



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

2 March 2020

BRIEFING NOTE: CHILDREN'S FUTURE FOOD INQUIRY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive details of relevant published reports in respect of this Scrutiny Review. .

2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 Detailed below is the executive summary of the Children's Future Food Inquiry.

"The scale of the challenge

In a society that believes in compassion and justice, it is unacceptable that children's development is being restricted by the effects of poverty. The number of children experiencing symptoms of food insecurity, or whose family income is evidently insufficient to afford a healthy diet amounts to between 2.5 and 4 million; between 20% and 30% of all children in the UK. We cannot allow this to continue.

One in three children (4.1million) are living in poverty in the UK. For their families to be able to afford the Government's recommended diet, they would have to spend an estimated 35% of their income on food, once their housing costs have been taken care of. This is not a realistic option, given the restrictive effects of the rising cost of living, prevalence of low-paid, insecure jobs, and the freeze on benefits. On average, after housing costs, households with children spend around 18% of their income on food. A proportion of children living in poverty experience food insecurity. UNICEF estimates on the basis of a small but nationally representative survey that 2.5 million (19%) British children live in food insecure households. This means that there are times when their household does not have enough money to acquire enough food, or they cannot buy the full variety of foods needed for a healthy diet.

The devastating consequences

Hunger is an extremely debilitating experience. It damages physical health. It is a cause of great personal distress. It is a social harm. Food insecurity brings

profound anxiety and stress into family life which can trigger depression, aggressive behaviour in children, a sense of hopelessness, and overwhelming stress for parents struggling to give their children the best start. It affects children's school attendance, achievement and attainment: children who are hungry in class cannot concentrate or may be disruptive. In addition, the long summer holidays are estimated to result in weeks of learning loss for some children through a combination of social isolation, low levels of stimulation and activity, and poor diets. Food insecurity also affects the quality of children's diets, which brings increased risks of obesity and poor child growth. The magnitude and importance of childhood food insecurity requires systemic change, rather than short term, ad hoc projects.

Our findings

We focus on three food settings that characterise children's lives: pre-school settings, school and home, and examine the policies and programmes in place that are intended to support children to eat well. We look at these settings in all four UK nations. We document the evidence on whether these policies are reaching children living in poverty, and we present the views of children and those who work with them on how these policies work in practice.”

2.2 A copy of the full report can be accessed [here](#)

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That the findings of the desktop research exercise informs the evidence base of the Scrutiny Review – Food Poverty.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager, on behalf of Councillor Dennis Meredith, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 – Food Poverty

19 February 2020