

Thanks to the Survey of Londoners, we now understand the scale of children's food insecurity in our capital. A staggering 400,000 children are affected, and in this briefing we show the damage this does to their health and wellbeing. Now that we are armed with the data, we have a unique opportunity to tackle the problem: we are equipped to target those most affected, and can monitor our impact.

This briefing highlights numerous examples of commitment and action in London which support the Children's #Right2Food Charter. The organisations and individuals leading the charge to protect and promote our children's

right to food should be celebrated, but this activity is too limited to drive the kind of change we so urgently need. Leadership, investment and meaningful response from policy makers must be significantly scaled to meet the challenge, and the London Children's #Right2Food Charter lays out practical steps for ensuring every child in the city has access to a healthy diet.

Young people in London are calling for city-wide, systemic change which recognises the magnitude and gravity of children's food insecurity in London. Securing every child's right to food should be a key priority for the Mayor of London over the next decade.



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# LONDON CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY



## CONTRIBUTORS



The Children's Future Food Inquiry was spearheaded by a cross-party parliamentary committee and conducted by partners in each of the devolved nations: Food Sense Wales, Children in Wales, Children in Scotland and Children in Northern Ireland. The involvement of young people in the Inquiry was thanks to coordination from Fixers and the support of the Tudor Trust, Trust for London, the National Lottery Community Fund and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland.

*With special thanks to [panoramastreetline.com](http://panoramastreetline.com)*



# LONDON CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY

London is one of the richest and most diverse cities in the world. Our capital is globally renowned for its dynamism, progressive spirit and cosmopolitan culture, but it's a city in which vast inequalities are increasingly stark (Mayor of London, 2018a). Despite London's economic strengths, it is home to some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country.

The food shops, restaurants and markets in London offer a vibrant array of multicultural cuisines, and the city's food sector contributes nearly £20 billion a year to London's economy (Mayor of London, 2018a). At the same time,

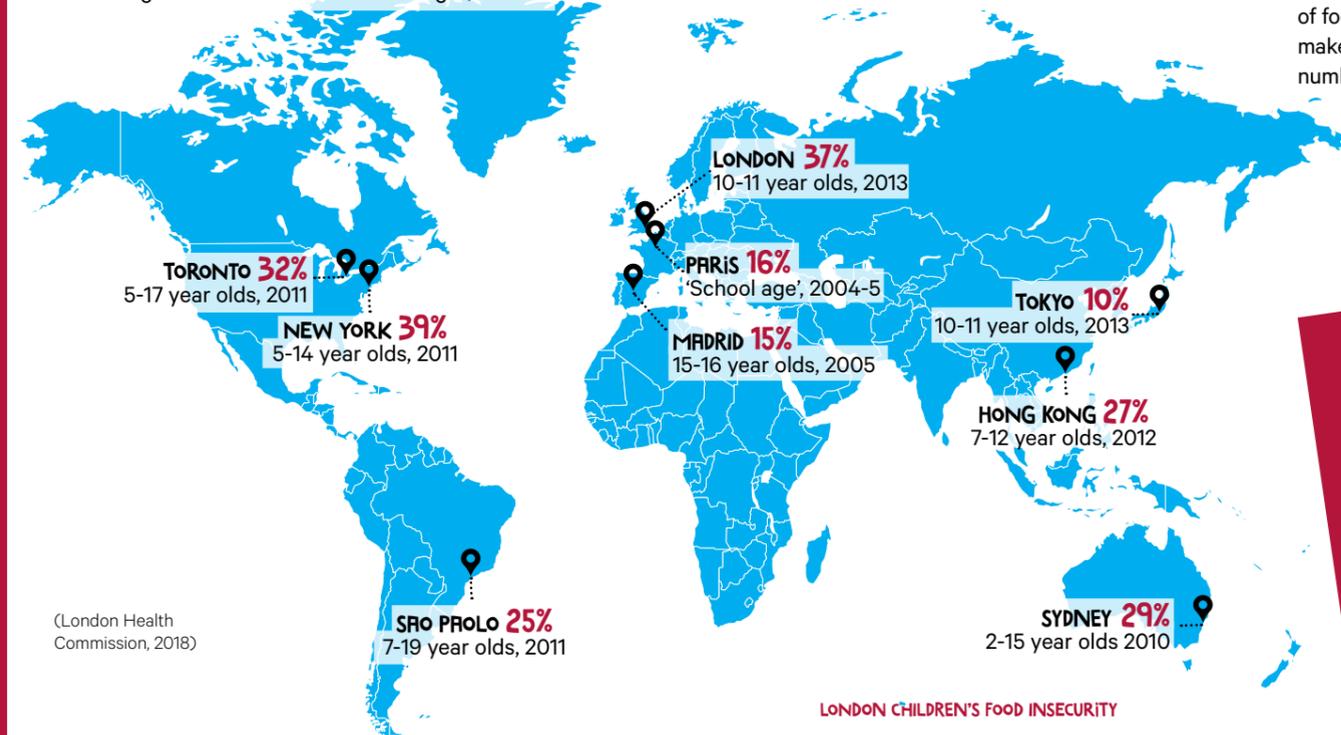
400,000 children in London are unable to access enough nutritious food, and the city's childhood obesity rates are some of the highest in Europe (Mayor of London, 2019a).

In a city that believes in compassion and justice, it is unacceptable that children's growth and development is restricted by poverty.

The Children's #Right2Food Campaign is a nationwide initiative to ensure every child in the UK can access and afford good food, and was shaped by the findings of

## CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES IN MAJOR CITIES

Percentage of children who are overweight/obese



(London Health Commission, 2018)

the Children's Future Food Inquiry. Led by Young Food Ambassadors from across the UK and coordinated by the Food Foundation, the campaign calls for government action on children's food insecurity in accordance with the Children's #Right2Food Charter.

The Inquiry (launched in 2018) marked the first attempt to speak directly and systematically to children, young people and those who live and work with them about children's experiences of food and how it affects their lives. In the absence of a robust national government measure of household food insecurity, UK campaigners have so far had to rely on estimates and small surveys. As part of his drive to ensure every Londoner has access "to healthy, affordable good food" (Mayor of London, 2018a), in summer 2019 the Mayor of London published levels of food insecurity in the capital. The Survey of Londoners makes London one of the first cities in the UK to measure the number of households affected by food insecurity, and comes well before the UK's national measure which is due in 2021. We now understand the scale and nature of the problem in London, and have a unique opportunity to tackle it effectively.

**"HAS ANYONE HAD THAT DAY WHERE THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO EAT?"**

BOY, 10, ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL, CROYDON

Access to good, affordable food is a basic human right. London's new Food Strategy and the trailblazing work done by local authorities and charities have laid the foundations for a visionary approach to young people's food. Young Food Ambassadors in London are calling for city-wide, systemic change which recognises the magnitude and gravity of children's food insecurity in London: they want their city to lead the way on securing every child's #Right2Food.

*"In all cases, children's rights – and the best interests of the child – must be at the centre of government efforts to create healthy food environments. As the primary duty-bearers of children's rights, governments should prioritise efforts to address the root causes of poor health among children by ensuring that they have access to nutritious and affordable food and a healthy and safe environment."*  
(UNICEF, 2019a)

**"IF EVERYONE HAD EMPATHY FOR EACH OTHER, THIS PROBLEM WOULD HAVE BEEN SORTED OUT EARLIER"**

YOUNG FOOD AMBASSADOR JANAN GILL, 10, LAMBETH

**Children's food insecurity means that there are times when their household does not have enough money to buy food, or they cannot buy the full variety of foods needed for a healthy diet, or their household members worry that this may happen in the future.**

## CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY: THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES



Food insecurity is an extremely debilitating experience. It damages physical health. It is a cause of great personal distress. It is a social harm. Food insecurity brings profound anxiety and stress into family life which can trigger depression, aggressive behaviour in children, a sense of hopelessness, and overwhelming stress for parents struggling to give their children the best start. It affects children's school attendance, achievement and attainment: children who are hungry in class cannot concentrate or may be disruptive. In addition, the long summer holidays are estimated to result in weeks of learning loss for some children through a combination of social isolation, low levels of stimulation and activity, and poor diets (The Food Foundation, 2019a).



IMAGE: PANORAMASTREETLINE.COM

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY IN LONDON

## What have we learned from the Survey of Londoners (2019)?

“Children seem to experience food poverty in a different way – adults often appear hungry (sometimes we’ve lied and put a mother down as breastfeeding so she gets a hospital meal too), while children only sometimes appear hungry BUT show impacts of malnutrition through having more unhealthy food. What is difficult to measure is how much this is influencing their underlying health until they present with signs of rickets or developmental stunting – we have had a couple of children more formally diagnosed with anaemia thought to be due to poor diet, and one with severe hypocalcaemia.”

Junior Doctor, London

**400,000** CHILDREN (ONE IN SIX, 17%) IN LONDON EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY

“We have spoken to children who have shoplifted for food, scavenged for food from bins, eaten tissue paper to fend off hunger, bartered for food at school, sold drugs for food, mugged other children for money for food.”

Laurence Guinness, The Childhood Trust

During a Children’s Future Food Inquiry event at which young people spoke directly to parliamentarians about their experiences of food insecurity, a London Young Food Ambassador talked about pressing down on her stomach in lessons to stop it rumbling.

“I didn’t have any breakfast ‘cos there was nothing in the fridge. I don’t eat breakfast much anyway. When we don’t have any food for dinner my Dad will go out to borrow money from our neighbour. Sometimes he doesn’t come back and I have to go sleep.”

Girl, 11, London (The Childhood Trust, Summer Give Campaign)

“I eat crisps for breakfast. I don’t like baked beans on toast ‘cos we eat them too much but they fill you up nice. Sometimes we get chicken and chips which is my favourite!”

Boy, 10, London (The Childhood Trust, Summer Give Campaign)

The categories of ‘low food security’ and ‘very low food security’ have been combined and are reported as ‘food insecurity’

**41%** of parents earning less than £14,900 have children living in food insecurity

**ONE IN FIVE** ADULTS (1.5 MILLION LONDONERS) EXPERIENCE FOOD INSECURITY

**70%** of young parents (aged 16-24 years) have children who are food insecure

The survey for Londoners was conducted in 2018/19. It is a representative survey interviewing adults aged 16 and over, and received responses from 6,601 Londoners.

Household food security status is measured by the responses to a series of questions about behaviours and experiences associated with difficulty in meeting food needs. The Survey of Londoners used five questions to assess London adults’ food security and seven questions to assess London children’s food security (asked of parents in the Survey). The questions are those recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.

**PARENTS FROM FOOD INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS ALSO REPORTED:**

- Relying on low cost food for their children (25%)
- Being unable to provide a balanced meal for their children (16%)
- Their children not being able to eat enough (9%)

**GROUPS MOST LIKELY TO HAVE CHILDREN EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY**

**Single parents (36%)**

**The lowest income Londoners (41%)**

**Black Londoners (32%)**

**HALF** (49%) of parents with children in low food security are socially isolated

**“YOU’RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO WORK PROPERLY IF YOU HAVE TOO MUCH JUNKY FOOD”**

GIRL, 10, ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL, CROYDON

**“YOU FEEL LIKE NOBODY CAN HELP YOU AND YOU FEEL LONELY”**

GIRL, YEAR 6, REARY PRIMARY SCHOOL, LAMBETH

Parents are more likely to protect their children’s food security at the expense of their own. **27%** of parents in London experience food insecurity but just **17%** of parents in London report having children who experience food insecurity. We know from what young people told the Inquiry that even when their nutritional intake is not affected, they may be damaged by the stress and other consequences of living in a food insecure household. One Young Food Ambassador described feeling upset that her mother would refuse to share any of the food served for dinner, saying she planned to eat later, because it was clear when the kitchen was silent for the rest of the evening that her mother didn’t eat at all.

**17%** OF PARENTS IN LONDON HAVE CHILDREN FACING FOOD INSECURITY

# CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY IN LONDON: WHAT DRIVES IT AND WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

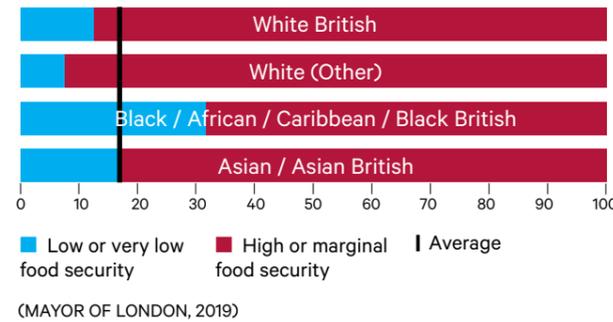
## POVERTY AND ETHNICITY

Low incomes and high living costs in London are fundamental factors that trap children in poverty, but they are part of a full spectrum of influences and pressure points that make it difficult for young people to escape the constraints of food insecurity.

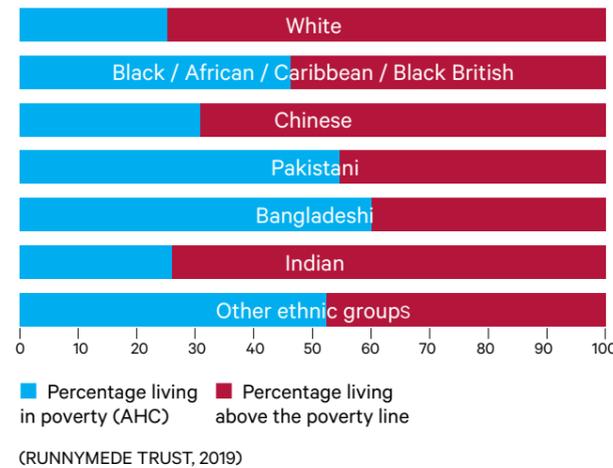
London's food environment makes it hard to access and afford healthy food that is appealing and convenient. Even once the shopping is done, preparing and storing good food requires the kind of time, space and facilities that are often unavailable to families living in poverty. Citizens of black and minority ethnicities are also disproportionately likely to be affected by food insecurity.

It's important to remember that food insecurity is a manifestation of poverty, the drivers of which have been explored and addressed elsewhere (by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Child Poverty Action Group, for example, along with numerous other organisations).

### CHILDREN EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY IN LONDON BY ETHNICITY:



### CHILD POVERTY RATES BY ETHNICITY:



### PERCENTAGE OF BME CHILDREN IN LONDON BOROUGH WITH THE HIGHEST CHILD POVERTY RATES

Borough	0-9 (2011 census) BME% 8-17 (2019)	Child poverty rate
Tower Hamlets	80.0	56.7
Newham	81.8	51.8
Hackney	56.2	48.1
Islington	49.7	47.5
Westminster	56.1	46.2
Camden	49.4	43.5
Brent	72.7	43.1
Barking and Dagenham	59.3	42.8
Lambeth	62.6	42.8
Enfield	52.2	41.7

(RUNNYMEDE TRUST, 2019)

**“THE CHOCOLATE AISLE IS JUST LIKE, SO MESMERISING. I JUST WANT TO EAT EVERYTHING”**

GIRL, 10, ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL, CROYDON

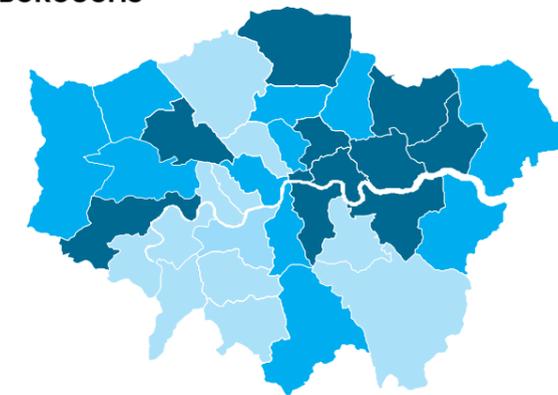


IMAGE: PANORAMASTREETLINE.COM

## OBESOGENIC FOOD ENVIRONMENTS IN LONDON

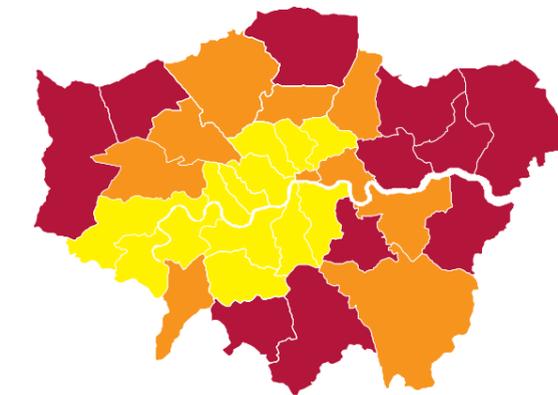
Even as the capital of the fifth richest economy in the world, London is plagued by the dual problem of food insecurity occurring alongside very high rates of childhood obesity. Across London there is a marked socio-economic gradient for childhood obesity, which is three times higher in the city's poorest boroughs compared with their wealthiest counterparts (Davie, 2019). Making the situation even worse is the link between deprivation and the concentration of takeaways in an area, with the poorest localities having far more than the richest parts of the city.

### LONDON BOROUGH



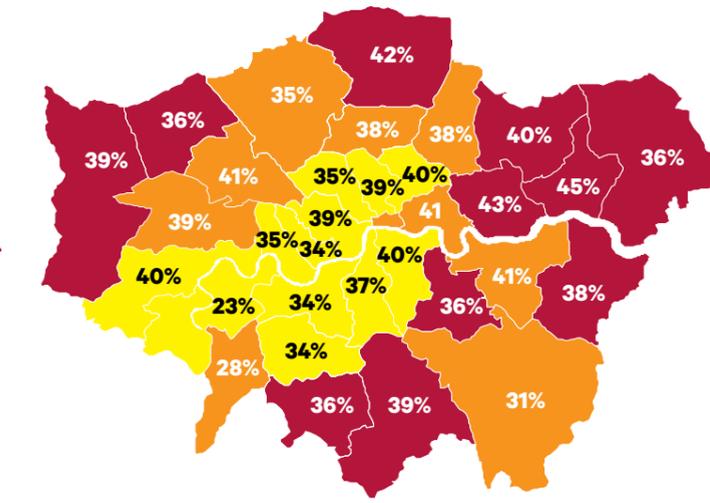
### PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN YEAR 6 CHILDREN:

- Top third of boroughs (highest rates) (40-45%)
  - Middle third (36-39%)
  - Bottom third of boroughs (lowest rates) (23-36%)
- (Department of Health, 2018)



### TAKEAWAYS AS A PROPORTION OF ALL FOOD OUTLETS:

- Highest third (26-32%)
  - Middle third (23-26%)
  - Lowest third (14-23%)
- (CEDAR, University of Cambridge, 2019)



### PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE CHILDREN AND DENSITY OF TAKEAWAY OUTLETS:

- Highest third
  - Middle third
  - Lowest third
- (Department of Health, 2018, and CEDAR, University of Cambridge, 2019)

*“We are based in Canning Town in east London. Our high street, Barking Road, was recently voted one of the top 10 unhealthiest high streets in the country. This is partly due to the number of fast food shops on Barking Road. Every day, teenagers congregate in these fast food shops because they are cheap.”*  
Community Links (charity, London)

**86% OF LONDONERS** feel tackling childhood obesity should be a top or high priority (Mayor of London, 2018b).

Findings from the Great Weight Debate 2017 and YouGov polls for the GLA show that Londoners want the Mayor and partners to act: **62% OF LONDONERS** believe having healthier and cheaper food options on London's high streets would have the biggest impact on improving healthy eating in the capital (Mayor of London, 2018a).



**£** **3.7 MILLION** children in the UK live in households for whom a healthy diet, as defined by the government, is unaffordable. The poorest families in the UK would have to spend **74%** of their after-housing income on food in order to buy a healthy diet (The Food Foundation, 2018).

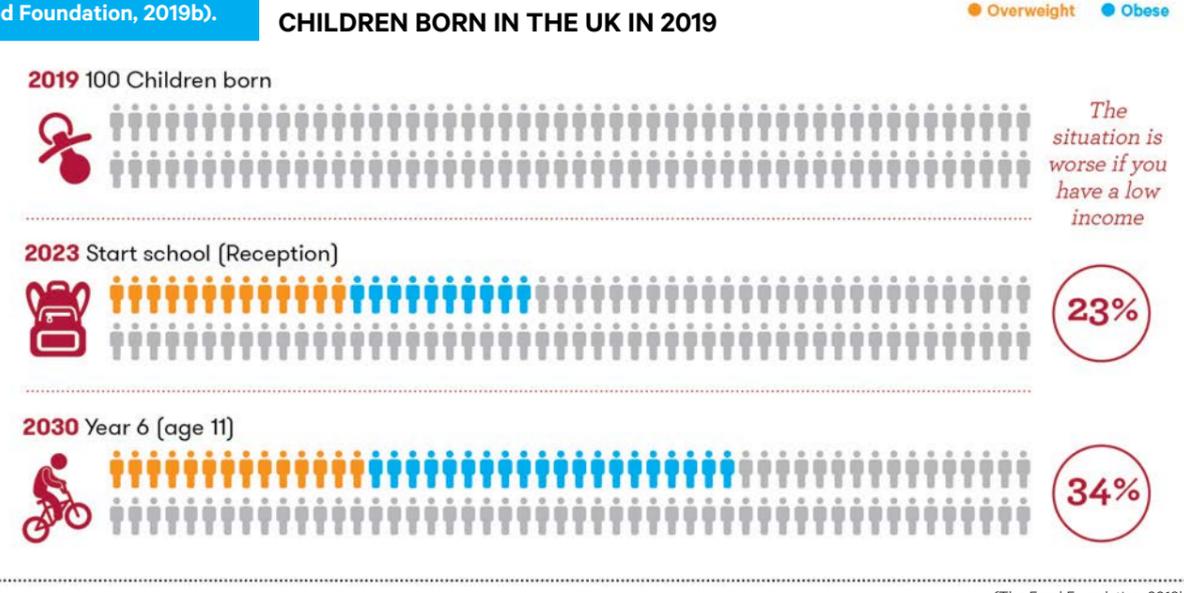


*“If you buy an apple it’s more expensive than junk food. Why are the things that are good for you more expensive than the things that are not good for you?”*  
 Girl, Year 6, Reay Primary School

46% of food and drink advertising goes on confectionary, sweet and savoury snacks and soft drinks; while only 2.5% goes on fruit and vegetables (The Food Foundation, 2019b).

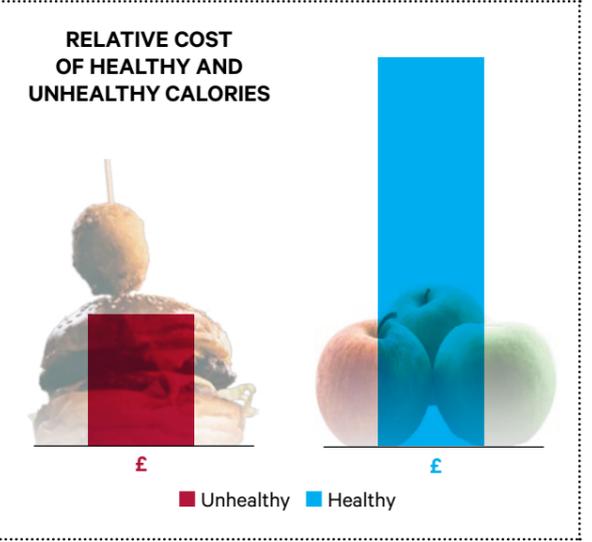
**DEVELOPING TASTE PREFERENCES**

Infancy and early childhood is a critical period for establishing food preferences and dietary patterns. Diets in infancy are not, on average, in line with national recommendations - solid foods are often introduced ahead of the recommended ‘around six months’ of age, and excess calorie and sugar intake is common. The consequences of this are likely to have an impact on the entire life course, affecting diets, body weights, and disease risk throughout childhood and into adult life (Public Health England, 2019).



**ONE IN FIVE JOBS (20.4%)** in London pay below the London Living Wage (ONS, 2018)

**“IT WOULD BE GOOD IF WE COULD LOWER THE PRICE OF HEALTHY FOOD, BECAUSE IT WOULD MAKE IT A LOT MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR THE PEOPLE WHO MIGHT NEED IT MORE”**  
 BOY, YEAR 6, REAY PRIMARY SCHOOL, LAMBETH



**UNHEALTHY FOODS ARE THREE TIMES CHEAPER THAN HEALTHY FOODS**



**CONVENIENCE MATTERS**

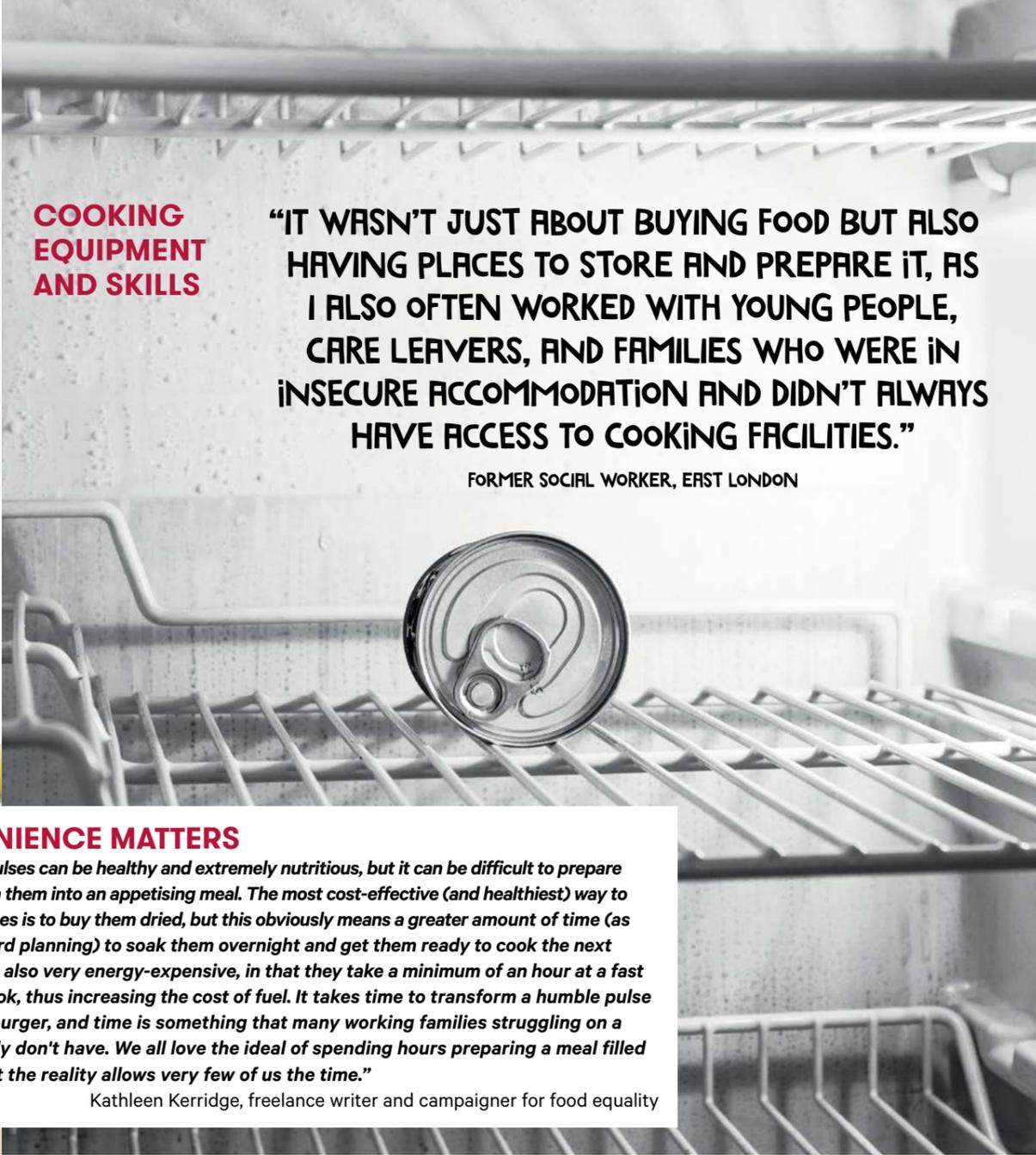
*“Beans and pulses can be healthy and extremely nutritious, but it can be difficult to prepare them and turn them into an appetising meal. The most cost-effective (and healthiest) way to purchase pulses is to buy them dried, but this obviously means a greater amount of time (as well as forward planning) to soak them overnight and get them ready to cook the next day. They are also very energy-expensive, in that they take a minimum of an hour at a fast simmer to cook, thus increasing the cost of fuel. It takes time to transform a humble pulse into a bean-burger, and time is something that many working families struggling on a budget simply don’t have. We all love the ideal of spending hours preparing a meal filled with love, but the reality allows very few of us the time.”*

Kathleen Kerridge, freelance writer and campaigner for food equality

**COOKING EQUIPMENT AND SKILLS**

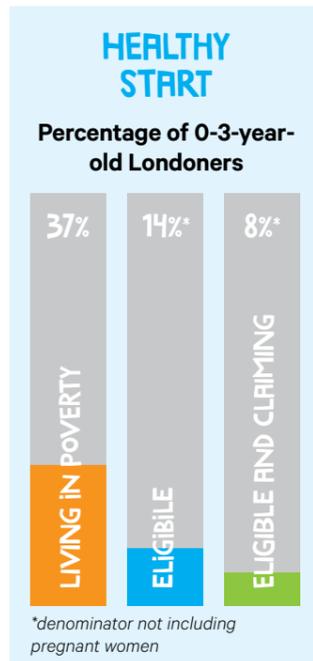
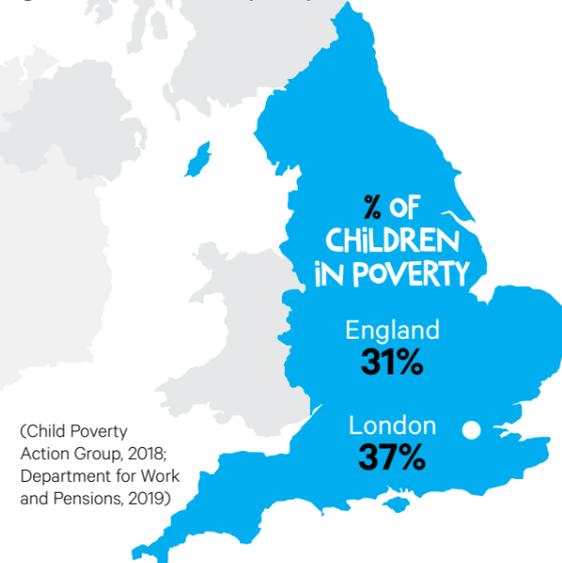
**“IT WASN’T JUST ABOUT BUYING FOOD BUT ALSO HAVING PLACES TO STORE AND PREPARE IT, AS I ALSO OFTEN WORKED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, CARE LEAVERS, AND FAMILIES WHO WERE IN INSECURE ACCOMMODATION AND DIDN’T ALWAYS HAVE ACCESS TO COOKING FACILITIES.”**

FORMER SOCIAL WORKER, EAST LONDON



# BABIES LIVING IN POVERTY IN LONDON - WHO DO THE POLICIES BENEFIT?

Too many of the children in London who are born into and live in poverty are left behind by the policies that are meant ensure their access to healthy food and adequate nutrition. These are the fundamental food policy gaps we need to fill to secure every child's right to good food, 365 days a year.



(Healthy Start, 2019)

In 2006, the initial value of the voucher was £2.80; in 2009, this was increased to £3.10. Ten years on and the voucher value has remained the same despite an increased cost of living (Crawley and Dodds, 2018).

### WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE SAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S #RIGHT2FOOD CHARTER?

'Expand the Healthy Start voucher scheme by increasing the voucher value and increasing the number of children who benefit'

**£4.5 MILLION WORTH OF HEALTHY START VOUCHERS ARE MISSED OUT ON BY LONDON HOUSEHOLDS**  
(SUSTAIN, 2019).

Healthy Start scheme: This is a means-tested scheme for low income pregnant women and families with children under the age of four years, with universal entitlement for mothers under 18 years of age, providing coupons for free vitamins and vouchers which can be used for foods such as cow's milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables or infant formula. The voucher is worth £3.10 per week, and babies under 12 months receive two vouchers (£6.20).



## BREASTFEEDING IN LONDON

Some of the babies and children in London who are affected by food insecurity have parents who are themselves young people: 70% of 16-24-year-old parents in London have children who are food insecure.

(Mayor of London, 2019a)

**Maternal and infant nutrition determines our future health, and yet the protective schemes we have in place for those living in poverty are too small to make a difference.**

No mother should be in a situation where she wants to breastfeed but does not have the support to, but many are. By the time our babies are six to eight weeks old in England, only 44% of them are still being breastfed (UNICEF, 2019b).

This is even harder for those whose resources are scarce, as the cost of infant formula can present a substantial and sometimes unsustainable financial burden.



### WHAT THE PRACTITIONERS TOLD US:

"I have come across a case where a mother came to A&E because she literally had no milk to feed her baby. Because of having very little money, she had tried to economise by bulk-buying a high calorie formula milk, but her baby wouldn't take it (a high calorie milk like this was inappropriate for an infant so young, but this wasn't clear on the packaging). She had no money left for an alternative milk, and no social support to help her. We were fortunately able to provide her with some milk and charity cash until her next benefits, but without this, it seemed she had no recourse to any other support. This is a direct consequence of forcing people to live on knife-edge levels of money not to mention the dire lack of breastfeeding support services which perhaps could have prevented this issue in the first place".

**Junior Doctor, Paediatric Senior House Officer, London**



BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY

**Camden Can Breastfeeding Welcome Scheme works with local businesses and community venues to make mothers feel welcomed to breastfeed when they are out and about.**

The cost of formula feeding: the cost of powdered first stage infant formula for infants at two to three months varies from £6.44 to £14.81.20 per week. Specialist formulas are more expensive (APPG on Infant Feeding, 2018).

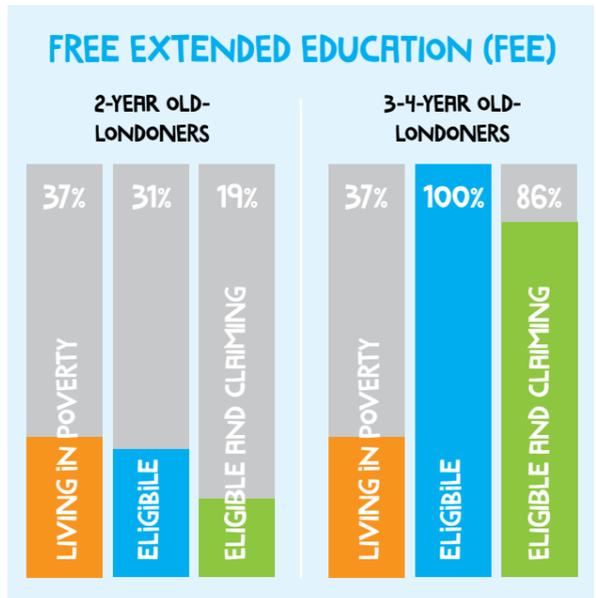


## ACTION TAKEN

In March 2019, the mayor refreshed his commitment to support mothers to breastfeed in London, and encourages all boroughs to achieve Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative accreditation in maternity, neonatal and community settings. The London Food Strategy also encourages boroughs to do more to increase the uptake of Healthy Start.

Local authorities can also play an important role by welcoming breastfeeding in all public spaces and council run workplaces – almost all London boroughs have accreditation of some kind.

# CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY IN LONDON - WHO DO THE POLICIES BENEFIT?



## BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY

Camden funds free food as part of its free childcare benefits for eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds.

In May 2019, Southwark Council announced that it would be providing free healthy nursery meals, which would be implemented in three waves between September 2019 and July 2020.

Free childcare for two-year-olds: means-tested entitlement for 15 hours per week.

Free childcare for three to four-year-olds: 15 hours universal entitlement per week, 30 hours for working families.

**WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE SAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S #RIGHT2FOOD CHARTER?**  
 'Provide free nursery meals to children who are entitled to free childcare'



IMAGE: PANORAMASTREETLINE.COM

Free school meals: means-tested entitlement for school-age children in families earning less than £7,400 per year (net income and before benefits taken into account). The amount which entitled children in secondary school receive on their cards seems to vary between £1.90 and £2.30.

(APSE, 2018)

Universal infant free school meals: all children are entitled to a free lunch in the first three years of school.

- Pupils eligible for free school meals are almost **20% LESS LIKELY** to have a good level of development at age five than those who are not eligible (Mayor of London, 2018b).
- **212,000 CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY** in London are projected to miss out on free school meals under the new Universal Credit criteria (The Children's Society, 2017).



## BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY

Southwark, City of London, Newham and Tower Hamlets provide Universal Free School Meals for all primary school children in their boroughs.

The Urswick Secondary School in Hackney provides free school lunches for all students Year 7-11. The meals are funded by the school's lettings income – the premises are hired at weekends and evenings by local organisations, including sports and drama clubs.



### WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE SAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S #RIGHT2FOOD CHARTER?

'Increase the offer of free school meals to a wider group of children throughout age bands'

'Stop the stigma: we shouldn't be made to feel ashamed. In a decent society no-one should be struggling to put decent food on the table. Rename free school meals as the "school meal allowance"'

'Ban water being sold in schools and make it freely available for everyone throughout the school day'

'Increase the meal allowance for secondary school to a minimum of £4 per day, and allow it to be used at any time of the day and carry it over between days'

'Poverty proof' our schools to ensure that no one is left out of activities like cookery and ensuring those on free school meals are kept anonymous.'

**"MORE CHILDREN SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HAVE FREE SCHOOL MEALS"**

GIRL, YEAR 6, REAY PRIMARY SCHOOL, LAMBETH



### ACTION TAKEN

**NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMME (NSBP).** In 2018, the Department for Education announced funding for Family Action and the

Magic Breakfast, to support over 1,800 schools in disadvantaged communities across England, ensuring that more children received a healthy breakfast at the start of their school day. The greatest density of NSBP delivery was in London, where pupils at 294 schools received free breakfasts (out of the 3,024 schools in London) (National School Breakfast Programme, 2019).

## BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY

As part of Hammersmith & Fulham's Universal Free School Meals pilot, which will constitute a universal free breakfast offer for every primary school and free lunches in two secondary schools, the borough is renaming the entitlement the 'Healthy Meal Allowance'. The pilot will launch in January 2020.

**CHILDREN EXCLUDED FROM FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

Children living in households who have migrated to the UK and have been granted leave to remain with the condition that they have No Recourse to Public Funds cannot claim free school meals. Along with children who are undocumented, these are often the poorest families in the city, with no source of income at all, reliant entirely on charity. London Councils reported that in 2016/17, London boroughs supported an estimated 2,881 households with NRPF, in which just over 3,000 children may have been living (London Councils, 2016/17) (although numbers are likely to be much higher than this). Families in these circumstances can apply for emergency funding from their local authority. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. The Children's Society reports that six out of 10 families who have approached their local authority for Section 17 support were refused. People are also often afraid to ask for this help because they are scared their children will be taken away or they will be deported.

*"Working in a deprived east London borough I often came across children and families who were experiencing the effects of food poverty, from children who struggled to concentrate in school or were obese as a result of poor nutrition, to families who relied heavily on food banks when they had delays to their benefits. The most difficult situations were with families who had no recourse to public funds and depended on Section 17 (child in need) support to feed themselves and their children. It felt like the fact we had to refer people to food banks all the time because they didn't have enough money for their basic needs was totally normalised, when we should have all been shouting about how it was unbelievable that in one of the richest countries in the world, even families who did work sometimes didn't have enough money for food."*

Former social worker, East London

**BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY**

In October 2019 Lewisham Council committed to backing the North East London Migrant Action and Labour Campaign for Free Movement's initiative calling for free school meals for all who need them, regardless of immigration status. Details of implementation are still being worked out, and campaigners will be keeping a close eye on the plan's development.



*"I have met a parent who had accrued £1,000 of debt to her child's school because she was unable to pay for their school meals. That child was then punished by not being allowed to attend his end of secondary school prom. School should be a space where children can learn and play together as equals. If a child is from a family that is struggling financially, they must be able to eat the same meals as their friends at school. It is socially unacceptable for this to place a family further into destitution."*

Nadia Chalabi, Hackney Migrant Centre

**"I DON'T GET FREE SCHOOL MEALS. MY MUM HAS TO PAY FOR MY MEALS BUT SOMETIMES I DON'T EAT LUNCH BECAUSE LIKE SHE NEEDS TO GET MONEY. SOMETIMES MY BELLY WILL JUST HURT."**

JADE, 12 (PROJECT 17, 2019)

**WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE SAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S #RIGHT2FOOD CHARTER?**

'Include migrant and undocumented children without recourse to public funds in free school meals'

**HOLIDAY FOOD INSECURITY**

For families who rely on free school meals and other children living in poverty, the 13 weeks of the year when children are on holiday can create a profound financial pressure point which forces the family into greater food insecurity and in turn leads to cut backs on other important family expenditure. A shortage of funds for costs like entertainment and socialising which affect the quality of children's lives can leave them isolated and unengaged. Councils can help tackle holiday food insecurity by ensuring that children have access to nutritious food on the 170 days a year when they are not in school, particularly over long holiday periods.

**WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE SAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S #RIGHT2FOOD CHARTER?**

'Expand holiday provision programmes that are educational, fun and provide access to healthy food as a right to all young people'

**BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY**

*"A child that eats well, grows up to be a better citizen of this world. This has been the guiding ethos behind The Akshaya Patra Foundation's journey, the world's largest charity cooking and serving hot nutritionally balanced mid-day school meals to 1.8 million children daily across 12 states in India. The access to a simple but nutritious hot meal has helped thousands of our beneficiaries to bridge the learning gap and be able to step out of poverty. This is helping create a sustainable food solution model in India which will help eradicate poverty in the long term vs. just filling up bellies. Unfortunately, the same child food poverty exists right here on our streets in the UK. With children going hungry or filling up on junk food, we believe the solution is the same as what has worked so well in India - i.e. giving children at least one free nutritious meal a day, via an efficiently run, cost-effective, government supported food program, scaleable enough to nourish all of UK's children struggling with hunger. Akshaya Patra's pilot of delivering 10,000 hot holiday lunches in London this summer was immensely successful, and we are all set to scale up to 15,000 meals daily in 2020. By forging the right partnerships with the government, Local Authorities and the voluntary sector, I am confident that together we can create a sustainable solution to food poverty in local authorities."*

Neha Agarwal, Director of Development, The Akshaya Patra Foundation UK

'Holiday hunger' has implications beyond physical malnourishment as teachers reflect that children who return to school malnourished after the holidays have fallen behind compared to their peers and many will never claw back this learning and health disadvantage to fulfil their full potential (The Childhood Trust, 2018). This is confirmed by the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on hunger, as evidence it had received indicated

that children who did not receive proper nutrition during the holidays 'start the new term with up to a 3.5 month "education learning loss", significantly behind their more fortunate peers who have enjoyed a better diet and lots of activity' (Hughes, 2017). Research by Hirsch (2007) reflects that poorer children are nine months behind, leading to an education divide between poorer children and their peers.' (The Childhood Trust, 2018).

**25%**

**OF LONDON'S CHILDREN ARE AT RISK OF GOING HUNGRY DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS (MAYOR OF LONDON, 2018C)**

**ACTION TAKEN**

The Mayor's Fund for London is helping to address food insecurity during the summer holidays through the Kitchen Social holiday provision programme. Launched in January 2017, Kitchen Social has to date has engaged 110 hubs across 23 boroughs. The initiative has helped to provide 58,880 meals to 12,590 children and young people. Youth clubs, schools, churches, adventure playgrounds and community centres across London are amongst those providing free

meals and activities for the capital's hungry school children (Mayor's Fund for London, 2019).

Family Action in Croydon was one of 11 coordinators to receive funding as part of the £9.1 million Department for Education holiday provision pilot in summer 2019.

This year, the GLA partnered with the Child Poverty Action Group to tackle child poverty in London primary schools, supporting schools to work in local clusters to design and deliver holiday food insecurity programmes with help from local businesses and philanthropic funders.

**THE ISSUE IS ESPECIALLY PRESSING BECAUSE FOR 1 IN 10 CHILDREN, SCHOOL LUNCH IS OFTEN THEIR BIGGEST MEAL OF THE DAY**

(IPSOs MORI FOR GLA, 2013)



# LONDON CHILDREN'S #Right2Food CHARTER

The UK-wide Children's #Right2Food Charter was published in April 2019. Towards the end of 2019, the Young Food Ambassadors met to review their most urgent policy priorities, and identified their key asks for London in light of the Survey of Londoners food insecurity figures.

## Young Food Ambassadors' priorities:

- Ensure free school meals are available to all children who need them:
  - 20% of children not entitled to free school meals report going without lunch because they cannot afford it
  - Children who have migrated to the UK and have no recourse to public funds are often excluded
- Tackle the stigma by renaming Free School Meals as School Meal Allowance and poverty proofing schools to ensure children don't have to pay for cooking ingredients for cookery lessons
- Increase the Free School Meal allowance for secondary schools and make sure it can be used all through the day, and that the funds are rolled over if not used
- Ensure all canteens have water fountains
- Make sure the cost of healthy food is legally recognised and used to set benefit and wage levels
- Ensure proper holiday provision is available for children entitled to free school meals and that financial allowances for holiday periods are provided to those on a low income
- Ensure school food is monitored to ensure the funding allocated to it is spent properly.

The London Charter presents practical suggestions for implementing these priorities, and makes recommendations for action that policy makers should take. Following these proposals from young people in the capital will help protect every child's #Right2Food.



**"I FEEL LIKE IF WE SPEAK OUR TRUE STORY, THINGS COULD CHANGE"**  
GIRL, YEAR 6, ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL, CROYDON



It's not right that children are held back by poor diets and hunger. Our Charter tells you how you can change this in London and help us unlock our potential.

## ACTION FROM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

IT'S RIGHT THAT WE HAVE A SAY IN WHAT WE EAT.

- We think there needs to be a new, independent Children's Food Watchdog, with young people involved in the leadership, to monitor and improve our food in the UK.

ALL CHILDREN NEED A HEALTHY LUNCH TO GROW AND THRIVE, WHETHER IN NURSERY OR SCHOOL, TERM TIME OR HOLIDAYS, AND ESPECIALLY IF TIMES ARE TOUGH AT HOME.

- Free nursery meals should be provided to children who are entitled to free childcare.
- We should be moving towards universal free school meals for all primary and secondary school pupils in England so that every school-age child gets a healthy lunch, including children with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).
- The government should support annual funding for the National School Breakfast Programme to ensure all children can access good quality nutritious meals and no child starts the day too hungry to learn.
- The cost of healthy food should be legally recognised and used to set benefit and wage levels.

HOLIDAY PROVISION PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE EXPANDED, AND MUST BE EDUCATIONAL, FUN AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD AS A RIGHT FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

- Building on the work done by the Mayor's Fund for London Kitchen Social holiday provision programme, the government should devolve holiday provision to ensure a high-quality, inclusive and consistent offer can be sustainably delivered across all 33 London boroughs.

## ACTION FROM THE MAYOR OF LONDON

SCHOOL AND NURSERY FOOD SHOULD BE MONITORED TO ENSURE IT MEETS SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS. THE FREE SCHOOL MEAL ALLOWANCE IS ALREADY INSUFFICIENT – WE SHOULDN'T BE SPENDING IT ON BOTTLED DRINKING WATER.

- The Mayor must provide funding to sustain and strengthen the Healthy Early Years London and Healthy Schools London awards schemes, both of which require early years settings and schools to meet Early Years Foundation and School Food Standards (including the provision of free and readily accessible drinking water at all times) in order to achieve accreditation. Investment in these schemes should support boroughs to:
  - > Engage all schools and settings, especially those in areas of deprivation
  - > Work with school leadership teams to secure buy-in for the schemes
  - > Rigorously assess school food standards.

EVERY SCHOOL-AGE CHILD SHOULD GET A HEALTHY LUNCH

- Until Universal Free School Meals are introduced, the Mayor should support local authorities and schools to provide Free School Meals for children with NRPF.
- Repeat the Survey of Londoners in 2022 to measure progress in London at a local level.

## ACTION FROM LONDON'S LOCAL AUTHORITIES

STOP THE STIGMA

- Rename Free School Meals as the 'School Meal Allowance'.

ENSURE WE HAVE ACCESS TO OUR FREE SCHOOL MEAL ALLOWANCE IN FULL, AND THAT WE CAN USE IT WHEN WE NEED IT.

- Local authorities must work with schools so that the Free School Meal allowance is carried over when we don't spend all of the allocation in one day.

**LONDON CHILDREN'S #Right2Food CHARTER**



## WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO TO TACKLE CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY?

The Young Food Ambassadors have put forward their vision for change in London. What else was highlighted in their broader UK-wide Charter, and are there examples of London taking action on their initial policy proposals from April 2019?

### EXPAND THE SCHOOL FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SCHEME SO ALL CHILDREN CAN BENEFIT (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

- As part of Croydon's Food Flagship School programme, Bensham Manor School (secondary special) has made free fruit and vegetables available to all students at break, sourced and delivered by a local supplier, alongside free water for all across the school.

### INTRODUCE MANDATORY FOOD STANDARDS FOR EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

- Food and drink standards must be met by early years settings applying for Healthy Early Years London accreditation. The Healthy Early Years London scheme is highlighted in the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy and currently engages 1500+ settings (11% of 13,000+ settings in London) (Healthy Early Years London).

### WHEN CONSIDERING CHANGES TO SUPPORT OR WAGES FOR FAMILIES, MAKE LAWS THAT TAKE COSTS INTO ACCOUNT AND UNLOCK THE CONSTRAINTS OF POVERTY ON WHAT WE CAN EAT

- The Mayor continues to support Sustain's annual publication of Beyond the Food Bank, which uses ten indicators to report on the steps local authorities are taking to tackle food insecurity at a local level. This



includes recommendations for councils to become accredited London Living Wage employers, to become Living Wage Funders, and to promote the London Living Wage to local businesses. It also calls on councils to relieve residents of Council Tax if they are on very low incomes, and to keep minimum payments at 10% or lower where they are essential.

### DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS FOR FOOD EDUCATION INCLUDING LEARNING ABOUT FOOD POVERTY, HOW IT CAN BE SOLVED AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN OUR CURRICULUM

- Whitefield Secondary School in Barnet has introduced year-round food lessons for their Year Seven and Eights, which includes Nutrition & Special Diets, Food Provenance, Food Science (how food ingredients work), Food & the Environment and Practical Cookery. They also ran a 2019 Healthy Eating Week with five challenges to eat breakfast, eat five a day, keep hydrated, keep active and sleep well. They also run a raft of enrichment activities including the Let's Get Cooking Club

### DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL MENU THAT MEETS SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS AND BEST EATING ENVIRONMENTS DESIGNED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

- "Joseph (age 12) lives in temporary accommodation in an inner London borough. The school [he attends] has a 'family service' approach to meals in which no money changes hands and everyone eats the same meal together, including teachers... At lunchtime, the children are allocated a table of six and each table



has a large tray of food, such as chicken curry and rice, macaroni cheese or spaghetti bolognese. Each child has a role in cutting up the food, sharing it out or clearing up afterwards... Joseph currently has the role of serving lunch and speaks positively about the food at school. Unsurprisingly, given the way in which meals are provided and served, he does not mention feeling stigmatised. 'Everybody gets the same food', he says." (Living Hand to Mouth: children and food in low-income families (Child Poverty Action Group, 2019)).

- As part of Croydon's Food Flagship Programme, Rockmount Primary School has introduced improvements to the lunch hall including pupil waiters, tablecloths, herbs and conversation cards on every table, a separate dessert trolley, wall decorations and food/healthy eating messages around the room.

#### TACKLING MARKETING OF JUNK FOOD ON TV, NEAR SCHOOLS, ONLINE AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- In February 2019, the Mayor banned junk food advertising on the entire Transport for London network (TfL) as a measure to help tackle child obesity in London.
- Advertising revenues across the TfL network have gone up £1 million since the introduction of the ban. The first official quarterly figures revealed that between April 1st and June 22nd this year, advertising revenues have gone up to £33m compared to £32m the previous year (Mediatel, 2019).

#### INCREASING BUSINESS RATES FOR FAST FOOD SHOPS NEAR SCHOOLS AND USING THE FUNDING TO SUPPORT FOOD EDUCATION AND EXTENDED SCHOOL DAY PROJECTS

- In October 2019, Planning Inspectors approved the London Plan policy to restrict the development of new hot food takeaways within 400 metres of schools.



LONDON CHILDREN'S FOOD INSECURITY

#### FURTHER ACTION TAKEN BY THE MAYOR INCLUDES...

- Commissioning the Survey of Londoners which includes a London-wide measure of household food insecurity (including children's food insecurity), which will be used to support the development of long-term solutions to the causes and impacts of food insecurity
- Convening the London Child Obesity Taskforce to lead action to halve the percentage of London's children who are overweight at the start of primary school by 2030, and obese at the end of primary school, and to reduce the gap between the richest and poorest areas
- Healthy Early Years London – an awards scheme which supports and recognises good practice and leadership in health and wellbeing in early years settings achievements in child health, wellbeing and development in early years settings.
- As well as supporting local authorities to...
  - > Produce Food Poverty Action Plans (19 boroughs have now completed or are in the process of developing their plans)
  - > Deliver Good Food Retail Plans – strategies to improve access to healthy, affordable food
  - > Promote the Healthier Catering Commitment – a voluntary scheme to help caterers and food businesses make simple, healthy improvements to their food.

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