

## 6.4.6 Good nutrition and food poverty Brighton & Hove JSNA 2015

### Why is this issue important?

Good nutrition supports both mental and physical health. A poor diet is characterised by excessive intake of saturated fat, salt, sugar and insufficient consumption of fruit, vegetables and dietary fibre.<sup>1</sup> Evidence demonstrates the impact of nutrition on educational attainment in children.<sup>2</sup>

It has been estimated that malnutrition costs UK health services up to £7.4 billion a year.<sup>3</sup>

Poor diet is associated with conditions such as obesity, coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancers.<sup>4</sup> Evidence demonstrates the contribution of food and nutrition to mental wellbeing and the development, prevention and management of some specific mental health problems.<sup>5</sup>

Data related to premature deaths between 2012 and 2014 in England shows that Brighton & Hove ranks 85<sup>th</sup> out of 150 local authorities (where 1 is the lowest rate).<sup>6</sup> Cancer and heart disease are key contributors to premature deaths. Poor diet and obesity are key factors in the causes of these deaths.

Data related to many aspects of nutrition and diet illustrate the inadequacies of the nation's diet and that dietary inequalities contribute to inequalities in health. In 2013, the average UK household purchased four portions of fruit and vegetables per person per day but in lowest income families this is 3.2 portions.<sup>7</sup> Food poverty is described as "the inability to afford, or have access to, food to make up a healthy diet."<sup>8</sup>

Food poverty is not just about no food but about difficult choices (food versus fuel, skipping meals and trading down) and long term unhealthier choices. As noted in the 2014/15 Annual report of the Director of Public Health<sup>9</sup> poor diet is linked to 30% of life years lost and disability.<sup>10</sup> Whilst in Brighton & Hove and across the population in the UK as a whole, levels of childhood obesity are now falling, the incidence of obesity in low income households is higher than it was in 2006.<sup>11</sup>

### Key outcomes

- ***The proportion of the population meeting the recommended '5-a-day' fruit and vegetable consumption (Public Health Outcomes Framework)***
- ***The Brighton & Hove Food Strategy is based around nine aims, one of which is for people in the city to eat a healthier and more sustainable diet.***<sup>12</sup>

### Impact in Brighton & Hove

Data from the Active People Survey, available through the Public Health Outcomes Framework Data Tool shows that 57% of adults in Brighton & Hove eat the recommended 5-a-day fruit and vegetables, significantly higher than the 53.5% for the whole of England.<sup>13</sup>

The 2014 Safe and Well at School Survey found that 19% of students aged 11-16 years in the city had eaten five or more portions of fruit or vegetables the previous day, an increase of 1% from the previous year.<sup>14</sup>

Research in Brighton & Hove suggests that cost is a major constraint informing choice when shopping

<sup>1</sup> National Heart Forum. Nutrition and food poverty: a toolkit; 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Feinstein et al. Dietary patterns related to attainment in school: the importance of early eating patterns J Epidemiol Community Health 2008;62:734-73.

<sup>3</sup> Elia et al. The cost of disease-related malnutrition in the UK and economic considerations for the use of nutritional supplements (ONS) in adults. Health Economic Report on Malnutrition in the UK. 2005.

<sup>4</sup> WCRF/AICR's Second Expert Report, Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective [http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/expert\\_report/index.php](http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/expert_report/index.php) [Accessed on 25/08/2012]

<sup>5</sup> Mental Health Foundation; Feeding minds: the impact of food on mental health; 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Public Health England. Mortality rankings 2012-2014. Available at: <http://healthierlives.phe.org.uk/topic/mortality/comparisons#are//par/E9200001/ati/102/pat/> [Accessed 19/11/2015]

<sup>7</sup> Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. Food statistics pocketbook. 2015 Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/food-statistics-pocketbook> [Accessed on 19/11/2015]

<sup>8</sup> Department of Health. Choosing a Better diet: a food and health action plan. 2005

<sup>9</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council. Annual report of the Director of Public Health 2014/15. 2015 Available at <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/reports> [Accessed 17/07/2015]

<sup>10</sup> Faculty of Public Health. Food poverty and health - briefing statement [Online]. London: Faculty of Public Health; 2005 [Accessed 26/04/2015] Available from URL: [http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs\\_food\\_poverty.pdf](http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs_food_poverty.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> The Fabian Society. A recipe for inequality [Online]. London: The Fabian Society; 2015 Available from: [http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ARecipeforinequality\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ARecipeforinequality_WEB.pdf) [Accessed 28/04/2015]

<sup>12</sup> Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. Spade to Spoon: Digging Deeper. 2012. Available at: <http://bhfood.org.uk/strategy> [Accessed on 07/07/2015]

<sup>13</sup> Public Health England. Public Health Outcomes Framework Data Tool. 2014. Available at: <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#page/4/gid/1000042/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/102/are/E06000043/iid/91477/age/164/sex/4> [Accessed 11/11/2015]

<sup>14</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council. Safe and Well at School Survey (Secondary) Summary Results 2014. Available at: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/surveys> [Accessed 11/11/2015]

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for food,<sup>15</sup> with those growing their own food motivated to have access to food that is fresh and healthy but importantly affordable.<sup>16</sup>

The 2011 community consultation for the city's food strategy identified the need for information and support on good diet and nutrition to be available to people living with long-term mental and physical health conditions.

The effects of austerity and welfare reform have contributed to food poverty in the city, with a rise in people turning to food banks and other emergency help. The city is seeing an increase in Crisis Food Poverty (e.g. financial crisis means they're unable to buy food at that moment in time) and On-going Food Poverty.<sup>17</sup>

Food banks report a lot more families, including working families are turning to them for support.<sup>18</sup> According to the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership's annual snapshot of food bank use (2015)<sup>19</sup> there are currently 15 food banks in Brighton & Hove (plus one in Shoreham not included in the snapshot) giving out 289 parcels a week. This is an increase from the 270 parcels given out in 2012 by 12 food banks. However the rate of increase in the overall number of parcels given out across the city has slowed down (there were 220 parcels given out by six food banks in 2012). All food banks give out ambient food whilst 80% give our fruit and 73% give out vegetables. Just under half of the food banks also provide access to a meal at their project.

Other than access to food users were asked what other benefits they gain by visiting the food banks:

- 93% think clients gain a sense of community & connection by using their services
- 80% think the clients gain improved wellbeing and mental health by using their services
- 60% think the clients benefit from improved diet & nutrition.

Food Bank volunteers have identified a need for more information on cooking on a budget and using donated produce, training on welfare rights and benefits, food hygiene and working with vulnerable adults.

People are using the food banks because of benefit changes or delays; debt; low income not covering rent and utility bills; unemployment; marital break-up, being a refugee, homelessness, sickness, alcohol or drug dependency. During the summer holidays, Purple People Kitchen in Portslade reports an increase in families attending because of lack of free school meals.

The majority (80%) of food banks give out some sort of advice (money, debt, benefits). For example at the Bevendean Food Bank, the Bridge Education Centre attends every week and other agencies attend on a monthly rota, including the City Council Housing Benefit team, Money Advice Plus, The Fed, CAPS- Christians Against Poverty and the City Council Financial Inclusion team.

A FareShare survey of its Community Food Members (CFM) in Brighton & Hove in 2011 found that the 18 CFM projects that responded served 1,600 clients. The CFMs reported that 30% of clients had gone without food for a day in the last month and 60% had gone without a square meal for a day or more in the past year. 42% of clients were unable to buy food on a regular basis. 25% of the CFMs had seen an increase in demand for their services since the start of the recession.<sup>20</sup>

There are strong links with other areas including fuel poverty (fuel and food both put increasing pressures on household budgets). The Brighton & Hove Warm Homes Healthy People Programme 2013-14 found that 84% of programme recipients who completed the equalities questionnaire got into debt or cut down on buying essential items (including food) in order to heat their home. Around half (51%) stated that they or other people in the household had reduced the size of meals or skipped meals in the last six months because there wasn't enough money for food.<sup>21</sup> The Marmot Review<sup>22</sup> drew attention to the need to address the food environment in tackling health inequalities,

<sup>15</sup> Harvest Brighton and Hove Evaluation Report – Bevendean Street Survey, Food Matters; 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Brighton & Hove Community Supported Agriculture Feasibility Study, Food Matters; 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. April 2013

<sup>18</sup> O'Brien E. Food Poverty Affecting Many More Families. Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. 2013

<sup>19</sup> Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. Food Bank Survey Snapshot July 2015.

Available at: <http://bhfood.org.uk/downloads/food-poverty-resources> [Accessed 11/11/2015]

<sup>20</sup> FareShare National Impact Survey 2011. Results for FareShare Brighton.

<sup>21</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council. Brighton & Hove Warm Homes Healthy People Programme 2013-14: Summary & Evaluation Report; 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Marmot et al. The Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy Lives; 2010.

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including the value of local sustainable food. In 2015, 23% of people calling the Brighton & Hove Moneyworks helpline stated that they had to skip or reduce meal size in the last 6 months.

### Where we are doing well

Between 2003 and 2012 there has been a statistically significant improvement in the proportion of respondents to the Health Counts Survey, eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day – increasing from 43% to 52%.<sup>23</sup>

Our obesity rates in children are lower than in England, though the number of obese children is still high. Our rates are also low compared with our children's services statistical neighbours. However, this is tempered by the fact that one in four of our 11 year olds are already overweight or obese and the UK has one of the highest rates of obesity in Europe.

We have few underweight children at 0.9% of reception and 1.5% of year 6 children measured as part of the programme in 2013/14.

Breastfeeding has been shown to be associated with lower rates of childhood obesity. The city has high breastfeeding rates at initiation and six weeks.

The Public Health Schools Programme launched in 2014. Healthy eating and physical activity are key components of the programme which is delivered in primary schools across the city.

Free school meals help mitigate the effects of food poverty on children. In January 2015 there were approximately 4,400 pupils in Reception to Year 11 in Brighton & Hove who were eligible for a free school meal. This is 14.5% of the school roll. The take-up of free school meals is between 80% and 85%. In September 2014, the Universal Infant Free School Meal Policy was introduced, offering a meal for no charge (not dependent on receiving a qualifying benefit) to pupils attending schools in Reception and Years One and Two. This initiative and the efforts of the school meals team means that at least 7,200 pupils across the city now have a healthy lunch. Take up of this offer varies daily and can range from 70-85% depending on the menu choice.<sup>9</sup>

In 2012 the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board adopted healthy weight and good nutrition as one of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority areas for the city.<sup>24</sup>

The Brighton & Hove City Council Financial Inclusion Policy 2013-2016 includes addressing food poverty as one of the aims of the Community Banking Partnership.<sup>25</sup>

There is a vibrant network of more than 150 food projects across the city providing education, opportunities to participate in community activity, and access to healthy, sustainable food. There are community-based cookery and nutrition programmes that are addressing health inequalities associated with poor diets. However these are not necessarily accessible to all those in need.

Allotments and community growing projects are one way of increasing access to good quality affordable food. The city has one of the largest allotment services in the country with 36 sites and approximately 3,000 tenants. Plots are provided for individuals, disabled people and community plots. A reduction of 25% on annual fees is available for people over 60, full time students, those on long term disability allowance and some benefits recipients.

### Local inequalities

Nationally it has been identified that those most likely to experience food poverty are: people on low incomes or unemployed; households with dependent children; older people; people with disabilities; and members of BME communities.<sup>1</sup>

The Brighton & Hove Food Poverty Action Plan (FPAP) includes a list of people who are most vulnerable to food poverty is based on locally collated research and agreed by partners in the food poverty action plan as the priority groups:

- Disabled people (including people with learning disabilities) and people experiencing long term physical or mental ill health.

<sup>23</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council and NHS Brighton and Hove. Health Counts survey 1992-2012. Available at <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/surveys> [Accessed 11/11/2015]

<sup>24</sup> Draft Brighton & Hove Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000687/M00004093/AI00029519/\\$20120903105223\\_002717\\_0009306\\_JHWSworkingdraft3008125.docA.ps.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000687/M00004093/AI00029519/$20120903105223_002717_0009306_JHWSworkingdraft3008125.docA.ps.pdf)  
<sup>25</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council Financial Inclusion Strategy, 2013-2016. [http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/equalities/Appendix\\_One\\_Financial\\_Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_-\\_Final.doc](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/equalities/Appendix_One_Financial_Inclusion_Strategy_-_Final.doc)

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- Large families, single parent families and families with disabled children.
- Working people on a low income, especially younger working age people.
- Vulnerable adults - including some older people - who are isolated or digitally excluded – or who are experiencing transition e.g. bereavement/ becoming ill/ leaving hospital and people moving from homelessness, offending or addiction.
- 16-25 year olds who are vulnerably housed and care leavers.
- BME people and migrants who have limited recourse to funds.<sup>26</sup>

The Safe and Well at School Survey 2014 found that younger students aged 11-12 years are significantly more likely to eat five a day (20%) than those aged 15-16 years (16%) and there is a significant reduction in the consumption of five or more portions of fruits and vegetables associated with increasing age. Girls are significantly less likely to eat five a day (18%) compared with boys (12%). There was little difference in consuming five or more portions of fruits or vegetables between BME students (20%) and White British students (19%).<sup>14</sup>

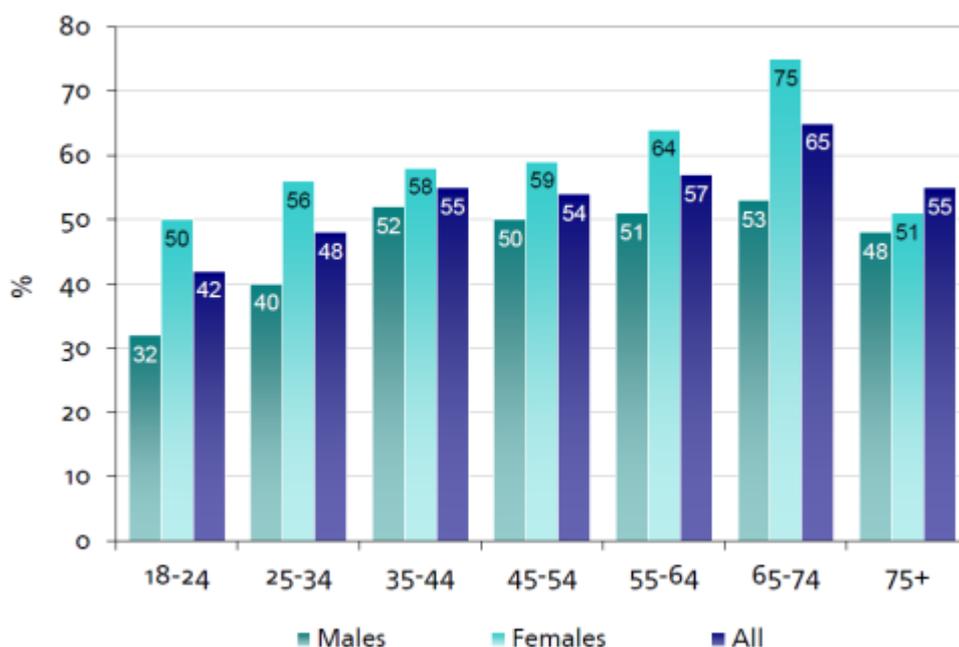
The Health Counts Survey 2012 found eating five a day is significantly more common in females (59%) than males (46%) and is considerably higher for women in all age groups (Figure 1).<sup>23</sup>

The Health Counts survey also showed that:

- People living in the most deprived quintile have the lowest consumption of five a day (48%), with the highest consumption in quintiles 3 and 4 (55%).

- Single people responding to the Health Counts Survey were significantly less likely to eat five a day or more (44%). Those who were widowed were significantly more likely (66%).
- Home owners are more likely to eat five a day (58%) compared with those renting from local authority or housing associations (41%).
- Unemployed people are less likely to eat five a day (40%) and those with a degree or higher level qualification are significantly more likely (59%) to eat five a day than those without qualifications (46%).<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 1: Percentage of Health Counts respondents eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day by gender and age, Brighton & Hove 2012**



**Source:** Brighton & Hove Health Counts Survey 2012

Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) applications for payments in the city are open only to people who are on a low income and also face an unforeseen emergency or financial crisis. Many of these applications and payments are for food and fuel related expenses.

In 2013/14, 480 payments for food were made to families or households who are experiencing short term food poverty. There were also a further 1,140 payments for cooking related equipment.

Areas of with much higher than average numbers of these payments were East Brighton, Queens Park, and St Peter's and North Laine.

<sup>26</sup> Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. Brighton & Hove Food Poverty Action Plan. 2015. Available at <http://bhfood.org.uk/downloads/downloads-publications/142-food-poverty-action-plan-final/file> [Accessed 26/11/2015]

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Payments for cooking related equipment indicate a lack of sufficient facilities which can make it hard to prepare nutritious, affordable meals. There were also 256 awards for fuel expenses excluding fuel arrears. This is significant because food and fuel poverty are related - 'heat or eat'. Together these food and fuel payments represent a possible 736 occasions when households in city have been vulnerable to experiencing food poverty.

In the 2014 City Tracker a question was asked about local people's level of concern about meeting basic living costs in the next 12 months.<sup>27</sup>

Of the respondents, 23% disagreed with the statement that they will have enough money in the next year to cover basic living costs. The groups most likely to strongly disagree were women, 18-34 year olds and people with a long-term condition or impairment.

In March 2014 Amaze reported that of the parents of children with special need supported by them, 15% said they had reduced the size of meals or skipped meals for the family in the previous two months, because there wasn't enough money for food.

A 2015 survey by Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, of 68 community settings that offer a shared meal, identified that there are 38,460 meal a month being eaten in a shared setting (e.g. lunch clubs, growing projects, cookery groups, day centres). Of project leaders, 42% said that the people using this option rely on the project for food and 100% for companionship.

There are many neighbourhoods in the city where access to fresh fruit and vegetables is limited. This is a particular issue for residents who are reliant on public transport or have limited mobility. Access to good quality food is not just about location, but includes other factors such as cost; opening and delivery times; acceptability and awareness.

Around 18% (7,735) children under 16 who live in poverty in the city (lower than across England at 19%).<sup>28</sup> Child poverty varies widely; Moulsecoomb and Bevendean has 39% and Hove Park just 6%. Work to improve children's diet should be targeted

at those most at risk including children living in areas of deprivation. Children from poor working families are often not entitled to free school meals and may be at particular risk. Families with children who are entitled to free school meals are at higher risk of food poverty within school holidays.

The Brighton & Hove Learning Disability Partnership Board has recognised the need to support adults with learning disabilities around food and nutrition choices. The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and Speak Out have run Cooking Together cookery skills and healthy eating courses for people with learning disabilities.

### Predicted future need

Food prices rose 11.5% in real terms between 2007 and their peak in June 2012 as measured by the Consumer Price Index, following a long period in which they had fallen. Gradual price reductions since 2013 have reduced that real terms increase to 8.0% compared to 2007. In the past 12 months food price inflation has fallen in real terms by 2.1%.<sup>7</sup>

Averaged over all households 11.4% of spend went on food in 2013, 0.9 percentage points above the 2007 level. For households in the lowest 20% by equivalised income 16.5% of spend went on household food, 1.3 percentage points above 2007.

It is expected that fluctuations in food prices will continue: lower income families are most affected by rising food prices.<sup>29</sup>

Continued national Welfare Reform may have an additional impact as benefit levels are set with no account of food costs or other needs.

### What we don't know

We do not have much data on the differential impact of food poverty on specific groups. Nor do we know a great deal about how the implementation of welfare reform will affect people's access to healthy food.

However the findings from a local impact study show<sup>9</sup>:

<sup>27</sup> Brighton & Hove Connected. City Tracker survey results. Available at <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/surveys> [Accessed 07/07/2015]

<sup>28</sup> HM Revenue and Customs/Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Child Poverty Statistics 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Food Standards Agency (2007) Low Income and Diet Survey. London: Food Safety Authority. <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/dietarysurveys/lidnsbranch/> [Accessed on 25/08/2012].

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A total of 25,400 households have seen a reduction in income: this is equivalent to 20% of all households in the city (total household number is 127,000); The average loss in income in these households is £44 per week: equivalent to £2,300 per year; Of those households affected, half are working households and half rely solely on out of work benefits.

Within this group of residents that already sits at one end of the inequality spectrum, some will experience greater inequality:

Around 40% of those affected are disabled and face a greater impact than able bodied people;

The impact on households headed by women (22%) will be higher than for those headed by men.

The cumulative impact across the city is considerable. Brighton & Hove sits in the top 10% of most affected cities in the country and the annual financial loss in the city from reduced benefit spending is estimated at £59 million each year. The large, high-cost, private rented sector makes the city particularly vulnerable. The cumulative impact on individuals and families is more concerning still. Local council and third sector services report that in order to manage their debts, residents are borrowing from friends and family, from crisis loans and from pay-day lenders.

Several residents report that they are eating less, heating their homes less, buying cheaper food, and using food banks to mitigate the effects on their children. The majority of residents affected also report significant effects on their own health and wellbeing.

### Key evidence and policy

The city's food strategy and action plan sets out a long-term vision for the city's food system that is healthy, sustainable and fair.

<http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-strategy>

The local Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserve supports the development of locally produced and sustainable food sources.

<http://biospherehere.org.uk/>

### Recommended future local priorities

In November 2015 a Food Poverty Action Plan for the city was agreed.

<http://bhfood.org.uk/downloads/downloads-publications/142-food-poverty-action-plan-final/file>

This sets out priority actions to reduce the impact of food poverty on the health and wellbeing of local people, leading to better mental and physical health, reduced obesity, higher educational attainment and longer, healthier lives. The plan aims to mitigate against the likely impact on future health and social care budgets if we do nothing about this issue and to focus the city's limited resources on the most effective solutions.

The Healthy Weight Programme Board oversees the strategic delivery of a Healthy Weight Action Plan. The priority actions under the **Healthy eating domain** are:

**Prevention:** Conduct and analyse results from the audit of existing preventative healthy weight and physical activity programmes for children and young people across the city to identify any gaps, access issues and inform service commissioning. As part of the Public Health Schools Programme work is underway to increase awareness of and decrease consumption of sugary drinks, snacks and foods, as well as curriculum based work on five a day and other healthy eating themes.

### The Food Poverty Action Plan principles:

- Take a preventative approach and address the underlying causes of food poverty, even if this means thinking beyond food (e.g. employment, benefits, and housing and fuel costs).
- Recognise that food poverty is not just about food banks – focus on how people in 'long term food poverty' can avoid reaching crisis (though we still need emergency provision when things do go wrong).
- Focus on groups which have been locally and nationally identified as the most vulnerable to food poverty.
- Involve people experiencing food poverty in the design of solutions.
- Ensure that food is at the centre of policy making, not an 'add on'.
- Commit to measuring and monitoring, so we know if food poverty is increasing and why.

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The plan has been arranged around five aims with a series of actions under each one. This sets out how the city intends to tackle the underlying causes of food poverty, to ensure that as a bare minimum every child and adult can eat one nutritious meal a day, to increase cookery skills and harness the potential of shared meals, to ensure that there is crisis support for when prevention is not enough and to commit to measuring so effectiveness can be measured.

**Last updated**

November 2015

### **Other areas of work that support this agenda**

1. Improve information and support on diet and nutrition for people living with long-term mental and physical health conditions (initially prioritising people with HIV).
2. Provide hands-on food education (cooking and growing) alongside education about healthy and sustainable diets, so that young people can make confident food choices now and when they become adults. Schools should be supported to include the whole school community in promoting and offering healthy food choices.
3. Large public sector organisations (schools, universities, hospitals etc) should lead by example to ensure that the food they serve is of a high standard of sustainability and nutrition.

### **Key links to other sections**

- Climate change
- Excess winter deaths and fuel poverty
- Green and open spaces
- Child poverty
- Healthy weight
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Cancer

### **Further information**

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership  
<http://www.bhfood.org.uk/>