Food loss can be reduced, domestic trade encouraged, and foods high in fats, sugars and/or salt discouraged through action in this area. However, there is limited evidence for what works. We have a role, however, we need to work in partnership. We are too small to influence London's food supply alone. | -Work through London Food Group to advocate for change at London level.                                                                                       | **Public Health Outcomes Framework:**  
  ↑ Dietary quality  
  **Other Indicators:**  
  ↑ Proportion of food expenditure spent on healthy food categories  
  ↑ Expenditure on healthy food  
  ↑ Availability of healthy food  
  ↓ Price of healthy food  
  ↑ Price of unhealthy food                                                                 |
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<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Likely outcomes</th>
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</table>
| **Food transformation** *(e.g. nutrition labelling laws and reformulation)* | **Nutritional labelling:**  
There is evidence that nutritional labelling, with energy information, may reduce energy purchased in restaurants. | -No current option found for local action.  
-There is a medium term opportunity to build calorie labelling into the Food for Health Award. | We await possible new national policy on calorie labelling in takeaways and restaurants. | **Public Health Outcomes Framework:**  
↑ Dietary quality  
**Other Indicators:**  
↑ Expenditure on healthy food  
↓ Expenditure on unhealthy food  
↑ Awareness of healthy portion size |
The local picture

What does food poverty look like in Tower Hamlets?

Mentioned previously, it is difficult to accurately estimate food poverty but the following statistics give an indication of the challenges people face:

- In London, 1 in 5 adults have low or very low levels of food security.
- In London, 1 in 6 parents have children living in low or very low levels of food security.
- The majority of those experiencing low or very low food security are in work (60% are working either full or part-time).

In Tower Hamlets, we can also expect our poorer and larger families to be most likely to suffer food poverty. Single parent families, sole earning households and those who suffer long term mental and physical health issues will also be at risk. Those reliant on working aged benefits will likely suffer a degree of food poverty. Furthermore, our local food banks report their most common users to be single men.

Tower Hamlets’ local food retail environment is likely to exacerbate the health harming impact of food poverty. Recent studies of the Tower Hamlets food environment suggest that we currently have few food deserts (see Appendix 1), however, we have plenty of food swamps; 97% of Tower Hamlets residents live within 10 mins of a fast food outlet. Therefore, any food interventions should on the one hand aim to enhance the desirability and convenience of affordable healthy food within our borough; on the other it should work to curtail the unhealthiest and unsustainable excesses of the food retail environment.
Local actions: what is being done to address the issue 1

**Current actions**

LBTH’s current performance on food poverty is tracked by Sustain’s ‘Beyond the food bank’ league table. In 2018 LBTH’s response was judged to be the best in London because of the Healthy Start voucher uptake, exclusive breastfeeding rates, food partnership, free school meal provision and holiday hunger pilots.

*Actions include but are not limited to:*

- **Tower Hamlets Food Partnership:** This was established in 2018. There are more than 50 food partnerships around the country. Each assists local networking, collaboration, and information sharing. Most act as a local forum working to align strategies, coordinate action, marshal resources and hold partners to account. The Tower Hamlets Food Partnership, hosted by the Women’s Environmental Network has been developed through consultation with over 50 local community organisations with experience of working with people in food poverty and will help us create a healthier food system.

- This **Food Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** has been developed which includes recommendations for action.

- **Healthy Start Vouchers:** Healthy start vouchers are part of a means-tested scheme which provides pregnant women and children under four years old with vouchers to spend with local retailers on basic goods such as milk and vegetables. In 2018, the uptake rate was between 70-85%, but it dropped in 2019. To increase uptake, London Borough of Tower Hamlets are working with children’s centres, the Tower Hamlets Food Partnership, market traders and other key stakeholders to raise awareness of the scheme.

- **Breastfeeding:** London Borough of Tower Hamlets is fully accredited as Baby Friendly through the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Accreditation; a set of evidence-based standards aimed to provide parents with the best possible care to build loving relationships with their baby and to feed their baby in ways which supports health and development.
Local actions: what is being done to address the issue 2

• **Free school meals**: In Tower Hamlets, universal Free School Meals are available for all infant school children (reception, Years 1 and 2) and primary school aged children (Years 3-6). In secondary schools (Years 7-11), FSM are offered to all disadvantaged pupils based on household means tested benefits.

• **Holiday hunger**: London Borough of Tower Hamlets supported the provision of free food to children in the summer holidays in 2018 and is offering support again in 2019. London Borough of Tower Hamlets has engaged businesses and other community partners to provide support for holiday provision, works with schools to coordinate efforts, and has engaged a network of statutory and community partners capable of reaching hard to reach groups.

• **Breakfast Clubs**: Breakfast Clubs exist in Tower Hamlets, the majority are school based, some in partnership with organisations such as Magic Breakfast. However we don’t currently have a strategic picture of activity.

• **London Living Wage**: The London Living Wage ensures people receive a fair wage for working and living in the city. Tower Hamlets local authority is an accredited London Living Wage employer, ensuring that all directly employed, outsourced and agency staff are paid at least the London Living Wage.

• **Welfare advice** is provided at Poplar Food Bank.
Food poverty is not currently measured at national level. However as of April 2019 the Family Resource Survey completed by the Department for Work and Pension will include 10 questions which measure household food insecurity and data will be available by March 2021.

There is currently no routine borough level survey measuring food poverty in Tower Hamlets and we rely on secondary level data to monitor food poverty.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>What does it tell us?</th>
<th>What is the local picture?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free School Meals</td>
<td>How many people are eligible for and claiming free school meals.</td>
<td>33.6% of students at nursery, primary, secondary and special schools are known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. This is the highest rate in any local authority, telling us that more children in Tower Hamlets are vulnerable to food poverty compared to children in other boroughs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Bank usage</td>
<td>How many people are relying on food banks to access food and why. Often used as a measure of acute food poverty.</td>
<td>Trussell Trust usage is up 284% since 2012. In 2017, 10% of its 1,332,952 food packages were distributed in London. For reasons why, see Key Facts section, ‘Who is affected?’</td>
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Impact on indicators: evidence we are making a difference 2

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<th>Indicator</th>
<th>What does it tell us?</th>
<th>What is the local picture?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Start Voucher eligibility and uptake</td>
<td>How many families out of the eligible population are applying for healthy start vouchers.</td>
<td>In 2018, 8,167 families in Tower Hamlets were eligible for the scheme but did not apply. Uptake in Tower Hamlets varies by postal district and throughout 2018 was between 70-85%. However uptake in 2019 has dropped, likely due to universal credit issues. Table 1 below shows uptake in Tower Hamlets compared with the England and London average.</td>
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Table 1: Healthy Start Voucher uptake in Tower Hamlets (data for June 2019)

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<th>Families eligible</th>
<th>Families successfully signed up to healthy start</th>
<th>% of families successfully signed up to scheme</th>
<th>% of families who are eligible but have not signed up</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>3091</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43% (NB: this could be because they don’t know about the scheme or they have applied but the form has been returned because of errors)</td>
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Source: NHS Business Authority
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<th>Indicator</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mapping food retailers</td>
<td>Helps increase understanding of areas with poor access to healthy affordable food.</td>
<td>Mapping of fruit and vegetable shops was conducted by LBTH in 2018- for results see Appendix 1. Further mapping exercises could be useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (lived experience and key worker)</td>
<td>Interviews with groups most at risk of food poverty, and professionals they engage with, provide insight into their lived experience and barriers and opportunities for action.</td>
<td>Over summer/autumn 2019 community research is being conducted by LBTH and will inform action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of fast food outlets</td>
<td>The rate of fast food outlets per 100,000 population.</td>
<td>The density of fast food outlets in local authorities in England ranges from 26 to 232 per 100,000 population. In Tower Hamlets the rate is 133.6 fast food outlets per 100,000 population.</td>
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### Impact on indicators: evidence we are making a difference

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<tr>
<td><strong>Children affected by poverty</strong></td>
<td>How many children are living in households in relative poverty.</td>
<td>After housing costs, Tower Hamlets is number 1 in the top 20 local authorities with the highest levels of child poverty across the UK. 56.7% of children live in poverty (2017/18), compared with the UK figure of 30%. In some parts of Tower Hamlets, such as Poplar and Limehouse, 58.5% of children are living in poverty.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Although many of these children will be eligible for free school meals during term time, there is no such provision during the holidays, and therefore holiday hunger programmes are necessary to prevent children going hungry.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local intelligence shows London Borough of Tower Hamlets targets their holiday programmes to successfully engage with those living in low income households.</td>
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Children affected by poverty: After housing costs, Tower Hamlets is number 1 in the top 20 local authorities with the highest levels of child poverty across the UK. 56.7% of children live in poverty (2017/18), compared with the UK figure of 30%. In some parts of Tower Hamlets, such as Poplar and Limehouse, 58.5% of children are living in poverty. Although many of these children will be eligible for free school meals during term time, there is no such provision during the holidays, and therefore holiday hunger programmes are necessary to prevent children going hungry. Local intelligence shows London Borough of Tower Hamlets targets their holiday programmes to successfully engage with those living in low income households.
## Public perspective

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<th>Public Perspective</th>
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| National| • A 2015 survey commissioned by Oxfam surveyed 1,890 people across the UK to find out their views on food insecurity and food banks. 74% of people thought it was ‘important’ or ‘extremely important’ for the government to tackle, within the next 12 months, the issue regarding the number of people finding it difficult to afford to eat in the UK. Available here: https://views-voices.oxfam.org.uk/2015/12/public-perceptions-of-uk-foodbanks/  
  • The Department for Work and Pensions has added 10 questions about food buying and eating habits to its annual Family Resources Survey which is sent to around 20,000 households. Data will be publicly reported in 2021. |
| Regional| • In 2018/19, the Greater London Authority conducted a Survey of Londoners with over 6,000 adults aged 16 and over to improve the evidence base on food security, social integration, equality, diversity and inclusion and economic fairness in London. Available here: https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/survey-of-londoners-headline-findings?utm_campaign=%7B~messageName~%7D&utm_source=emailCampaign&utm_content=%7B~mailVariationId~%7D&utm_medium=email  
  • London’s Great Weight Debate was coordinated by the Healthy London Partnership and invited Londoners to share their views on how children could be better supported to live healthier lives. Too many cheap and unhealthy food and drink options was cited as the top reason making it harder for children to lead healthy lives in their area. Available here: https://www.healthylondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/The-Great-Weight-Debate-report.pdf |
| Local   | • The Tower Hamlets Food Partnership conducted ‘Know Your Food System’ research in 2018. It identified a gap in our understanding of people’s lived experience of food poverty in Tower Hamlets.  
  • London Borough of Tower Hamlets will be collecting insight from residents on food poverty in summer/autumn 2019. |
Knowledge gaps: what more do we need to know?

- We need better testimony from people experiencing food poverty. This would help build our understanding of what matters to people and where our efforts to create a healthier food system are best focused.

- We need to better understand the needs of older people and people with disabilities. The Greater London Authority will be commissioning research on this topic.

- London Borough of Tower Hamlets is currently working in partnership with members of the Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to conduct fieldwork over summer/autumn 2019 to learn about the challenges people face in getting enough food to live a healthy life. This fieldwork will also explore any resources that already exist in the borough that might be able to help address the challenges people face. The fieldwork will focus on reaching the groups most at risk of food poverty.

- Better understanding of Breakfast Club provision in Tower Hamlets.

- We also need to better understand effective interventions to improve the food retail environment.

- Brexit: At the time of writing this Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, there remains uncertainty regarding the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union and its impact on local food systems and food consumers. Local authorities and key stakeholders will need to plan for how they will cope with any challenges that arise.
The following slides include recommendations based around 8 priority areas that should do much to alleviate our residents’ food poverty. The table below provides a brief overview of the evidence underpinning these. It is important to note that recommendations to improve a resident’s income are amongst the most sustainable responses to food poverty, and a Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been developed with its own recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority area</th>
<th>Evidence base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1. Leadership</td>
<td>History shows us that by working together we can have a greater impact on social issues than if we act alone. Food partnerships are a tried and tested model for driving positive change and there are now more than 50 food partnerships around the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2. Holiday Hunger Clubs</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets has a tried and tested local approach to holiday hunger provision that has been shown to effectively target children most at risk of food poverty. An evaluation of Tower Hamlets’ holiday response in 2018 found that for £3/day/child, in-school summer clubs could feed children 2 healthy meals; increase fruit and veg uptake for all attendees; raise aspirations and confidence in up to 50% of attendees; reduce skipped meals; increase activity and reduce sugar consumption. In specifications for holiday hunger provision bids, the Department for Education require coverage to be at least four hours a day, for four days a week, for four weeks, to ensure children access a good ‘dose’ in terms of frequency and duration. See ‘What works’ for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3. School Food</td>
<td>Healthy free school meals can improve children’s educational attainment, social skills and behaviour, support the development of long term healthy eating habits, and help families with the cost of living. Studies show that provision of universal free school meals can lead to significant increased uptake (between 60%-90%) for both pupils who were not eligible for free schools meals and those who were already eligible. Studies also suggest that universal free schools meals reduces the stigma associated with them. Studies have found breakfast clubs can also have a positive impact on health, diet and behaviour, attainment and attendance. See ‘What works’ for more information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Priorities: what are the priorities for improvement? 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority area</th>
<th>Evidence base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong># 4. Families and food in the home</strong></td>
<td>It is advantageous to increase a family’s relative ability to afford healthy food. Effective interventions include decreasing the price of healthy food, food voucher schemes and ensuring adequate cooking facilities are available. See ‘What works’ for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#5. Food influences around us</strong></td>
<td>Evidence shows our living environment, schools, workplaces, streets, shops and places we access services such as hospitals and leisure centres influence our opportunity to access healthy food. For example, advertising of foods high in salt, fat and sugar affect a child’s food preferences and requests, people living in temporary accommodation are at a disadvantage as they often can’t access kitchen equipment, and community food growing can encourage fruit &amp; vegetable consumption. See ‘What works’ for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>#6. Evidence: Build knowledge and understanding</strong></td>
<td>This JSNA has identified gaps in our knowledge in areas, including better testimony from people experiencing food poverty and what breakfast clubs there currently are in Tower Hamlets. See ‘Knowledge Gaps’ for more information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#7. Communications

To support delivery of the recommendations in this Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, a communications plan is essential.

#8. Tackling Poverty

We know that people most at risk of food poverty included poorer, larger families, single parents, people on low income, people who are unemployed, homeless, in temporary accommodation or with no recourse to public funds. Other risk factors include insufficient benefits, benefits changes and indebtedness. (See ‘Key Facts’ section for more info)

Tackling poverty is therefore one of the most important long term solutions to reducing food poverty. Actions in this area are being coordinated by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Poverty Task Force but are included in this Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for information.
Top 10 recommendations to reduce food poverty

1. Provide **leadership** to combat food poverty
2. Develop a **communications strategy** to ensure all those who experience food poverty know what services are available
3. Continue to provide **holiday hunger programmes** during the summer to young people who need it
4. Continue to provide **free, healthy school meals** to young people who need it
5. Map out **breakfast clubs** and ensure young people who need it get free, healthy breakfast at school
6. Increase **healthy start voucher uptake** in the areas where it’s lowest
7. Make **school food** healthier: support schools to run policies and practices that guarantee healthier food in school
8. Pilot a **food pantry project** in an area of greatest need
9. Understand and ensure the food poverty needs of **older people** are met
10. Support **people in temporary accommodation** to access cheap, appealing healthy food
Priorities: what are the priorities for improvement? 5

Although we have compiled a ‘top 10’ list (see previous slide) we have also included the recommendations below, based on the evidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority area #1</th>
<th>Recommended actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is already happening:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tower Hamlets Food Partnership was established in 2018.</td>
<td>1. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to keep bringing stakeholders together regularly to co-create solutions, develop action groups on priority areas and identify a way for the partnership to be sustainable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tower Hamlets Food Partnership action plan being developed.</td>
<td>2. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to incorporate the recommendations of this Joint Strategic Needs Assessment into actions for their action groups and report annually on progress to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Poverty and Inequality Board.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Priority area #2

### Recommended actions

3. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to identify funding for holiday provision with cost-effective interventions that provide healthy food for children (most likely in schools, adventure playgrounds, libraries, sports and leisure facilities and youth clubs) that guarantee a child in food poverty edifying, healthy catered holiday activity at least 4 hours a day, at least 4 days a week.

The tried and tested local approach is with schools, who are able to provide children regular catered activities throughout the summer for approximately £3/child/day.

4. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to establish who amongst their members is able to offer holiday provision of healthy food to children and young people (for example housing associations), and seek to build a clear picture/map of the local offer and synergise activities, and coordinate promotion of these.

5. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to consult with young people to explore their holiday hunger needs and what sort of provision would engage them, by speaking with the Young Mayor and Youth Councillor, and exploring how to implement associated recommendations.

### What is already happening:

- Support for provision of free food during summer holidays offered again in 2019.
- Holiday provision of food also offered by community organisations (although there is no comprehensive list/map of providers).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority area #3</th>
<th>Recommended actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Food</strong></td>
<td>6. London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to ensure young people get their free school meals through targeted communications aimed at those eligible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is already happening:</td>
<td>7. London Borough of Tower Hamlets Contract Services to keep improving the nutritional quality of the food they serve in schools to ensure it is healthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Universal free school meals for all infant school children (reception, Years 1 and 2) and primary school aged children (Years 3-6) in Tower Hamlets. In secondary schools (Years 7-11), free school meals are offered to all disadvantaged pupils based on household means tested benefits.</td>
<td>8. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to continue to encourage schools to implement the recommended school food policy. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. London Borough of Tower Hamlets Healthy Lives team to continue to work with schools on their healthy food policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority area #4</td>
<td>Recommended actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and food in the home</td>
<td>10. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to explore how to ensure single people in temporary accommodation have access to affordable, healthy food, adequate kitchen facilities, secure food storage and a private dining space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is already happening:</td>
<td>11. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to explore food voucher opportunities (e.g. Alexandra Rose scheme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Healthy Start Voucher Scheme.</td>
<td>12. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to explore a fruit and vegetable prescription scheme for patients at risk of food poverty and diet related ill-health, and funding options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• London Borough of Tower Hamlets is a fully accredited Baby Friendly Borough (breastfeeding friendly).</td>
<td>13. London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to explore the role housing associations and private landlords can play in reducing their tenants’ risk of experiencing food poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Healthy Families Programme</td>
<td>14. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to present on Healthy Start Voucher scheme at a future Tower Hamlets Food Partnership meeting to increase awareness of scheme and barriers to uptake. Work together to increase uptake of Healthy Start Voucher Scheme in areas with low uptake and encourage market traders to accept healthy start vouchers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Priority area #5

**Food influences around us**

**What is already happening:**
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets new tiered approach for Food for Health Awards being developed and renewed focus on chicken shops.
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets planning policy restricts the opening of new fast food outlets.
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets signed up to local declaration on sugar reduction & SUGAR SMART campaign.
- Tower Hamlets in Bloom annual prize giving for community and school growing projects.
- Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network gatherings and workshops organised by Women’s Environmental Network.
- Food growing initiatives in public parks.
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets partners run programmes with external organisations to support food growing eg through Food growing and cooking programmes in schools & children’s centres.

#### Recommended action

15. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to nurture community groups that seek to grow, give, cook and share healthy food. Explore the role of community centres as key assets.

16. All food projects (eg food banks, community gardens) to assess how they can be developed to act as a gateway to other services; (eg social prescribing services) to review how they can best assist food poverty.

17. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to identify food redistribution organisations and support them to expand their operation so they can work according to local need. Support community groups to access the services of food redistribution organisations.

18. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to find a suitable space and work with a food charity to set up a Food Pantry/Food Stop pilot, for example in a Children’s Centre or a school.

19. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to explore opportunities around food growing spaces in Tower Hamlets, supporting the development of new spaces for community food growing and protecting existing spaces.

20. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to explore the option of redistributing food surplus to people who would benefit e.g. hostels, afterschool clubs.

   This will include use of apps to match people with businesses with food to give away.

21. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to present their work on the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction at the Food Partnership to explore how they could take on further actions.
## Priority area #6

**Evidence: Build knowledge and understanding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to use the outputs of the Know Your Food Systems Research and London Borough of Tower Hamlets Community Insights Research on Food Poverty to inform the actions in the Food Partnership Action Plan and of the action groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. London Borough of Tower Hamlets to conduct research to explore the evidence behind, demand for and provision of Breakfast Clubs in Tower Hamlets. London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Tower Hamlets Food Partnership should use insights gained from this research to shape their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. London Borough of Tower Hamlets Community Insights team to conduct research to build an understanding of people’s lived experience of food poverty and the barriers and opportunities to change. Fieldwork to explore any resources that already exist in the borough that might be able to help address the challenges people face and focus on reaching the groups most at risk of food poverty. London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Tower Hamlets Food Partnership should use insights gained from this research to shape their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Tower Hamlets Food Partnership to use the learning from the Bromley by Bow Centre Community Fridge pilot to explore further Community Fridge opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority area #7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Priority area #8

#### Tackling Poverty

- **Food Poverty**: To support projects which tackle food poverty in the borough, in providing more healthy food to those in need to improve health outcomes and budgetary pressures.

- **Holiday Hunger**: To provide holiday hunger programmes across the borough.

- **Poverty Proofing the School Day**: To roll out the Poverty Proofing the School Day programme, as developed by Children North East, to schools in Tower Hamlets. This seeks to change school structures and processes to feel more inclusive to children facing poverty. It engages every child at the school in order to see issues through the eyes of the child and to understand each child's experience of the school day. Outcomes in other locations have included altering the administration of free school meals to make students feel less stigmatised, changing uniform policy and ensuring parents have enough warning for things which carry a cost.

- **Other projects** which are relevant to the food poverty agenda include: Youth Employment Support Pilot; Childcare support; Innovation Fund; In work poverty; Digital Logbook; Resident Support Scheme; Discretionary Housing Payments Support; Under-Claiming of Benefits; Council Tax Arrears Support; and Local Community Fund Social Welfare Advice Services.
Key contacts and stakeholder involvement

• This document was written by Fran Eatwell-Roberts and Natalie Lovell.

• Thank you to all the stakeholders who contributed to this publication. This includes: Tower Hamlets Food Partnership Members and Council Officers from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets including Public Health Team, Parks Team, Town Centres Team, Enterprise Office, Tackling Poverty Unit and Planning Policy Team.

Any queries regarding this publication should be sent to Natalie Lovell, Public Health Programmes Manager, Healthy Environments (natalie.lovell@towerhamlets.gov.uk)
Appendices 1: Affordable Fresh Food Availability

Research was undertaken by London Borough of Tower Hamlets in summer 2018 to understand the availability of fresh food in shops in Tower Hamlets. The information below provides an overview of this work including methodology and results.

Data collection methods for fresh food availability in the Borough

- A web-mapping application was configured using ESRI Arc GIS, based on the Collector App to aid mobile data collection.
- A pre-configured list of shops, supermarkets and convenience stores—delivered from Environmental Health and deemed most likely to sell fresh fruit and vegetables—was used as the primary data layer in the app.
- A blank template of questions was associated with the primary data layer. This included questions such as ‘Does the shop stock any fruit and veg?’ and also allowed the user to input price of fresh food items (apples, bananas, peas, brassicas, cucumber, garlic, onion, sweet potato, tomatoes) where they were available.
- The app was used by a member of the Community Research team during the summer of 2018, who used the app to collect and record data on fresh food availability as they visited shops in the Borough.
Appendices 2: Affordable Fresh Food Availability

Initial Results

Information was collected for 69% of all 425 shops which were initially identified, meaning a lot of valuable information was gathered in a short space of time by just one community researcher.

Out of the 292 shops for which information was collected:

- 64% of shops sold some form of fresh food and vegetable
- 59% sold at least three different forms of fresh fruit and veg.
- 39% sold at least all nine forms of different fresh food items (ie all of the following were available: apples, bananas, peas, brassicas, cucumber, garlic, onions, sweet potato, tomatoes).
Access to fresh food stores

Based on analysis of the 187 stores which were visited, and found to be selling at least one item of fresh fruit and veg, it was found that:

- Three quarters (75%) of the total estimated population in the Borough are within 400 metres of their nearest shop which sells fresh fruit/veg
- About a third (32%) of the total estimated population in the Borough are within 200 metres of their nearest shop which sells fruit/veg

- The number of people within close proximity to a shop which sells fresh fruit/veg is likely to be higher than this

- The most notable ‘gaps’ were mainly in locations where food stores still need to be visited (eg Wapping, the upper NE of the Borough near Old Ford)

- Overall, the Borough has very good access to shops which sell fresh fruit and veg, with most of the population within a ‘walkable’ distance of 400 metres.

Population mid-year estimates for 2017 by Output Area derived from ONS Small Area Population Estimates and applied to population-weighted centroids for analysis.
Price of onions

- It’s reported that the purchase of onions is often used by supermarket marketers as a proxy measure to indicate whether the customer is likely to cook at home with fresh ingredients.

- Although we have extensive raw data, for reporting purposes we explored using the price of onions as a starting point to indicate affordability of fresh food ingredients by area.

- Average price of onions by MSOA shows that:
  
  - High prices in: St Katherine’s and Wapping, Bromley, Whitechapel, St Dustan’s Canary Wharf, Blackwall & Cubitt
  
  - Lower prices in: Limehouse, Mile End, Stepney Green

- Hot spot analysis by shop shows that:
  
  - There are statistical hot spot clusters with high prices in: Canary Wharf, Blackwall & Cubitt and in the west edge of the Borough in Whitechapel.
  
  - Statistical cool clusters (low prices) in Stepney Green/Bethnal Green around Mile End Road.
Appendices 5: Affordable Fresh Food Availability

**Price of onions**

- The analysis showed that, on average, Tesco was the most expensive store to purchase onions.

- There were also more Tesco stores (25) than any of the other main supermarket chains visited (there were 12 Sainsbury stores, 11 Co-Operative stores, 4 Iceland stores, 3 Nisa Local stores, 1 Waitrose, 1 Londis, and 1 Marks and Spencer).

- The maps depicting higher prices on the previous slide are therefore likely to be skewed by the presence of Tesco stores.

- There were 122 stores identified as ‘Other’, i.e., independent convenience stores.

- Most of the main supermarket chains were selling onions at more expensive prices than the median price (£0.15).

- Those classified as ‘other’ were amongst the cheapest for onions.

### Average Price of Onion by Store

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Price (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tesco</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sainsbury’s</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costcutter</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks &amp; Spencer</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisa Local</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Operative</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waitrose</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Londis</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean price: £0.21
Median price: £0.15