

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Scrutiny Panel – Food Poverty**

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held at The Jeffrey Room,  
The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on  
20 November 2019 at 6pm

**George Candler**  
**Chief Executive**

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please phone who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For further information regarding **Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty** please visit the website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

**Members of the Panel**

Chair	Councillor Dennis Meredith
Panel Members	Councillor Mohammed Azizur Rahman ( Aziz) Councillor Alan L Bottwood Councillor Emma Roberts Councillor Cathrine Russell Councillor Zoe Smith
Co-opted Member	Paul Foster, Emmanuel Church Clive Ireston, Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network

**Calendar of meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Room</b>
25 November 2019 6:00 pm 14 January 2020 2 March 31 March	All meetings to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated

# Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty Agenda

Item No and Time	Title	Pages	Action required
1. 6pm	Apologies		The Chair to note apologies for absence.
1.	Apologies		The Chair to note apologies for absence.
2.	Deputations and Public Addresses		<p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a <a href="#">Public Address Protocol</a> and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p>
3.	Minutes	1 - 5	The Scrutiny Panel to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2019.
4. 6:05pm	Witness Evidence	7 - 28	<p>The Scrutiny Panel to receive a response to its core questions from a number of key expert advisors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director, Education Services, Northamptonshire County Council</li> <li>• Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Northamptonshire County Council</li> <li>• Director of Children's Services, Northamptonshire</li> <li>• Chief Executive, NPH</li> </ul>
5.	Published reports and data		
5 (a) 7:20pm	NEU Councillors Network: Statistical data: Regional estimates; East Midlands Child Poverty (2019)	29 - 31	
5 (b) 7:30pm	UN Report: Food Poverty	33 - 34	
5 (c)	Trussell Trust: Food Bank	35 - 36	

# Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty

<b>7:40pm</b>	<b>Statistics</b>		
<b>5 (d) 7:50pm</b>	<b>House of Commons Library: Food Banks in the UK</b>	<b>37 - 38</b>	
<b>5 (e) 8:00pm</b>	<b>Institute for Fiscal Studies Report: Living Standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2019</b>	<b>39 - 41</b>	

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## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

Wednesday, 25 September 2019

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillor Graham Walker (Chair) , Councillors Alan Bottwood, Emma Roberts and Zoe Smith

**APOLOGIES** Councillor Cathrine Russell

**CO-OPTED MEMBER:** Paul Foster

#### **Witnesses**

Councillor Stephen Hibbert, Cabinet Member – Housing and Wellbeing  
Councillor Anna King, Cabinet Member – Community Engagement and Safety  
Phil Harris, Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing  
Vicki Rockall, Community Engagement and Safety Manager  
Robin Bates, Head of Revenues and Benefits, LGSS

#### **Officers**

Geraldine Mahney, Customer Services Manager  
Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager

Councillor Jane Birch - Observing

#### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bottwood declared an interest as a Board Member of NPH. This declaration was for the life of this Scrutiny Review.

#### **2 DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES**

There were none.

#### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2019 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

#### **4 WITNESS EVIDENCE**

Councillor Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, and Phil Harris, Head of Housing and Wellbeing provided a verbal response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel:

Key points:

- Hunger in young people can be seen as malnutrition and also slower development. Hunger in schools has an impact on education and concentration.
- There is a stigma around poverty
- Poor quality food is also poor value for money
- Zero hours contract often have an impact on poverty and food poverty
- There is a good referral system into food banks
- Help is available regarding budgeting from organisations such as CAB, Housing and Money Advice and Community Law
- A key role is to raise awareness and understanding around the causes and impact of poverty and food poverty. Phil Harris advised that the Night Shelter is a good example of the positive impact good quality food can have on people's health and esteem
- Initiatives are in place as schools for those children that come in hungry such as free breakfast clubs. They are therefore provided with both a free breakfast and a free lunch during school days.
- NPH runs a food bank and also makes referrals. It is a food bank for Council tenants.

Phil Harris confirmed that he would provide a comprehensive written response to the core questions

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- There is a need to maximise people's income
- It was noted that Northamptonshire Food Poverty had commented that there are just under 12,000 children living in poverty
- There is a need to de-stigmatise food poverty and provide assistance to the community
- In response to a query, Phil Harris confirmed that the Child Poverty Action Group had identified that 1:4 children are living in poverty
- Councillor Roberts confirmed that she would provide details of the research that NTI undertook regarding poverty statistics
- It was confirmed that the Chief Executive of NPH would be invited to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel and provide a response to the core questions
- Paul Foster, Co Optee, provided details of the Holiday Club that he co-runs with Growing Together. It is held at Blackthorn Community Centre and provided activities and lunch over the summer holidays. This club is very well received by the Community.
- In answer to a question, Phil Harris advised that many homeless people are not receiving any benefits and a lot are suffering from extreme malnutrition

- Phil Harris confirmed that bed and breakfast accommodation has not been used very much for homeless families over the last 18 months. 35 hours of outreach work is provided on the streets each week.
- In response to a query, Phil Harris confirmed that should a family present as homeless at the One Stop Shop they would be provided with food free of charge and officers would then assess their needs.
- The Scrutiny Panel referred to the “Pop Up” food bank that staff in the One Stop Shop and Customer Services provide by donating food each month. It was queried whether this could become a Statutory provision. The Chair suggested that this could be considered as a potential recommendation of the final report such as “ that it is investigated the element of food that is provided by staff at the One Stop Shop.”
- It was confirmed that individuals are referred to food banks around the borough and the One Stop Shop “food supply” is only emergency supply
- In the run up to Unitary there is a need to consider joint responsibility of Agencies regarding homelessness, poverty and food poverty.
- The Chair advised the Scrutiny Panel to contact the Head of Housing and Wellbeing should they want to visit the Night Shelter

Councillor Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, and Phil Harris, Head of Housing and Wellbeing were thanked for their informative address;

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review

That the Chief Executive, NPH, is invited to attend a future meeting of this Scrutiny Panel to provide a response to the core questions

Robin Bates, Head of Revenues and Benefits, LGSS, addressed the Scrutiny Panel. Key points:

- Revenues and Benefits does not have a direct statutory responsibility for food poverty; it administers the benefit system and collects Council Tax. The benefits system changed in 2009 and Robin Bates commented on the contributory factor this has in relation to poverty.
- There will be full migration to Universal Credit from December 2019.
- As of 16 September 2019 there were 11,350 claims for housing benefit, in May 2019 it had been 14,000.
- There is a five week waiting period for Universal Credit that has been causing issues and problems. Money management support is important for example pay bills such as rent first.
- Childcare costs are paid four weeks in arrears.
- Since 2009 there have been other Welfare Reforms such as a freeze on the indexation for rents. There is also the bedroom tax, and a cap to Benefits.
- There is £9 million outstanding in Housing Benefit.
- 1,192 discretionary housing payments were made last year
- A Council Tax Reduction Scheme is in place; everyone now has to pay at least 35% of the Council Tax bill for their property but some Groups are protected.

- A Vulnerable Persons Policy is in place and an Income Assessment is undertaken.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- There are around 14,500 court summons each year.
- Since 2015, The Authority collects itself or uses debt collectors.
- Revenues and Benefits do signpost individuals to the relevant Agencies and Groups.
- Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) receives localised funds, in 2013 it was capped and it is now often used for white goods, furniture etc.
- The Crisis Loan System is administered by NCC
- In response to a query regarding simplifying Council Tax forms, the Scrutiny Panel heard that this has been looked at and help is provided over the phone to customers.
- £400,000 has been given out in discretionary housing payments this year.
- The Scrutiny Panel suggested a potential recommendation of its final report that an information gathering session for all Councillors on the benefits system, in particular on Universal Credit (UC), is offered.
- NPH recognises that there is a 5 week wait from customers applying for UC to them receiving it. Officers in the One Stop Shop can identify who has applied for UC and will put a stop on reminder letters during this period. Customer Services deal with arrears up to £300; however, due to the wait in respect of UK this has been increased to £600. Rent Income Officers do not get involved until there are arrears of £600 in this respect.

The Scrutiny Panel recommended that the Chief Executive of NPH and the Chief Executive of CAAN is invited to attend a future meeting and provide a response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel.

Robin Bates, Head of Revenues and Benefits, LGSS, was thanked for his informative address.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

Councillor Anna King, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety and Vicki Rockall, Community Engagement and Safety Manager presented their written response to the core questions, highlighting the salient points.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- £900,000 has been awarded in grant funding in respect of food aid.
- The Cabinet Member confirmed that she would be meeting with the Director of RESTORE imminently regarding joint working



- The Co-Optee highlighted that there is a need to address child poverty separately from holiday hunger. It was realised that breakfast clubs and free school meals address child food poverty in the week but it is not addressed at weekends.
- The work undertaken by Loughborough University on child poverty was highlighted.
- A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested that child poverty needs are included in any Strategy in relation to poverty.
- In response to a question regarding holiday hunger and its impact, the Scrutiny Panel heard a Working Group would be undertaking a mapping exercise. The Working Group would include which schools provide breakfast clubs. It was emphasised that NCC should hold this information and they would be asked to provide details to a future meeting.

Councillor Anna King, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety and Vicki Rockall, Community Engagement and Safety Manager were thanked for their informative responses.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review

## **5 SITE VISITS**

The Chair presented the briefing note detailing the findings from the recent site visits highlighting the salient points.

In discussing the findings the Scrutiny Panel commented that around 30% of Council tenants are in receipt of Universal Credit and that is important that the Chief Executive of NPH attends a future meeting of this Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED: That the conclusions and recommendations detailed in briefing note were accepted for inclusion in the final report. In addition it was agreed that a further recommendation would be considered for inclusion in the final report “ that the best use of fresh food donations is investigated.”

The meeting concluded at 8:10 pm

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## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY



### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – FOOD POVERTY

### CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review:

- To examine the extent to which individuals and families are experiencing food poverty, the range of contributing factors and the changes that have been made to the way the Council and partners support residents during hardship.
- To review the impact and concentration of food poverty across the Borough of Northampton

The required outcomes are:

- To make informed recommendations to all relevant parties on the most appropriate approaches to take to mitigate the impact of food poverty in Northampton.
- To make recommendations on how the specific issues in relation to food poverty are dealt with from now until the new Unitary Authority.

## **CORE QUESTIONS:**

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

1. In your opinion, what are the main impacts of food poverty?
2. How widespread do you understand food poverty in the borough to be?
3. In your opinion does food poverty differ across the borough of Northampton and what are the reasons for this?
4. What strategic approaches are you aware of to tackle food poverty?
5. What approaches are in existence to reduce people's dependency on food aid, such as Food Banks?
6. How do you understand food poverty is being addressed?
7. How can the Borough Council, together with its partners, can collectively respond to food poverty?
8. In your opinion what are the specific issues relating to food poverty?
9. Are you aware of the existence of "holiday hunger" and what is its impact?
10. Please supply details of the support that your organisation or group offers?
11. Please supply details of your thoughts on suggested solutions regarding food poverty.
12. Are you aware of the number of people who are registered for pupil premium? Please supply details.
13. Do you have further information or comments regarding food poverty which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**



**SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – FOOD POVERTY**  
**CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS**

**Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council**

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## CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

### 1. In your opinion, what are the main impacts of food poverty?

It's important to define what we mean by "food poverty" so that we can properly understand what the impacts of this might be and to accurately measure how widespread this problem is.

**Food poverty** according to the Department of Health is "the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet"<sup>1</sup>. It is closely related to **household food insecurity** which is the inability to be able to secure social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life<sup>2</sup>.

**Hunger** as a term to describe the physical feeling of insufficient food is used by a number of organisations working with people unable to afford food as a means of communicating messages to the wider public, including the Trussell Trust, FareShare, Magic Breakfast, and Church Action on Poverty. Hunger is one consequence of food insecurity but not an inevitability.

A clear direct impact of not having access to a healthy diet is malnutrition. As illustrated in **Figure 1** below, the malnutrition that arises as a result of food insecurity can manifest as undernutrition, **hunger and underweight** but may also come in the form of **nutrient deficiencies with healthy weights** or **overweight/obesity**.

The poor health and wellbeing and risk of chronic ill-health related to food poverty are not only due to the direct dietary risks but also due to associated social and psychological impacts e.g. chronic stress related to food poverty and poverty more generally, poor school performance due to acute hunger, It is also important to consider the differences between acute hunger and chronic food insecurity.

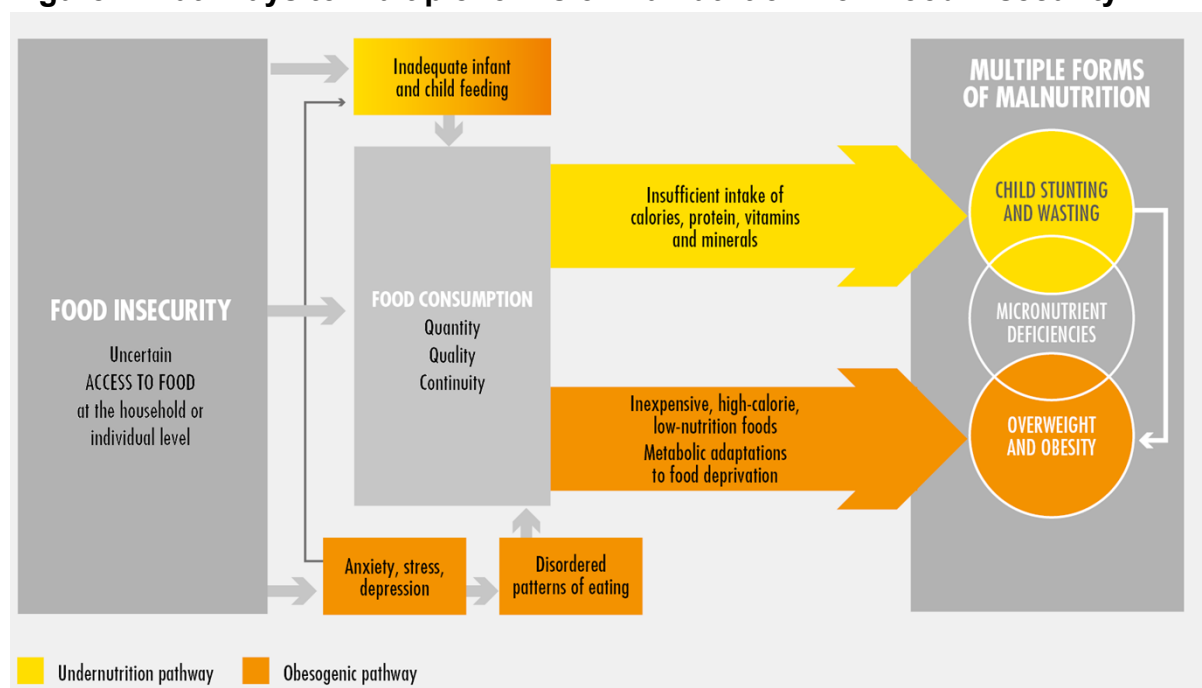
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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health, Choosing a Better Diet: a food and health action plan, 2005

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/y4671e/y4671e06.htm>

Poverty has been further defined in terms of the way that it effectively excludes individuals from participation in what might be regarded as the customary life of society (Levitas, 2006).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1. Pathways to multiple forms of malnutrition from food insecurity**



Source: FAO The State of Food Insecurity<sup>4</sup>

## 2. How widespread do you understand food poverty in the borough to be?

Food poverty or food insecurity are challenging conditions to measure and there is a lack of robust or systematic measures in the UK. Other measures, however, can be useful in estimating the size of the problem.

Food poverty is clearly linked to poverty more generally and poverty can be measured in a number of ways. One useful metric is “income deprivation” which measures the number of people who are in receipt of various means tested benefits. In 2015 the total number of people affected by income deprivation in Northampton was 27,279<sup>5</sup> of whom 7,806<sup>6</sup> were children and 6,193<sup>7</sup> older people.

<sup>3</sup> Levitas, L. (2006) The concept of measurement and social exclusion, in C. Pantazis, D. Gordon and R. Levitas (eds.) *Poverty and social exclusion in Britain. The Millenium survey*. Bristol: Policy Press.

<sup>4</sup>The State of Food Security <http://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Income Deprivation domain of [Indices of Deprivation 2019](#)

<sup>6</sup> [IDACI 2019](#)

<sup>7</sup> [IDOPI 2019](#)

Use of emergency food aid (i.e. food banks) can give an indication of the levels of need around acute food poverty. It should be noted that while the existence of emergency food aid provision reflects the growth of both episodic and chronic severe food poverty it measures just one aspect of this and so doesn't capture those who manage food insecurity in different ways<sup>8</sup>.

Re;Store coordinate food parcels across 6 churches in Northampton Borough and in 2018 distributed 4500 parcels (website reference)<sup>9</sup>. There are other emergency food aid providers (including those who provide meals to the homeless and rough sleepers) that are not included in this figure. Nationally, the Trussell Trust saw a 20% increase between 2017-2018 in the number of food parcels given out in the summer holidays<sup>10</sup>.

### **3. In your opinion does food poverty differ across the borough of Northampton and what are the reasons for this?**

Food poverty is closely related to income deprivation and so patterns of food poverty across the borough are likely to mirror pattern of deprivation across the borough. Map 1 below illustrates the proportion of children across the county affected by income deprivation.

The 2019 update to Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) identifies the top 20 most deprived small areas (lower super output areas – LSOAs) in the proposed West Northamptonshire [see Appendix 1]. It shows that 19 of the 20 areas are in Northampton Borough and that one small area in the borough is within the 1% most deprived LSOAs in England (Bellinge Ward: Fieldmill Road area, Billing Aquadrome).

Another important factor to consider is accessibility of food, and in particular fresh fruit and vegetables. 'Food Deserts' describe areas where there are no shops selling affordable healthy food. This is particularly an issue for those with mobility issues or lack of access to transport.

### **Map 1. Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) Northamptonshire 2019**

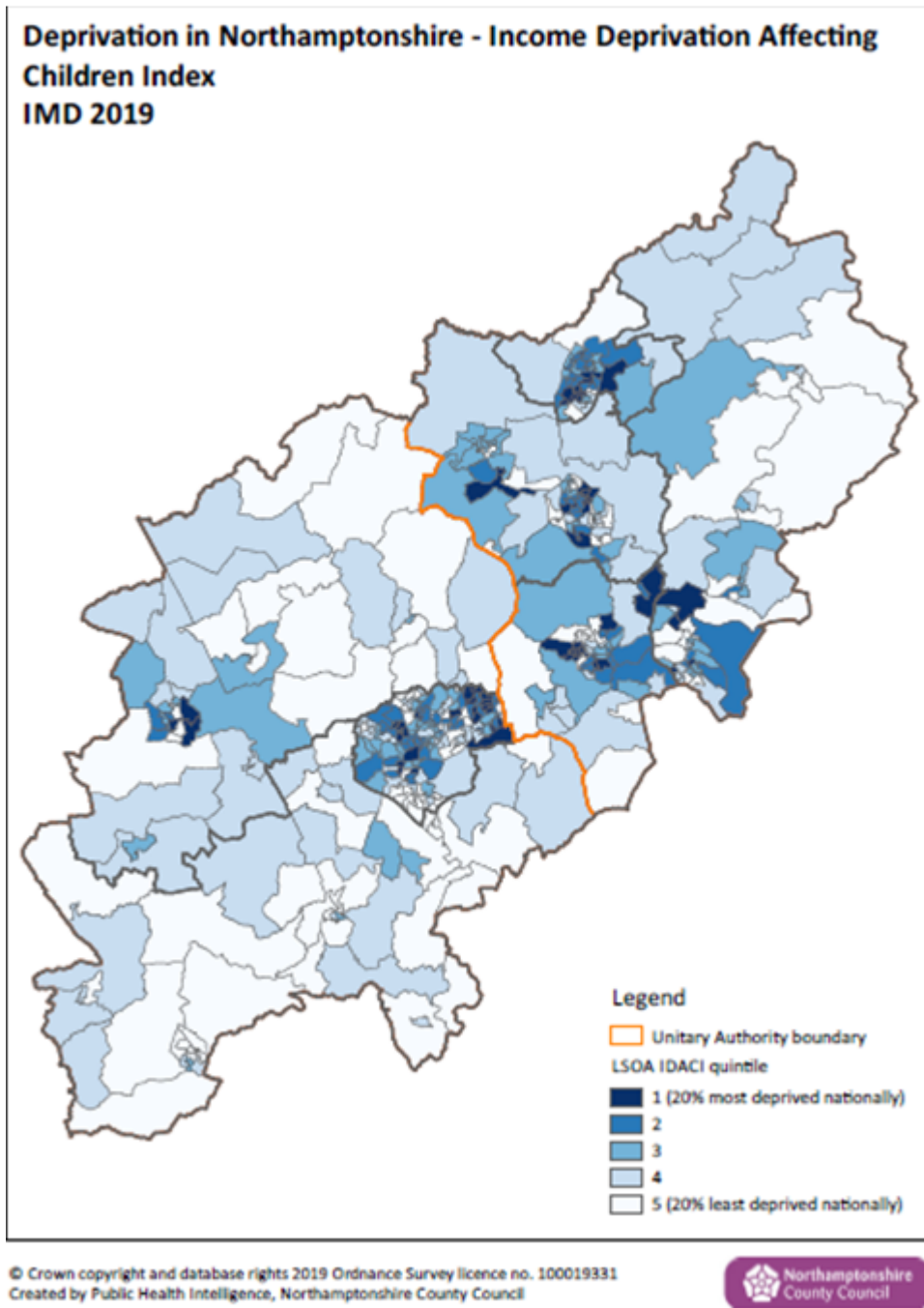
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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/2222/food-poverty.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.restorenorthampton.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2019/07/16/uk-food-banks-fear-busiest-summer-ever-ahead/>

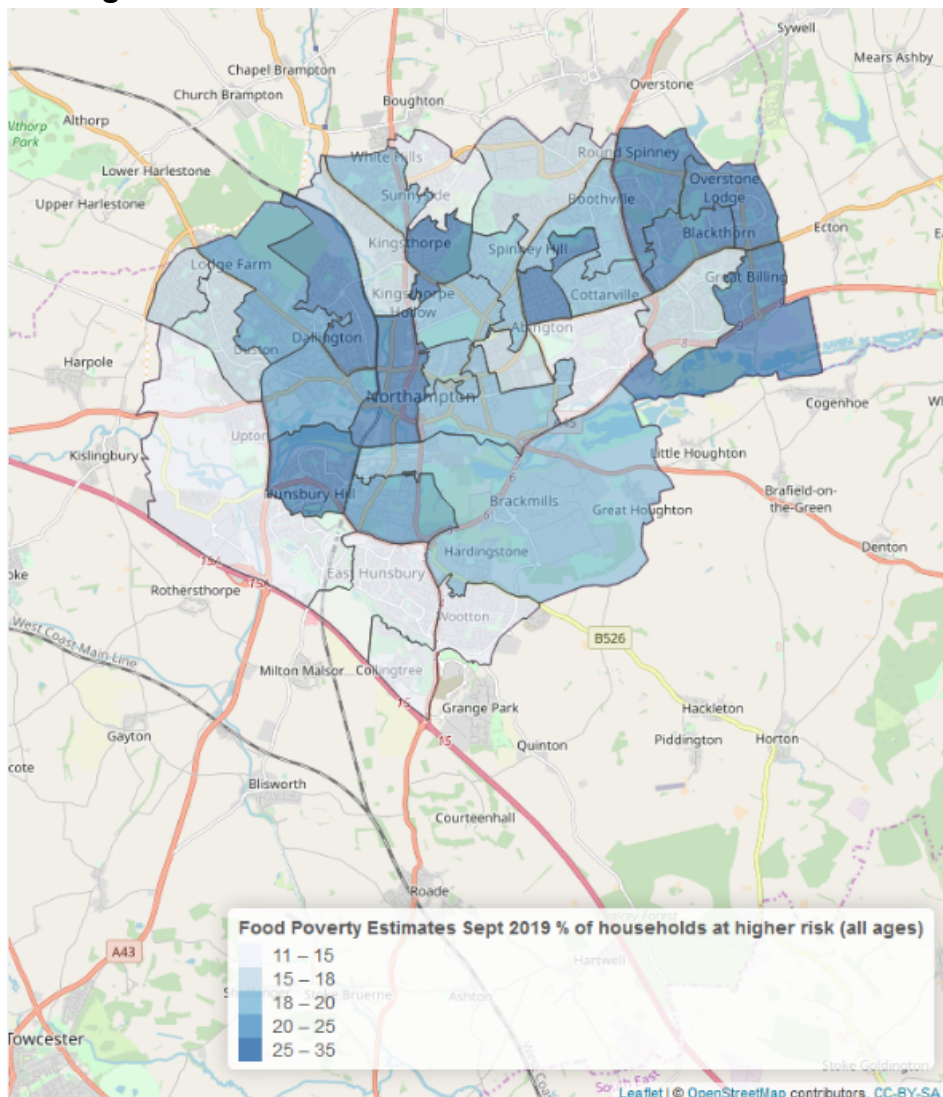




The University of Southampton has developed a methodology<sup>11</sup> to estimate risk of food poverty across local communities and it was last updated in September 2019. The map below shows the food poverty estimates at MSOA level across the borough of Northampton. Other presentations of the data are available [here](#).

<sup>11</sup> [Identifying populations and areas at greatest risk of household food insecurity in England, D. Smith et al. University of Southampton, 2018.](#) Further details on methodology available from Public Health Intelligence, NCC.

**Map 2. Proportion of households at high risk of food poverty in Northampton Borough 2019**



**4. What strategic approaches are you aware of to tackle food poverty?**

In order to understand approaches to tackle food poverty it's important to understand the root causes of food poverty. An analysis by the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee "Sustainable Development Goals in the UK follow up: Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in the UK" identified three themes relating to the causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition:

1. Low incomes and rising living costs:
2. Universal Credit and the benefits system; and
3. Cuts to funding for local social care services.

Further to this, Sustain, in their guide to developing Food Poverty Action Plans suggest three broad approaches to tackle food poverty that complement the three key themes identified by the Environmental Audit Committee, namely;

1. Taking a preventative approach
  - a. Improving access to financial and debt advice as well as maximising access to welfare and discretionary funds inc. fuel poverty funds.
  - b. Improving access to healthy start vouchers, breastfeeding support and free school meal provision and access to affordable locally grown produce.
  - c. Promoting fair incomes and the Living Wage
2. Shaping crisis provision (or more immediate provision)
  - a. Improving access to food aid by developing signposting tools for frontline staff and ensure this is delivered in a non-stigmatising way.
  - b. Improving nutritional value of food aid.
  - c. Promoting greater coordination and networking of assistance providers.
3. Taking a wider approach
  - a. Measuring and monitoring food poverty at a local level
  - b. Using planning and business rate relief systems to shape local areas and support social supermarkets and community food growing
  - c. Provide stable and affordable housing as well as access to energy efficiency measures
  - d. Make reducing food inequalities a priority across a range of strategies and plans and/or integrate food poverty actions within a wider food plan

It is also worth noting that innovative digital approaches can be employed as part of actions to address food poverty across these themes. In partnership with CAST (Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology), Oxfam is exploring how digital technology can challenge and address the causes of food poverty in the UK.

## **5. What approaches are in existence to *reduce* people's dependency on food aid, such as Food Banks?**

A review by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), Church of England, Oxfam GB and The Trussell Trust "Emergency Use Only: Understanding and reducing the use of food banks in the UK"<sup>12</sup> gives the following recommendations for preventing need for food banks:

- Improve access to short-term benefit advances: increase awareness, simplify the claim process and improve data collection to identify support needs.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report\\_web.pdf](https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report_web.pdf)

- Reform sanctions policy and practice: increase access to hardship payments, clarify communications about sanctions, mitigate the impact whilst a sanction is being reconsidered and address issues for Housing Benefit.
- Improve the ESA regime: ensure claimants are not left without income whilst challenging a decision made because of missing medical certificates or missed appointments.
- Sustain and improve access to emergency financial support through Local Welfare Assistance Schemes.
- Ensure Jobcentres provide an efficient and supportive service for all clients.
- Improve Jobcentre Plus Advisers' awareness of, and ability to respond to, mental health problems.
- Improve access to appropriate advice and support.

Crisp et al 2016<sup>13</sup> explores the value of community led approaches to reducing poverty in neighbourhoods, including:

- Approaches impacting on the 'material' forms of poverty, reducing housing or fuel costs or creating employment opportunities
- Approaches impacting on the 'non-material' aspects by enhancing health and wellbeing, improving quality of housing, the condition of the physical environment and increasing levels of social participation.

Approaches are neighbourhood based; need adequate funding and are reliant on skills and leadership and a strong voluntary and community sector.

Approaches include:

- Voluntary action
- Food banks
- Community organising and social action
- Neighbourhood enterprise
- Community-based credit unions
- Developing physical assets
- Community-led housing

This conceptual distinction between material and non-material forms of poverty provides a useful framework for understanding the broad range of poverty-related outcomes that community-led approaches may have. This is summarised in Table 1 below. The framework enables distinctions to be drawn between interventions that might not prevent 'material' poverty but could mitigate some of the 'non-material' impacts of poverty' that are part of the experience of poverty.

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<sup>13</sup> **CRESR, 2016 Community-led approaches to reducing poverty in neighbourhoods: A review of evidence and practice**

**Table 1: Potential impacts on poverty of community-led activities**

<b>Activities may impact on 'material' poverty where they generate outcomes around:</b>	<b>Activities may impact on 'non-material' poverty where they generate outcomes around:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Jobs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Worklessness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enterprise</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local economic growth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Living costs (e.g. food, fuel or housing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Housing (availability, quality or security)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community safety</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Physical environment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social interaction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community cohesion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community empowerment</li> </ul>

**6. How do you understand food poverty is being addressed?**

Nationally, the Government has recognised the need to understand better and measure the impact of food poverty. A national index of food insecurity is to be incorporated into an established UK-wide annual survey run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that monitors household incomes and living standards.

More widely, parliament, via the Environmental Audit Committee published a report in 2019 recommending greater action to reduce food poverty across the UK.

There are also a number of voluntary sector organisations who campaign around Food Poverty. Schemes such as 'The Sustainable Food Cities Award' incorporates a strand on tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food as part of the criteria for award.

Locally, alongside emergency food aid provision to address acute poverty there have been partnership efforts in recent years to address the root causes of food poverty. Northamptonshire Community Foundation currently host the Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network who are active in promoting issues of food poverty across the

Some of the NCC Public Health Team's activities to address food poverty are listed below:

As part of the support for the Borough and Districts Health and Wellbeing Fora, a Public Health Healthy Town grant was made available in 2018-19 for them to apply

for projects that support the health and wellbeing of local residents. Out of the 17 projects supported 5 projects are food related.

Breastfeeding – Health Visitors commissioned by the public health team provide infant feeding support including breastfeeding drop-ins as one of the key areas to reduce impacts of food poverty.

The Healthy Start Scheme is a statutory UK-wide government scheme that provides a 'nutritional safety net' for pregnant women and families on qualifying benefits and tax credits. Women who are at least 10 weeks pregnant and families with children under 4 qualify if the families received the relevant benefits. Pregnant women under 18 are also eligible, regardless of whether they receive benefits. The scheme includes food vouchers and vitamin supplements.. The uptake of Healthy Start vouchers in Northampton borough in August 2019 was 56%. Nationally the uptake in this period was 52%.

A recent recruitment to a public health role has the function to develop a coordinated plan of existing work to tackle obesity across the County and identify key gaps that can be collectively worked on through a whole systems approach.

There are also projects around fuel poverty and healthy schools that seek to improve people's uptake of means tested support e.g. support to reduce fuel poverty and to provide free school meals.

## **7. How can the Borough Council, together with its partners, can collectively respond to food poverty?**

Food poverty is an issue affecting the whole county and while there will be geographical and demographic variation the core issues, principles, actions and goals will be similar across all the boroughs and districts.

With the move to the two unitary authorities a way forward could be to use this issue to come together across the County and consider the following actions for local authorities recommended by Sustain:

- Developing a **food action plan** to tackle food poverty
- Improving the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers
- Promoting breastfeeding via the Baby Friendly Initiative
- Harnessing the value of children's centres
- Ensuring low-income families have adequate access to childcare
- Ensuring children's access to food 365 days a year
- Becoming a Living Wage employer and promoting the Living Wage

- Ensuring all residents have physical access to good food
- Supporting and enhancing meals on wheels provision
- Supporting financial advice services and providing crisis support

## **8. In your opinion what are the specific issues relating to food poverty?**

Food poverty is a complex issue and so has multiple and overlapping causal factors and impacts on health and wellbeing.

As noted by the Trussell Trust there are a widening group of people affected by food poverty, destitution and hunger<sup>14</sup>. Those vulnerable to food poverty are likely to be disadvantaged in other ways that have a negative impact on health and wellbeing.

Some specific associations with higher risk of food banks use include those who have a disability or health condition, lone parents and families with 3 or more children, those who have experienced adverse life events such as bereavement or loss of a job plays a role in food bank usage.

## **9. Are you aware of the existence of “holiday hunger” and what is its impact?**

A national survey conducted by the NEU indicates teachers concerned over pupils missing meals during the school holidays<sup>15</sup> and describe how the impacts of lack of school meals during the holidays and how these are compounded by:

- Increased pressure on family food budget
- Increased costs in Child care
- Increased Fuel bills (even cooking food has a cost)
- Social contact is diminished
- School readiness and learning decline
- Family Stress elevated

There is national evidence of adults skipping meals to save money so that their children can eat. For example in London in 2018 33% skipped meals<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Trussell Trust, 2019 The State of Hunger

<sup>15</sup> <https://neu.org.uk/press-releases/neu-survey-increase-amount-teenagers-going-hungry-during-summer-holidays>

<sup>16</sup> GLA, 2018 Final London Food Strategy

One project funded by the NCC Public Health Grant – Food with Dignity – was set up to address the issue of holiday hunger. As part of its application it recorded:

### **KCU (Kettering Community Unit) food bank statistics and local feedback:**

Between October 2017 and September 2018, 1,495 adults and 1,032 children were fed through the food bank. Since the start of rollout of Universal Credit (October 2018), there has already been over a 30% increase on the figures in food parcel requirements. In areas where full rollout has been going for 1 year, the average increase in food bank usage is 52%.

Researchers at Thomas Coram speaking with children on the impacts on their lives.<sup>17</sup>

- Children in low income families are going hungry and missing out on healthy food and social activities that their peers take for granted. Lack of money and food cause children physical pain, feelings of guilt and shame and a sense of social exclusion; Children in lone parents families are at greater risk of food poverty than others, reflecting broad poverty trends. Since most lone parents are mothers, the health implications of parental sacrifice are gendered;
- Free school meals are sometimes delivered in a discriminatory and stigmatising way and often don't buy enough to fill someone up.

They recommended:

- Healthy free school meals should be available to all children at school. Solutions to food poverty must address the root causes of low and irregular wages, inadequate benefits and the high cost of essentials that leave parents struggling to make ends meet.

### **10. Please supply details of the support that your organisation or group offers?**

Northamptonshire County Council supports disadvantaged groups who are vulnerable to food insecurity through a number of its statutory services as well as non-statutory offers.

The Adult Learning Service provides a “healthy cooking on a budget” course to provide communities with skills to prepare healthy meals with fruits and vegetables while

As noted above the Public Health within NCC provides support around reducing the burden of food poverty in the following ways:

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• Intelligence –  
<sup>17</sup> CPAG 2019 Living Hand to Mouth



- The public health team have a responsibility to produce Joint Strategic Needs Assessments that identify local health and wellbeing priorities.
- Commissioning –
  - Through our commissioned services (primarily the Public Health Nursing Service) we:
    - Work with health visitors to improve uptake of Healthy Start scheme
    - Maintain level 3 accreditation for the Baby Friendly Initiative as part of the public health nursing contract.
    - Work with health visitors to promote breastfeeding as part of infant feeding offer
- Partnership and project working-
  - Our work also includes areas that have an impact on the determinants of food poverty including:
    - Projects working with schools to improve uptake of free school meals.
    - Projects to reduce fuel poverty and address other wider determinants including access to training and employment will contribute to reducing food poverty.
    - Obesity prevention activities including promoting cooking on a budget skills and shaping food environments to reduce accessibility of fast food.

**11. Please supply details of your thoughts on suggested solutions regarding food poverty.**

1. Bringing together local leaders

Identify a strategic group to come together and map the need, current provision and develop a way forward across:

2. Tackling the underlying causes of food poverty

This includes working on local economic development, access to training and good quality jobs as well as a living wage and improving access to benefits.

3. Improving access to existing support for those at risk of food poverty

This includes improving uptake of free school meals, healthy start vouchers and other related support for prevention of acute food poverty.

4. Working at local community level to address food poverty

This includes improving access to affordable healthy foods through working on local community growing schemes and working with local businesses.

**12. Are you aware of the number of people who are registered for pupil premium? Please supply details.**

Pupil premium for deprivation is provided to schools on the basis of the number of pupils on the school roll that have ever eligible for FSM, (including those not currently eligible for FSM). Pupil Premium is also awarded on the basis of other elements of need e.g. children who have previously been “looked after children” and children of those previously in service in the armed forces.

Nationally, data on pupil premium values is reported according to the upper tier authority or parliamentary constituency that the school is located in and not lower tier authorities.

FSM eligibility, conversely, is available at borough level and is presented below:

**Table 2. - Free School Meals Eligibility - January School Census 2019**

District	% Eligible	Eligible	Total on Roll
<b>Northamptonshire</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>12300</b>	<b>118504</b>
Corby	12.5%	1598	12831
Daventry	9.3%	1009	10897
East Northants	8.6%	1022	11920
Kettering	10.2%	1688	16517
Northampton	11.7%	3934	33642
South Northants	4.5%	812	18097
Wellingborough	12.3%	1543	12513
PRU	47.5%	96	202
Special	31.7%	598	1885

**13. Do you have further information or comments regarding food poverty which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?**

We would like to promote the development of a food poverty strategy and note that the process of developing a food poverty strategy can of itself have wider impacts such as:

- Raising the profile of food poverty, especially with local decision-makers
- Developing a shared positive vision
- Creating a sense of empowerment for experts by experience
- Empowering diverse groups to raise their voices to call for food justice
- Ensuring the local council and other partners take ownership of agreed actions
- Sharing of good practice across local authority boundaries to support specific projects<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Developing food poverty action plans 2019, Sustain

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# Food Poverty

November 2019

Rhosyn Harris, Public Health Northamptonshire



**Public Health  
Northamptonshire**



**Northamptonshire  
Health & Wellbeing Board**



**Northamptonshire  
County Council**

# Overview

- What is Food Poverty?
- Why is Food Poverty Important?
- How can we measure Food Poverty?
- How is Northampton affected?
- What can be done to address food poverty in Northampton?

# What is Food Poverty?

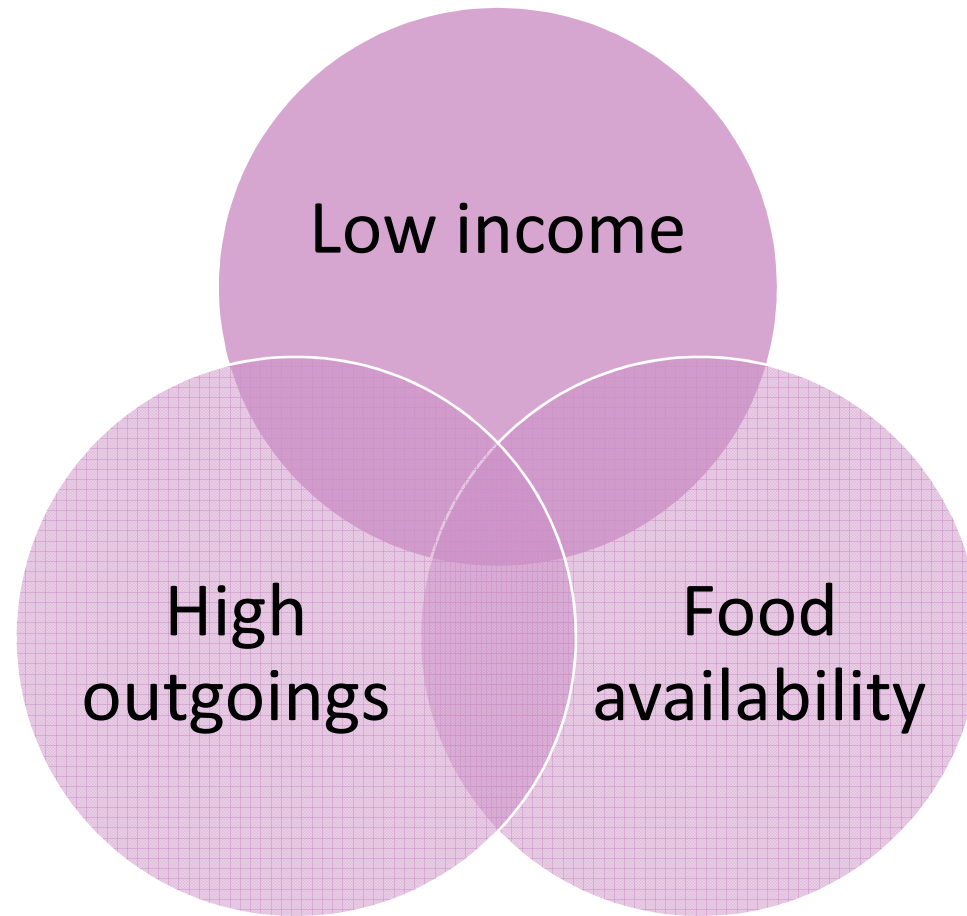
27

“the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet”.

Department of Health, Choosing a Better Diet: a food and health action plan, 2005

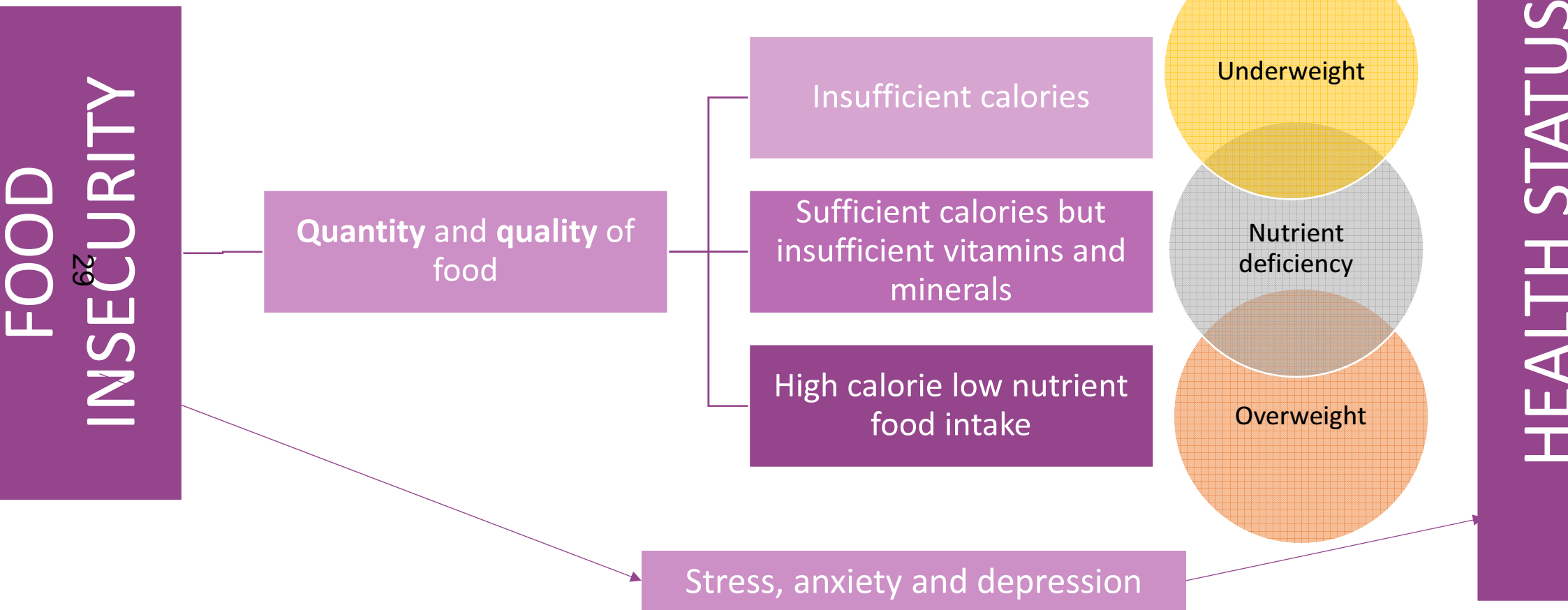
# What are the drivers of Food Poverty?

28





# Why is Food Poverty important?



Adapted from Source: [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World](#), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2018

# How can we measure Food Poverty?

## Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)



### FOOD SECURITY TO MILD FOOD INSECURITY

### MODERATE FOOD INSECURITY

### SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY



- This person has:
- insufficient money or resources for a healthy diet;
  - uncertainty about the ability to obtain food;
  - probably skipped meals or run out of food occasionally.



- This person has:
- run out of food;
  - gone an entire day without eating at times during the year.

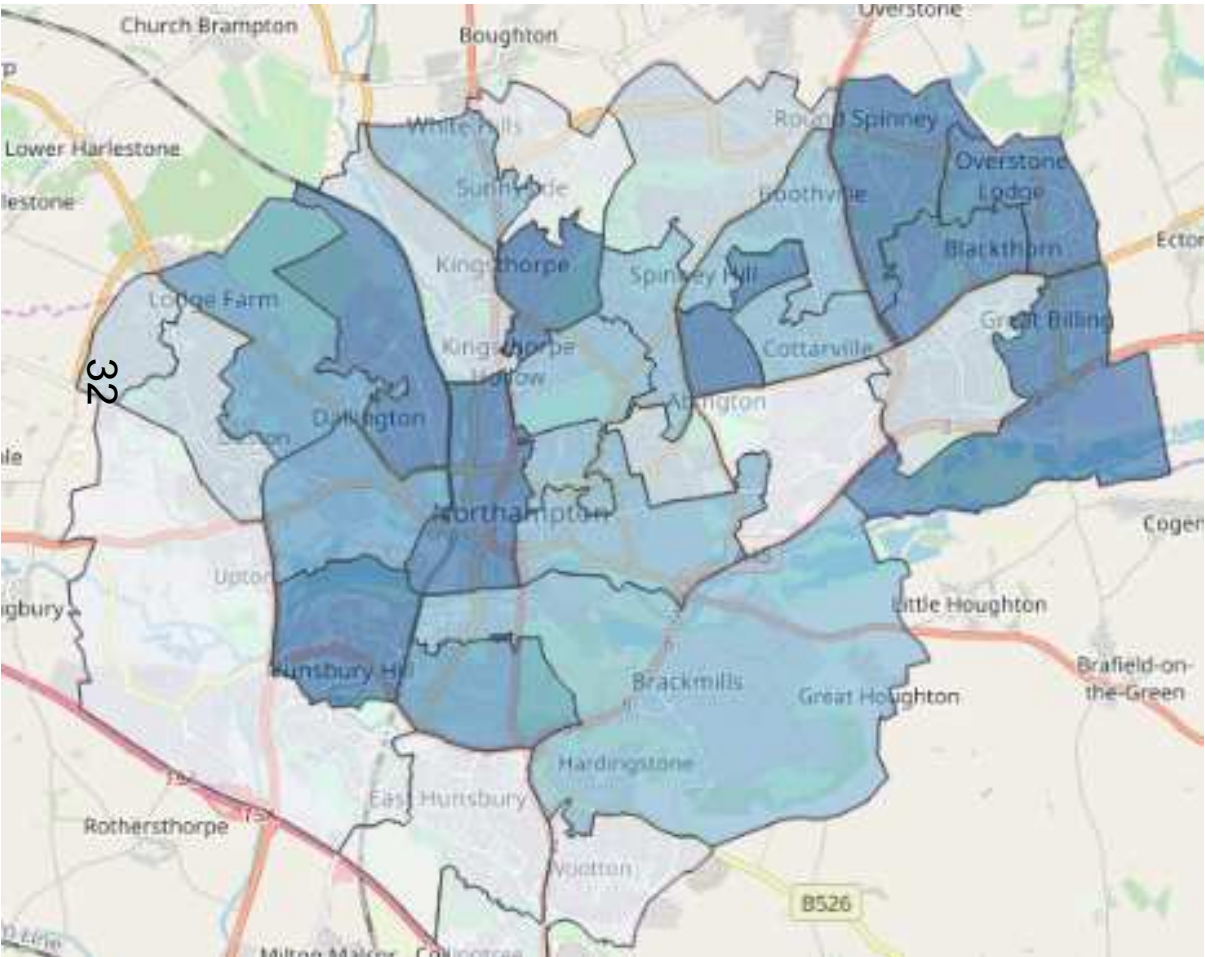


# How is Northampton Borough affected?

- In 2015 the total number of people affected by income deprivation in Northampton was 27,279 (of whom 7,806 were children and 6,193 older people).
- Approximately 4,000 children in the borough are eligible for Free School Meals\*
- Based on national surveys 9,000 households in the borough may be affected by some degree of food insecurity

\*note that universal infant free school meals not included

# How is Northampton Borough affected?



# What can we do to address Food Poverty?

- Collaborative/**partnership approach**
- Tackling the **underlying causes** of food poverty including increasing incomes by improving access to training, good quality jobs and access to benefits etc.
- Improving **access to existing support** for those at risk of food poverty  
This includes improving uptake of free school meals, healthy start vouchers.
- Working at **local community** level on initiatives around food growing, cooking skills etc.

# Summary

1. Measuring food poverty is challenging but government are collecting data from April 2019.
2. Health impacts of food insecurity are broad and complex.
3. <sup>34</sup> Causes of factors contributing to food insecurity/food poverty are multiple and complex.
4. Work to address this, therefore needs to be multi-level, multi-agency; a whole system approach.
5. National organisations can support and provide useful guidance.

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**



**SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – FOOD POVERTY**  
**CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS**

**CORE QUESTIONS: NPH RESPONSE**

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

**Definition**

The Department of Health defines food poverty as:

*‘The inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.’*

Food poverty means that an individual or household is not able to obtain healthy, nutritious food, or cannot access the food they would like to eat. Food poverty and economic poverty are linked. Rent, tax and debts are fixed costs; food is the 'flexible' budget item, and families and individuals pay the price.

1. In your opinion, what are the main impacts of food poverty?
  - a. Households cannot secure adequate food that is nutritious. This can lead to:
    - i. Poor health
    - ii. Chronic illness
    - iii. Poor mental health
    - iv. Crime
    - v. Obesity
    - vi. Diabetes
    - vii. Heart condition
    - viii. Poor education

2. How widespread do you understand food poverty in the borough to be?
  - a. More widespread than is likely to be recorded – it will be hidden by many families out of embarrassment and also many people will not recognise that they are in food poverty.
  - b. A report, compiled by the End Child Poverty coalition, shows that 13,633 children are living in poverty in Northampton
3. In your opinion does food poverty differ across the borough of Northampton and what are the reasons for this?
  - a. Yes it will be more prevalent in areas of deprivation.
4. What strategic approaches are you aware of to tackle food poverty?
  - a. NBC has recently agreed a new Anti-Poverty Strategy which will (should) include food poverty.
5. What approaches are in existence to reduce people's dependency on food aid, such as Food Banks?
  - a. Restore (crisis support including food)
  - b. Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network
  - c. Hope Enterprises
  - d. Elsie's cafe
6. How do you understand food poverty is being addressed?
  - a. It is nationally recognised, and a multi-agency response will be required
  - b. By charitable organisations including
    - i. NPH
    - ii. Northamptonshire food poverty network
    - iii. HOPE centre – cookery workshops and food awareness courses
    - iv. Northampton food bank – faith community venues around Northampton
7. How can the Borough Council, together with its partners, can collectively respond to food poverty?
  - a. By working collaboratively with all organisations
8. In your opinion what are the specific issues relating to food poverty?
  - a. Economic – ie low incomes and cost of healthy food.
  - b. Access to low cost food



- c. Inadequate cooking facilities
  - d. Lack of education
9. Are you aware of the existence of “holiday hunger” and what is its impact?
- a. Yes – where when children of families who qualify for free school meals – do not eat well when schools are closed.
  - b. In addition we are aware of the motion presented to NBC’s full council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019 (Councillor Emma Roberts) to establish holiday clubs where children could receive social activities and food to ensure no child goes hungry (it was defeated by 3 votes)
10. Please supply details of the support that your organisation or group offers?
- a. NPH Operate a food bank through its wholly owned subsidiary Happy to help (A Community Interest Company)
  - b. NPH (Happy to Help) are in the process of looking to set up a social supermarket.
11. Please supply details of your thoughts on suggested solutions regarding food poverty.
- a. Education
  - b. Availability of fresh food at low costs
  - c. Waste (out of sell by date) from supermarkets
  - d. Food recycling
12. Are you aware of the number of people who are registered for pupil premium?  
Please supply details.
- a. NO
  - b. We are aware that the pupil premium is additional school funding for disadvantaged children. It is paid directly to the child's school to improve the quality of their education. A child may be entitled to pupil premium funding if they receive one of the following benefits:
    - Income Support
    - Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
    - Child Tax Credit Only (with income up to £16,190) with no element of Working Tax Credit
    - National Asylum Seekers Support
    - Guarantee Element of the State Pension Credit
    - Employment and Support Allowance (income related)
    - Universal Credit (income dependant)

13. Do you have further information or comments regarding food poverty which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?

a. No



## **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY**

**20 NOVEMBER 2019**

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP (END CHILD POVERTY) - STATISTICS**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive details of statistics and published reports regarding food poverty.

#### **2 INFORMATION**

- 2.1 A Member of the Scrutiny Panel provided details of poverty figures for 2019 provided by the Child Action Group.

- 2.2 The Child Poverty Action Group reports a number of facts around poverty in general:

- There were 4.1 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2016-17.
- London is the area with the highest rates of child poverty in the country.
- Child poverty reduced dramatically between 1998/9-2011/12 when 800,000 children were lifted out of poverty. Since 2010, child poverty figures have flat-lined. The number of children in absolute poverty has increased by 0.5 million since 2010.
- As a direct result of tax and benefit decisions made since 2010, the Institute for Fiscal Studies project that the number of children in relative poverty will have risen from 3.6m to 4.3 million by 2020.
- Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. Two-thirds (67 per cent) of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one member works.
- Children in large families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty – 42% of children in poverty live in families with three or more children.

- Families experience poverty for many reasons, but its fundamental cause is not having enough money to cope with the circumstances in which they are living. A family might move into poverty because of a rise in living costs, a drop in earnings through job loss or benefit changes.
- Child poverty blights childhoods. Growing up in poverty means being cold, going hungry, not being able to join in activities with friends. For example, 50 per cent of families in the bottom income quintile would like, but cannot afford, to take their children on holiday for one week a year.
- Child poverty has long-lasting effects. By GCSE, there is a 28 per cent gap between children receiving free school meals and their wealthier peers in terms of the number achieving at least 5 A\*-C GCSE grades.
- Poverty is also related to more complicated health histories over the course of a lifetime, again influencing earnings as well as the overall quality – and indeed length – of life. Men in the most deprived areas of England have a life expectancy 9.2 years shorter than men in the least deprived areas. They also spend 14% less of their life in good health. Women share similar statistics.
- Child poverty imposes costs on broader society – estimated to be at least £29 billion a year. Governments forgo prospective revenues as well as commit themselves to providing services in the future if they fail to address child poverty in the here and now.
- Childcare and housing are two of the costs that take the biggest toll on families' budgets.

Source: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/key-facts/>

2.2 The full report can be accessed [here](#).

2.3 Appended to this briefing note are statistics produced by the Child Action Group in relation to children living in poverty in Northampton during the period 2017/2018.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

3.1 The report details information about poverty in general but also refers to food poverty, for example, it highlights that by GCSEs there is a 28% gap between children receiving free school meals and their wealthiest peers in terms of the number achieving at least 5 A\*-C GCSE grades.

### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 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

25 October 2019

% of children living in poverty 2017/18

ONS code	Local Authority	Before Housing Costs			After Housing Costs		
		Number of children	% of children	Percentage point change since 2016/17	Number of children	% of children	Percentage point change since 2016/17
E07000154	Northampton	10891	18.6%	0.8%	15725	26.8%	-0.2%
<b>ONS code</b>	<b>Ward</b>		<b>% of children</b>			<b>% of children</b>	
E05008836	Nene Valley		11.7%			19.6%	
E05008825	Billing		25.4%			33.2%	
E05008826	Boothville		7.9%			16.5%	
E05008848	Semllong		30.4%			40.8%	
E05008844	Riverside		16.4%			28.7%	
E05008837	New Duston		9.0%			16.5%	
E05008849	Spencer		27.7%			35.6%	
E05008828	Castle		27.9%			36.2%	
E05008852	Talavera		34.5%			37.7%	
E05008854	Upton		15.6%			25.3%	
E05008846	St David's		21.2%			31.8%	
E05008841	Parklands		7.5%			15.7%	
E05008824	Abington		14.6%			24.6%	
E05008840	Park		12.1%			17.5%	
E05008831	Eastfield		18.3%			26.0%	
E05008853	Trinity		16.5%			27.5%	
E05008851	Sunnyside		12.5%			22.2%	
E05008847	St James		16.8%			28.3%	
E05008835	Kingsthorpe		8.3%			18.7%	
E05008827	Brookside		32.2%			37.3%	
E05008855	West Hunsbury		19.1%			28.3%	
E05008834	Kingsley		13.8%			23.6%	
E05008845	Rushmills		15.8%			22.0%	
E05008838	Obelisk		13.5%			23.9%	
E05008830	East Hunsbury		9.3%			16.3%	
E05008832	Headlands		18.2%			24.8%	
E05008829	Delapre and Briar Hill		19.8%			28.6%	
E05008839	Old Duston		13.7%			23.7%	
E05008833	Kings Heath		26.4%			34.5%	
E05008850	Spring Park		9.1%			17.6%	
E05008843	Rectory Farm		32.0%			36.6%	
E05008856	Westone		10.0%			18.2%	
E05008842	Phippsville		17.8%			25.6%	

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## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

20 NOVEMBER 2019

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: United Nations Report: Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive published reports regarding food poverty.

#### **2 INFORMATION**

- 2.1 A report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights was received by the Human Rights Council in June and July 2019.

- 2.2 The reported summary of the report is detailed below:

*“Summary The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, undertook a mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 5 to 16 November 2018. Although the United Kingdom is the world’s fifth largest economy, one fifth of its population (14 million people) live in poverty, and 1.5 million of them experienced destitution in 2017. Policies of austerity introduced in 2010 continue largely unabated, despite the tragic social consequences. Close to 40 per cent of children are predicted to be living in poverty by 2021. Food banks have proliferated; homelessness and rough sleeping have increased greatly; tens of thousands of poor families must live in accommodation far from their schools, jobs and community networks; life expectancy is falling for certain groups; and the legal aid system has been decimated. The social safety net has been badly damaged by drastic cuts to local authorities’ budgets, which have eliminated many social services, reduced policing services, closed libraries in record numbers, shrunk community and youth centres and sold off public spaces and buildings. The bottom line is that much of the glue that has held British society together since the Second World War has been deliberately removed and replaced with a harsh and uncaring ethos. A booming economy, high employment and a budget surplus have not reversed austerity, a policy pursued more as an ideological than an economic agenda. “*

- 2.3 The key sections of the report are around:
- Government's reaction to preliminary findings
  - Understanding poverty in the UK
  - Dismantling the safety net
  - Shortcomings of Universal Credit
  - Poverty amongst specific groups
  - Devolved administrations
  - Brexit

- 2.4 The full report can be accessed [here](#)

#### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 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

25 October 2019





## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

20 NOVEMBER 2019

#### BRIEFING NOTE: The Trussell Trust – Published Statistics

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive published reports regarding food poverty.

#### 2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 A report of the Trussell Trust regarding the information that it publishes in relation to the number of emergency food supplies given to people in crisis by Trussell Trust food banks is published twice a year.
- 2.2 Trussell Trust reports that between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 its food bank network distributed 1.6 million three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis, which it states is an increase of 19% on the previous year. It goes on to comment that more than half a million of these went to children.
- 2.3 Regional breakdown of the figures for 2018/2019 are also reported by Trussell Trust.

East Midlands	Adults	Children	Total
	47,3331	28,328	75,659

- 2.4 Trussell Trust advises that its statistics are a measure of volume rather than unique users, and on average people needed around two food bank referrals in the last year. It collects its data by using an online system into which food banks enter data from each food bank voucher, and the number of three-day emergency food supplies is recorded.
- 2.5 An example is provided: *“if a family of three was referred to a food bank twice in one year, this would* ~~45~~ *count as six supplies on the system because*

*it would reflect six instances on which a supply went to someone in the household. However, if a family of three were only referred to a food bank once, this would count as three supplies.”*

2.6 It is highlighted by Trussell Trust that its figures cannot be used to fully explain the scale of food bank use across the UK, because our figures relate to food banks in our network and not to the hundreds of independent food aid providers. There are more than 1,200 food bank centres in its network across the UK.

2.7 Trussell Trust reports that the top three reasons for referral to a food bank in the Trussell Trust network in 2017-2018 were:

- Income not covering essential costs 33.11%
- Benefit delays 20.34%
- Benefit changes 17.36%

2.8 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

28 October 2019



## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

20 NOVEMBER 2019

#### BRIEFING NOTE: House of Commons Library – Food Banks in the UK

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive published reports regarding food poverty.

#### 2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 The summary of the report detailed in the House of Commons Library – Food Banks in the UK (Published 1 October 2019):

*“The primary source of data on food bank use is the Trussell Trust. This national charity provides food parcels to people referred to it by professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers and the Citizens Advice who meet certain requirements. Other charities also operate food banks or similar services, but there is no centrally collected data on them, except in Scotland. The data used here is mostly from the Trussell Trust, and so it should be considered incomplete – there are some areas where the Trussell Trust does not operate, but where other services may have delivered food parcels.*

*This briefing has sections on:*

- The 2000 food banks in the UK, of which 1,200 are run by the Trussell Trust and 800 are independent*
- Food parcel distribution statistics including the 19% rise from April 2018 to March 2019 in Trussell Trust figures*
- Regional data; the North West being the part of the UK where the largest total number of Trussell Trust food parcels are distributed*
- Food banks and parcels in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with Scottish independent food banks being available in addition to Trussell Trust statistics, permitting a more complete picture*
- Government introduction of food insecurity indicators, following an announcement made in February 2019*
- Other food aid provision, such as meal providers, social supermarkets and initiatives aimed at school children”*

- 2.2 The Briefing Paper makes specific reference to the research undertaken by the Trussell Trust, a briefing note detailing its research is contained in an earlier agenda item of this meeting.

- 2.3 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

29 October 2019



## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

20 NOVEMBER 2019

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: Institute for Fiscal Studies Report: Living Standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2019**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive published reports regarding food poverty.

#### **2 INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The introduction of the report of the Institute for Fiscal Studies states:

*“This report examines how living standards – most commonly measured by households’ incomes – have changed for different groups in the UK, and the consequences that these changes have for income inequality and for measures of deprivation and poverty. In this latest report, we focus in particular on those people who are poorest in society, with two of our three main chapters focusing on poverty.*

*The analysis in this report is chiefly based on data from two UK household surveys. The first is the Family Resources Survey (FRS), a survey of around 20,000 households a year, which contains detailed information on different sources of household incomes. We use household income variables derived from the FRS by the UK government’s Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). These measures of incomes underlie the DWP’s annual statistics on the distribution of income, known as ‘Households Below Average Income’ (HBAI). The FRS/HBAI data are available for the years from 1994–95 to 2017–18. They are supplemented by HBAI data derived from the Family Expenditure Survey (FES) for the years up to and including 1993–94. We also use data from the FES, and its later equivalents the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) and the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF), to look at measures of households’ expenditure to help us to measure and understand the material living standards of poorer households.*

*The main outcomes of interest in this report are measures of household income. We use the measure of income that is used in the HBAI statistics. Further details regarding the methodology of HBAI can be found in Appendix A, but a few key points are worth summarising here:*

- Income is measured at the household level, i.e. as the total income of all individuals living in the same household. A household for these purposes is not the same as a family, which is defined simply as a single adult or couple and any dependent children they have. For instance, young adults living together (other than as a couple) would be classified as in the same household but not in the same family.*
- Income is rescaled (“equivalised”) to take into account the fact that households of different sizes and compositions have different needs.*

- *Income is measured after deducting income tax, employee and self-employed National Insurance contributions, and council tax, and it includes income from state benefits and tax credits.*
- *Income is measured both before housing costs have been deducted (BHC) and after they have been deducted (AHC).*
- *All cash figures are presented in 2017–18 prices and all income growth rates are given after accounting for inflation. We adjust for inflation using measures of inflation based on the Consumer Prices Index, which are the same measures as are used by DWP in the government’s official HBAI statistics.*

*Because the data on household incomes are produced and released with some lag, we complement the results using another data set, the Labour Force Survey (LFS), for which Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2019 Institute for Fiscal Studies the latest available data cover 2018–19. Although these data do not measure household income, they provide high-quality information on the UK labour market, trends in which are key in determining living standards. This data set allows us to present results that are more up to date than those using household income data alone.*

*Since all the analysis is based on a sample from the population, all estimated statistics are subject to sampling error. It is therefore important to gauge whether changes are large enough that we can be confident they reflect real changes in the population as a whole, rather than random variation in the sample from one year to another. We frequently test whether estimated changes are ‘statistically significant’. In our analysis, being ‘statistically significant’ implies that an estimate is statistically significantly different from zero at the standard 5% significance level.*

*The rest of this report proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 contains our analysis of changes in average incomes in the UK, and how incomes have changed for richer and poorer people, and the knock-on consequences for income inequality. We also examine how household incomes have changed for people of different ages in recent years. Chapter 3 analyses changes in poverty, and the living standards of poorer households in general. We examine how ‘material deprivation’ (the inability to afford important material goods and services) has changed for families with children and for pensioners. Finally in this chapter, we examine the increase in relative pensioner poverty that has occurred in recent years. Chapter 4 analyses measures of – and trends in – severe poverty, which affects people with incomes significantly below the headline poverty lines. This is challenging because household surveys struggle to measure those with the very lowest (and the very highest) incomes in society, so we make use of a range of data sources to do so.*

*Finally, accompanying the release of this report, the same authors have written a standalone working paper (Bourquin et al., 2019), which examines the gradual, but important, rise in in-work poverty (the poverty rate for working-age families living in a working household) in the UK over the last 25 years. In it, we look at the role that changes in the labour market, tax and benefit system, and housing costs have played in this development. It forms part of the research undertaken as part of this report.”*

## 2.2 The conclusion of the report details:

**“Conclusion** - *Before summing up, it is worth reiterating a point we made in the introduction to this chapter. It is always likely to be difficult, even with the large-scale household survey data that are typically used to analyse the distribution of living standards, to pick up the most severe forms of poverty in the UK or, as some call it, destitution. Populations such as the homeless will, by definition, not appear in these surveys. Of those who can appear in a household survey, those in the most severe hardship may not reliably respond, or it may be difficult to distinguish them from people who are in fact much better off but whose resources have been under-recorded.*

*It is possible that there is increasing severe hardship among a very small proportion of the population which is simply undetectable with any confidence in these key data sources. There is some evidence in this respect, such as a rising number of people rough sleeping. But none of the analysis in this chapter has spoken to the frequency of destitution in the UK. We have, however, tried to assess what has happened to more severe forms of poverty than those measured by the headline statistics.*

*On none of our measures of severe poverty do we find any evidence of a significant rise in severe poverty ‘hiding’ behind the relatively small changes seen in headline measures of income poverty since 2010–11. Material deprivation rates (using both more and less severe thresholds) have clearly declined over the period, and the frequency with which people report being unable to afford those items most indicative of more severe poverty – such as keeping the home warm or keeping up with bills and debt repayments – has fallen by about as much as the frequencies for other items. Income and expenditure measures of severe poverty suggest little change, however. This discrepancy is not due to material deprivation falling only among those families not in poverty, because we see declines across the income distribution. It may be partly explained by the basic items, access to which is tracked by material deprivation measures, becoming cheaper (relative to other goods and services), though this evidence is only suggestive. Looking over a longer period, the modest declines in headline income poverty that have been seen since the mid 1990s do not appear to be reflected in more severe forms of poverty, with income- and expenditure-based measures suggesting a small increase over the period. However, some of this increase is driven by those with very low incomes who in fact on average have higher living standards; more generally, the unreliability of low incomes in survey data and the long-run fall in the coverage of spending in the LCF mean that we should be cautious in putting too much weight on these results.*

*In general, we find that those regions and nations of Great Britain that have higher rates of headline poverty also have higher rates of severe poverty, whichever measure of the latter we use; though severe poverty is slightly more concentrated in London and slightly less concentrated in the rest of the South than headline poverty.*

*We also find that the composition of those in severe poverty is more tilted towards social renters and workless households than for those in headline income poverty. But these trends are changing: just as private renters and working households are making up an increasing share of those in headline income poverty, they are also making up an increasing share of those in severe poverty.*

*As already stressed, drawing conclusions about those in severe poverty is made more challenging by the limitations of the data available. Some of these difficulties are at least partially surmountable. For example, the under-reporting of income could be made less acute if surveys were linked to administrative benefit and tax records. The increased use of internet shopping and credit and debit cards also may make higher-quality expenditure data possible. Surveys themselves could be improved by expanding the sample size and putting more resources into ensuring that as many households as possible respond.*

*Such improvements would by no means solve every difficulty with the analysis of severe poverty, which is by its very nature a challenging topic to study. But the ability of policymakers to tackle severe poverty, should they want to do so, is somewhat dependent upon the quality of the data available.”*

2.3 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

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