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 this 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 responses 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.
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
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.

“Has anyone had that day where there’s nothing left to eat?”

YOUNG FOOD AMBASSADOR JAINI GILL, 10, LAMBETH

“It’s 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 there are no barriers to nutritious and affordable food and a healthy and safe environment.”

JENA PREZIOSO, 10, BRIGHTON

Access to good, affordable food is a basic human right. London now has 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.

Food insecurity is an extremely debilitating experience. It damages physical health in 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 helplessness, 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 and are 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).

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The survey for Londoners was conducted in 2019/20. 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 (ood for their children (28%)
- Being unable to provide a balanced meal for their children (15%)
- Their children not being able to eat enough (4%)

**Groups Most Likely to Have Children Experiencing Food Insecurity:**
- Single parents (36%)
- The lowest income Londoners (41%)
- Black Londoners (32%)

**17% of Parents in London Have Children Facing Food Insecurity**

**What We Know about Children's Food Insecurity in London**

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

- 400,000 children (one in six, 17%) in London experience food insecurity.
- 41% of parents earning less than £14,900 have children living in food insecurity.
- 44% of parents with children in low food security are socially isolated.
- 61% of parents with children in low food security reported paying an extra cost for food.
- Half (49%) of parents with children in low food security reported being socially isolated.
- Half (49%) of parents with children in low food security reported being unable to afford nutritious food.
- One in five adults (1.5 million Londoners) experience food insecurity.
- One in six Londoners (660,000) have children who are food insecure.
- The categories of ‘low food security’, and ‘very low food security’ have been combined and are reported as ‘food insecurity’.

**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. It is difficult to measure how much this is influencing underlying health unless 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 their diet, and one with severe hypercalcemia.”**

Junior Doctor, London

“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, engaged 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)

“One Young Food Ambassador said: “You're not going to be able to work properly if you have too much junky food.”

Girl, 10, Rockmount Primary School, Croydon

“Parents are more likely to protect their children's food security at the expense of their own. 37% of parents in London experience food insecurity, but just 25% of parents in London experience food insecurity who have children in food insecurity.”

GIRLS, ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL, CROYDON

“‘You feel like nobody can help you and you feel lonely’

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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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage living above the poverty line (2020)</th>
<th>Percentage living at high or marginal food security (2020)</th>
<th>Percentage living at low or very low food security (2020)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Other)</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CHILD POVERTY RATES BY ETHNICITY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Child poverty rate (2019)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newham</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
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PERCENTAGE OF BME CHILDREN IN LONDON BOROUGHS WITH THE HIGHEST CHILD POVERTY RATES

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OBSOGENIC 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.

"The chocolate aisle is just like, so mesmerising. I just want to eat everything"

Girl, 10, Brockwell Primary School, Croydon

PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN YEAR 6 CHILDREN:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Prevalence of overweight or obese children (2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>Top third (41% - 45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newham</td>
<td>Middle third (36% - 40%)</td>
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<td>Hackney</td>
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PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE CHILDREN AND DENSITY OF TAKEAWAY OUTLETS

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<td>Highest third (26% - 32%)</td>
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<td>Middle third (23% - 26%)</td>
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<td>Hackney</td>
<td>Bottom third (31% - 35%)</td>
<td>Lowest third (14% - 23%)</td>
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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, 2018b).
"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

"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

"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

"In 2019, one in five jobs (20.4%) in London pay below the London Living Wage (ONS, 2018).

Infancy and early childhood is a critical period for establishing food preferences and dietary patterns. Delay in infancy are not at, or 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).

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"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).

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Kathleen Kerridge, freelance writer and campaigner for food equality

"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 to 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 scheme: This is a means-tested scheme for low income 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).

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 breastfeeding charter?

“Expanding the Healthy Start vouchers would increase the voucher value and improve the number of pregnant women who benefit.”

In London, 14% of children under five are food insecure (Healthy Start, 2019).

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

Mental 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 breastfeeding but does not have the support to, and 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).

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 who are affected by food insecurity have parents who are single young people (Mayor of London, 2019a).

What the practitioners told us:

“Travelling from a poor estate in south London, a mother came to A&E because she just had to breastfeed her baby. Because of having very low income, for baby formula I make a high calorie milk, but for an expert it’s a prospect but for my babies it’s just high calorie milk. She had £99 in her bank account. It was too hard for her to afford formula milk, but for each child she had 2 tablespoons of sugar and then water.”

“Breastfeeding is free, but what about the responsibility of the baby? Just because the baby is feeding, she is not feeding. The baby is hungry, but we are not feeding. We are watching the baby, and we are not feeding the baby.”

In London, 37% of children living in poverty have parents who are 16-24-year-old parents in London who are affected by food insecurity.

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WHAT THE PRACTITIONERS TOLD US

"I have come across a case where a mother came to A&E because she simply had no money for food and was not receiving any support. Her baby was six months old and she was struggling to feed her baby. 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 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)."

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Free school meals: means-tested entitlement for school-age children in families earning less than £4,000 per year (net income and benefits taken into account). The amount entitled children in secondary school receive on their cards seems to vary between £1.90 and £2.30.

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

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.

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**Children Excluded from Free School Meals**

Children living in poverty in London - who do the policies benefit?

"I don't get free school meals. My mum has to pay for my needs to get money. Sometimes my belly will just hurt."

Children who are in need." The Children's Society reports that in 2016/17, London boroughs reported that in 2016/17, London boroughs were with families who had no recourse to public funds and depended on Section 17 (child) need to support to food themselves and their children. It felt like the fact we had to refer people to food banks at all the time because they didn't have enough money for their basic needs was totally normal, when we should have all been shining about how it was unacceptable that in one of the richest countries in the world, even families who did work had no money for food.

**In October 2019**

Lewisham Council committed £750,000 to fund the pilot on the East London Children Action and Local Government's initiative calling for free meals for all so that children need them, regardless of immigration status. Details of links to resources for those who are unengaged. Councils can help tackle holiday food insecurity by ensuring that children have access to nutritious meals across 115 days a year when they are not in school, particularly over long holidays.

**Holiday Food Insecurity**

Holidays have implications beyond physical malnutrition. Migrant Action and London Councils were with families who had no recourse to public funds and depended on Section 17 (child) need to support to food themselves and their children. It felt like the fact we had to refer people to food banks at all the time because they didn't have enough money for their basic needs was totally normal, when we should have all been shining about how it was unacceptable that in one of the richest countries in the world, even families who did work had no money for food.

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The London 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 to light 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 schemes 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.
- Make sure the cost of healthy food is legally recognised and used to set benefit and wage levels.
- Ensure all canteens have water fountains.
- School food is monitored to ensure the funding allocated to it is spent properly.
- 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 free school meals are available to free school meals children who are entitled to free school meals.
- School food is monitored to ensure the funding allocated to it is spent properly.

The London Children’s Right2Food Charter tells you how you can change this in London and help us unlock our potential.

Schools and voluntary food must also be monitored to ensure the funding allocated to it is spent properly. The Charter tells you how you can change this in London and help us unlock our potential.

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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 Flamingo 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 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 SURE 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 London 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 in very low incomes, and to keep minimum payments at 10% or lower where they are essential.

**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...

**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 Eight, 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 ran a roll of enrichment activities including the Let’s Get Cooking Club.
As part of Croydon’s Food Flagship Programme, in October 2019, Planning Inspectors approved the ShOPS near schools and using the funding to increasing business rates for fast food.

In February 2019, the Mayor banned junk food tackling marketing on tv, day projects supporting food education and extended school.

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.

Promising Pathway to junk food

In 2015 the Mayor announced junk food advertising on the entire TfL 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.

INCREASING BUSINESS RATES FOR THE FIRST FOOD SHOPS NEAR SCHOOLS:

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AS WELL AS SUPPORTING LOCAL AUTHORITIES

To increase business rates for the first food shops near schools.

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