

# Case Study

## A whole city approach to tackling food poverty 2015-2018



# Why develop a Food Poverty Action Plan?

The overall aim of the Food Poverty Action Plan is to reduce food poverty in Brighton and Hove.

Food poverty is complex – it is never just about money, but may involve a range of factors including access, skills, equipment and personal circumstances such as ill health. Brighton and Hove has some of the highest living costs – especially for housing – in the country along with some of the lowest wages, with 14 areas of Brighton & Hove in the bottom 1% for income deprivation in England.<sup>1</sup>

And at a time of increasing need the city has experienced major cuts to funding and local services. There are now 15 food banks in the city, but that just represents the sharp end. Many more people live in 'long term' food poverty. Figures show that almost a quarter of the city's residents (23%) are concerned about their ability to pay for the basics: food, fuel and water.<sup>2</sup>

Across the city, key stakeholders from Directors of services to small community groups, agree that **“food poverty is unacceptable.”** Many of these same people however, also feel disempowered and even demoralised when it comes to doing something to tackle the issue.<sup>3</sup> Many factors such as welfare benefit levels are outside local control; and the complexity of the issues involved can be overwhelming.

The Brighton & Hove Food Poverty Action Plan was developed as a positive response to these challenges, to demonstrate just what can be achieved provided people are willing to try new approaches and above all to work together collectively, as a city. The roots of the Food Poverty Action Plan lie in the city's food strategy,<sup>4</sup> with the same ethos that it is not always about one big thing, but a series of well-chosen smaller actions on different fronts can collectively bring about transformation.



**“Food poverty is unacceptable in our city.”**

- 1 2015 indices of multiple deprivation
- 2 2015 Brighton & Hove city council City Tracker survey (annual survey of residents which is weighted to be representative)
- 3 This was a theme in consultation at every level
- 4 Spade to Spoon: Digging Deeper, 2012 [www.bhfood.org.uk/strategy](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/strategy)

# How the Food Poverty Action Plan was developed

Funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership developed the plan throughout 2015 with support and input from council staff, the Local Strategic Partnership and voluntary, community and faith groups.

A participatory approach was taken to ensure that the plan was seen as belonging not just to the Food Partnership but to the whole city. It was important that the Action Plan was embedded in both policy and practice at different levels.

Engagement was therefore carried out with over 50 organisations in a range of innovative ways including: a food poverty round table for strategic decision makers; focus groups with clients of lunch clubs and food banks; consultation events; and individual conversations. National good practice and local research and briefings<sup>5</sup> were also incorporated into the plan.

The plan sits under the city's food strategy,<sup>6</sup> and builds on existing practical initiatives such as the Food Partnership's *Food Banks and Emergency Food Network*<sup>7</sup> which has helped to improve the links between food banks and advice services; *food poverty awareness training* for frontline workers in the city;<sup>8</sup> and *on-line resources* to support people in need.<sup>9</sup>

As well as a formal adoption by Brighton & Hove City Council (a partner in more than half the actions) the Food Poverty Action Plan is embedded in the city's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Just as importantly, the city's lunch clubs, food banks, advice services and other community partners have individually committed to the vision and the actions.



5 See also a range of Food Partnership research e.g. identifying food poverty, the role of shared meals, school breakfast clubs, and healthy ageing at [www.bhfood.org.uk/resources](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/resources)

6 The city's food strategy, Spade to Spoon is at [www.bhfood.org.uk/strategy](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/strategy)

7 See [www.bhfood.org.uk/local-food-banks-network](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/local-food-banks-network)

8 See [www.bhfood.org.uk/food-workshops-and-training](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-workshops-and-training)

9 Advice for people experiencing food poverty and those who advise them at [www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice); referring to a food bank is at [www.bhfood.org.uk/referring-to-a-food-bank](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/referring-to-a-food-bank)

# What is in the Plan?

There are 78 separate actions ranging from high level strategic initiatives, to simple practical actions. They are arranged under 5 overall aims, with many cross cutting and linked actions.



## How will we know whether the plan is succeeding?

This plan has an overall aim: to **reduce food poverty**. However there are real challenges in knowing whether the approach is working. There is no defined measure of food poverty nationally or locally and there is a lack of robust data. In addition, the sheer complexity of food poverty, plus the changing external environment, makes measuring change difficult. For example further welfare benefit changes and cuts, and a continuing increase in housing or food and or fuel costs, might mean that success is a **slower rate of increase in food poverty**, rather than an actual reduction.

To overcome these challenges the Action Plan is outcomes focussed and each action has a tracking mechanism, timescale, lead partner and resources shown against it. Additionally, Aim 5 of the Action Plan tackles the problem head on as it is all about **becoming better at understanding and measuring food poverty** on a local basis. The fact that there is citywide systematic approach is in itself part of the solution, as it is only by working together that we can take steps to address not just the problem of measurement, but of food poverty itself.



### Crisis food poverty

Food banks and hunger are just the tip of the iceberg

The action plan takes a **preventative approach**, addressing the underlying causes of food poverty, and looking beyond food to issues such as employment, benefits, and housing and fuel costs.

### Long term food poverty

Our approach focuses on the **much larger group** of people struggling **long term** to eat a healthy diet, and aims to **prevent** them reaching crisis point.

## What prevents food poverty?



Cooking equipment



Employment



Access to low cost healthy ingredients



Cooking skills



Benefits and pensions



Financial inclusion (e.g. savings, money advice)



Affordable housing, fuel, transport



Healthy food in health/social care services



Community networks



Shared meals & eating together

Crisis support for when prevention doesn't work



# The Brighton & Food Poverty Action Plan.....

Is a 3 year  
action plan from  
**2015-2018**,  
aimed at reducing  
food poverty in  
Brighton & Hove

Commits to  
involving the people  
experiencing food  
poverty in the  
**design**  
of solutions

Looks at making the  
most of limited  
resources in the city,  
by focusing on  
**what we  
can do,**  
not what we can't

Argues that the city needs to address food  
poverty **now** to save major costs **later**  
on arising from poor mental and  
physical health, poor educational attainment,  
obesity and malnutrition

Took a year to  
develop, via  
participatory  
approach involving  
**over 50  
partners**  
in agreeing and then  
delivering 78  
achievable actions

Sets out  
**10 good  
practice**  
principles for  
planning and  
prioritising future  
work in the city,  
beyond the life of  
the action plan

Has a positive vision  
of becoming  
**'the city and  
that cooks and  
eats together'**  
– recognising the  
role that sharing  
food can play – and  
on ensuring that  
every child and  
every vulnerable  
adult can eat at  
least one nutritious  
meal a day

Identifies the  
**groups of people  
who are most  
likely to**  
experience food  
poverty in the city

## Find out more...

For more information on  
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

Visit [www.bhfood.org.uk](http://www.bhfood.org.uk)

Email [info@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:info@bhfood.org.uk) Call 01273 431700

The Brighton & Hove Food Poverty Action Plan  
and local research into food poverty can be  
found at [www.bhfood.org.uk/resources](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/resources)

For Food Poverty Awareness Training  
and other consultancy services see  
[www.bhfood.org.uk/whats-on/bespoke-workshops](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/whats-on/bespoke-workshops)

Advice for people experiencing food  
poverty in Brighton & Hove is at  
[www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice)