

HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

Community led responses to food insecurity in north Edinburgh



Pilton
Community
Health
Project



Contents

- 3 Executive Summary**
- 4 Introduction**
- 5 Background and context of food insecurity**
- 6 Research purpose and key questions**
- 7 Research approach and methodology**
- 8 Research findings**
- 14 Discussion**
- 16 Moving forward**
- 18 What PCHP WILL do**
- 20 Acknowledgements**

Executive Summary

There is a public debate taking place about food insecurity and, particularly, food banks and everyone has something to say. We hear from politicians, media commentators and those members of the public who have time and energy to take part in the discussion. However, it seems often, that those living with food insecurity, or living and working beside them, are not being heard and it's not their stories that shape the headlines that we see in the news.

*Pilton Community Health Project*¹ (PCHP) wants to see the debate around food insecurity better including voices from communities that experience food insecurity. There is much to be learned from local responses to food insecurity. We want local and national decision makers to recognise and learn from what is already happening at a local level in order to shape local and national policy.

As the Community Health Project in Pilton, an area of multiple-deprivation in north-west Edinburgh, we have worked alongside the community here for more than 30 years. Food insecurity has always been a key issue that residents have identified and wanted to work on. Increasingly our work on this issue is to support residents who are leading their own community food initiatives to help their neighbours have a better diet, and bringing those individuals together to have a voice and work together through the *Food for Thought Forum*² (FFTF).

Study and findings

This *Hungry for Change* report details the research study carried out by PCHP to explore the solutions to food insecurity that residents in north Edinburgh are delivering. During the study we talked to local residents, volunteers and workers to learn about their experiences of food insecurity to help inform future actions, decisions and policy. Overall we found that

- Food insecurity is caused by poverty but many other factors contribute to people's ability to adequately feed themselves.
- Residents in north Edinburgh feel that Government at all levels should take more responsibility for tackling food insecurity.
- Food insecurity has a negative impact on resident's mental health and on mental health services they use.

- Residents in north Edinburgh have led the development of community initiatives that provide food for others. Those who are experiencing food insecurity find these locally grown solutions to be a more dignified way for them to obtain food.

PCHP recognises the fundamental cause of food insecurity is poverty and this must be addressed by Government. In this report we share what residents and workers have told us about how they have come to be in food insecurity, but in the main we will focus on the other issues that are being raised.

PCHP would like to see locally defined and developed community food hubs that are for and by the communities they serve. There needs to be more community development support to encourage and enable communities to grow and thrive. This report begins to provide some evidence of what the north Edinburgh community has already achieved in developing a community food hub, with only limited support. We believe our vision of a thriving local food economy can be achieved if it is better supported and barriers were removed. This report shows that local food activities provide more dignified ways for residents to get food.

The availability and affordability of food in north Edinburgh needs to be improved. Clearly a wide range of agents could help this happen, including supermarkets, other food suppliers and the local authority. PCHP would encourage these agents to use this report to inform future action and would gladly take part in discussions with them about this issue.

We want to highlight the negative impact that food insecurity has on residents' mental health. The socio economic determinants of health are very clearly demonstrated in this study.

The report was prepared by the staff and volunteers from PCHP with support from Community Food and Health (Scotland) and community research expert Lesley Greenaway. We would like to thank the residents and projects within north Edinburgh who contributed their views and experiences to this study (September 2017).

¹www.pchp.org.uk

² <http://pchp.org.uk/projects/food-thought-forum>

Introduction

The use of foodbanks has been increasing in Scotland and the focus of much heated debate in the country. North Edinburgh has been no exception and Pilton Community Health Project has been alarmed and upset at the rise in the number of people we see or know about who don't have enough money to put food on the table every day.

The community we work with have reacted to the rise in food insecurity with anger and action. They clearly tell us they think government should be doing more to alleviate poverty, but have got together, rolled up their sleeves and started activities where they and their neighbours get together to cook, grow or eat.

Pilton Community Health Project wanted to explore what is going on, and how to support it better. This report is a result of the discussions we have had over the past few months.

About Pilton Community Health Project

PCHP has been working to tackle health inequalities in north Edinburgh since 1984. It uses a social model of health and a community development approach. Food insecurity was one of the first issues that residents identified and PCHP has been working with residents to identify and deliver solutions ever since. Currently we are working to tackle issues around food insecurity on a range of levels.

- **Direct service delivery**
We run a range of cooking groups that focus on cooking and eating a healthy meal together; we include information on basic nutrition and the recipes we use are affordable for those on low incomes.
- **Networking**
We support the *Food for Thought Forum* which brings together community food groups and activists in north Edinburgh to share experience, knowledge and resources.
- **Capacity building**
We offer a wide range of training, mentoring and development support to local groups and individuals working with food.
- **Local and national policy**
We contribute to various policy discussions at local and Scottish levels and, when possible, support residents to contribute also.

For the past 3 years issues directly relating to use of food banks have been a key priority and, as a result, we held a one day community conference (November 2014) that brought 40 residents and local workers together to discuss food insecurity and answer the question '*Do we have the ingredients for a well-fed north Edinburgh?*'³ The conference came to the conclusion that while community groups and residents had skills and knowledge to contribute, residents in the area still lacked sufficient household income and easy access to affordable good quality food.

The conference report also highlighted how the Food for Thought Forum, a network of local community food groups, activists and residents could be a vehicle for collective action to tackle food insecurity in the area.

We continued discussions on this issue at a local and national level and, as a result, were awarded funding from the Scottish Government's Fair Food Transformation Fund which aims to support dignified responses to food insecurity in Scotland. Explicit in the bid was a commitment to work with residents to explore dignified responses to food insecurity and further support local community food groups.



³<http://pchp.org.uk/resources/good-food-all-do-we-have-ingredients-well-fed-north-edinburgh-conference-report>

Background and context of food insecurity in north Edinburgh

We were clear that we wanted the findings to contribute to the body of research around food insecurity in Scotland, rather than duplicate it⁴. Food insecurity⁵ (or food poverty) is defined by Professor Liz Dowler (University of Warwick) as *'the inability to consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food for health, in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so'*.

Through the Food for Thought Forum and our contact with residents, we have been aware that residents and local groups have been supporting their neighbours who have been struggling to put food on the table every day. We wanted, tactfully, to explore what is going on locally in order to better support it.

We wanted the research to provide a platform for the views of residents to be heard at a decision making level. Too often, those experiencing the impact of policies are not heard. In addition to speaking to those who have experienced food insecurity and reflecting their views in the research, we have invited a few residents to join an Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group has been vital for this work. As paid workers who don't necessarily live in the area, we are not experiencing food insecurity and our views may differ to those who live in this community. We've asked advisory group members, all people who live in the community or work directly with those experiencing food insecurity on a daily basis, to be critical friends. They have worked with us to collect and analyse the data for this report, and, crucially, develop trusting relationships with participants. Importantly, they helped us to frame the discussion included in this report and we will continue to work with them to take forward this discussion within the Food for Thought Forum.



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‘Anything about
us, without us,
is not for us’

Poverty Truth Commission

⁴A wide range of agencies have published on food insecurity or poverty. Here are some of a range of reports.

<https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/2016/communityled-research-food-security-insecurity/>
www.foodaidscotland.org/userfiles/files/food_aid_study.pdf
www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report_web.pdf
www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Hard-Choices-Foodbank-Report%28Sept15%29.pdf
<http://www.nls.uk/scotgov/2014/9781784121242.pdf>

⁵Definition adopted by the Scottish Government's short term working group on food poverty.

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/06/8020/5>

Research purpose and key questions

We were aware of many small initiatives operating in the area that had been started by residents groups. We wanted to explore further what was going on in the area, as well as get a better understanding of where people experiencing food insecurity were most likely to go, and most comfortable going. Beyond this we wanted to know more about what support PCHP could offer and what messages residents had for decision makers at all levels.

We worked with a community research expert, Lesley Greenaway, to develop the *scope of the research*. We decided that we wanted to collect qualitative data and, therefore, we would speak to a small number of participants. Lesley supported us to narrow our research to these 4 discussion questions.

1 What are residents' experiences of food insecurity?

- How do people feel about being in food insecurity?
- How did people arrive at a situation where buying food is difficult?
- What coping mechanisms do people use? What compromises do people make?
- What factors effect change for the better /for the worse?

2 What are more dignified approaches for supporting food insecurity?

- What informal support is going on?
- What do people think about the food/community support initiatives they use?
- What are the comfortable/uncomfortable places to go and why?
- What are agencies saying/doing?

3 What should Pilton Community Health Project be doing in response to food insecurity in the future?

- How should Pilton Community Health Project develop its services in the future?
- What can Pilton Community Health Project learn and how can we take action based on what we have learned?

4 What messages should we send to decision makers?

- What are the structural factors that influence food insecurity?
- Who needs to hear these messages? Who can change what causes people to be in food insecurity?



Research approach and methodology

We agreed that we would include data from **workers**⁶ and **residents** as our key stakeholders and identified a number of local projects with an interest in food insecurity to work with. We were aware that these voices are less likely to be heard in the general debate but we consider them important. Also, as we were only going to speak to a small number of individuals, we wanted to reach those who have a deep understanding of what is going on. Many of the workers are volunteers who live locally and may have experienced food insecurity themselves. Finally, and most importantly, workers have built trust with those they work with and could support us to reach those we might not be able reach on our own.

In total 28 people contributed to our findings. We spoke to 11 residents and 17 workers. We asked all the residents for demographic data; this was however, only partially complete⁷. All were of working age, with a good spread across the age ranges. 8 identified as white Scottish with others from a range of backgrounds (reflective of the ethnic composition of the area). Data on gender was incomplete with 5 identifying as female and no others completing the question.

We adopted a 'Food Security' spectrum provided⁸ by Community Food and Health Scotland (see Figure 1) to enable participants to identify themselves where they stood on the spectrum and as an easy place to start the discussions. We wanted to capture data from people who are only just coping or in the severe segment of this spectrum to find out about how people cope.

Initially we contacted **community food groups** in the area to carry out small group semi-structured interviews with workers. This included questions about the work they do, their views on the issue, and we asked for their help to identify and interview study participants. Through these community groups we recruited **residents** and conducted semi-structured interviews with them. Usually these interviews took place in small groups, however, some were interviewed individually. All the interviews took place at a location that the participants were comfortable going and childcare and food were offered. After the research was complete we thanked all the participants with a card and supermarket voucher.

We have tried to conduct this work sensitively; we are particularly aware that those who have no choice but to use foodbanks often face a barrage of questions

and we did our best to make these discussions feel like conversations, rather than interviews. We have been flexible to adapt to individuals' circumstances, rather than sticking to fixed methodology. We let the participants know that their views and comments would be used anonymously; for example we have identified any quote using general term of 'resident' or 'worker'. However, despite our best efforts, it has been difficult to recruit individuals to take part, particularly if we didn't have an existing relationship with them.

The Advisory Group worked with the food staff team at Pilton Community Health Project to **analyse** the data we had gathered. We sorted the data under the research questions and identified themes beneath each question. Following the initial write up of the findings, we went back to the advisory group for their views on our discussion and conclusions and included their views.

We decided to keep the study small. We wanted to use the time and resources available to us to get in-depth and qualitative data about the intricacies of how people are feeling and what is going on in the area, rather than talk in general terms to a lot of people. In addition we have developed three case studies to illustrate some issues more fully.

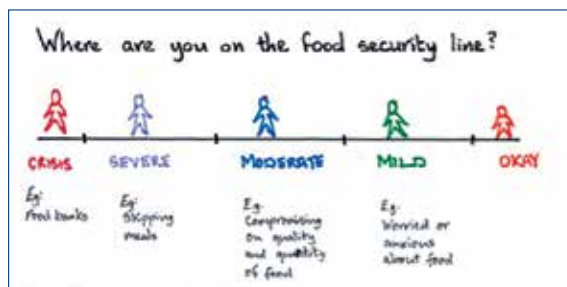


Fig 1. Provided by Community Food and Health (Scotland)

⁶We include anyone who works within a community food initiative in our definition of a worker, whether or not they are paid.

⁷Full demographic data collected is available at <http://www.pchp.org.uk/resources/hungry-change-community-led-responses-food-insecurity-north-edinburgh>

⁸Central and West Integration Network developed this tool when working with Community Food and Health Scotland on community led research into food security. See <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/2016/communityled-research-food-security-insecurity/>

Research findings

The following research findings are based on the views and comments of all the residents and workers who participated in this research study and are organised in relation to the main research questions.

1 What are residents' experiences of food insecurity?

All of the residents (11), and some of the workers, that contributed to this study have experienced food insecurity in varying degrees. They told us how food insecurity manifests in their lives. It is not possible to quantify the level of food insecurity people were feeling; mainly because most participants said they would place themselves at different places on the scale at different times. We used the scale as a tool to open up the discussion and didn't require everyone to share with us where they were on it.

How people feel about being in food insecurity

'you feel like a failure, it's degrading and you become deeply depressed ...' RESIDENT

'We think about hot water and the gas, so it's like, we've got £20 and we need to buy food. Or do I go replace my old shoes that are leaking and letting water in, or buy some food?' RESIDENT

'They say you can't afford food so why are you buying food for the cat?... 'You couldn't afford food, how can you afford to go away for the weekend?' RESIDENT

'If you're a person whose normal life is chaotic when this sort of thing happens you're not shocked. But people who are usually in control of their lives ... they find it harder if they have to come here' WORKER

Residents are clearly feeling shamed, judged, stressed and shocked about being in food crisis. Those whose circumstances have changed dramatically or suddenly feel this more acutely. Some are so traumatised by the experience that they only take up 1 of their 6 foodbank referrals.

CASE STUDY 1

Joanna

Joanna⁹ is in her fifties and lives in Muirhouse with her adult son and daughter. The family live with high levels of distress caused by the long term effects of poverty. Having worked for most of her life, Joanna is unable to work now due to complex mental health difficulties. Her son and daughter are also unemployed due to disability and ill health. Joanna's daughter Faye has retreated from the outside world and does not claim any benefits at all, meaning Joanna's income supports her adult family. Having a low income means Joanna and her family live in acute poverty; they experience food insecurity constantly and are often in crisis.

Joanna has accessed support at WSW¹⁰ for over a year. She is an intelligent, resourceful, strong woman who has survived multiple traumas in her life. Joanna uses her hour a week at the project to talk over issues and maintain resilience. Very often her main concerns are not having enough money to live and the responsibility of caring for and feeding her family. Out of sheer necessity, Joanna has needed to be referred to the local foodbank. She lives with constant hardship. The day to day worry causes Joanna extreme stress and anxiety; it exacerbates her mental health difficulties and makes her ill. Repeated exposure to poverty and the daily struggle to eat causes accumulative harm.

What is also clear is that living in food poverty constantly depletes Joanna's personal resources. Often when turning up for sessions she won't be able to 'get to' the issues of loss and trauma that she needs to discuss and process because there will be the unimaginable 'bread and butter' issue of hunger, lack of food and lack of money to access food and essentials. It is a never ending, exhausting cycle for Joanna which takes away from her much needed support. There have been times too when Joanna has felt judged and shame when accessing her local foodbank. Securing much needed food parcels has come at a price. The systems need to be more flexible to allow for Joanna's complex circumstances. If her basic needs are met, she would be enabled to better manage her mental health condition.

⁹Joanne is not her real name.

¹⁰Women Supporting Women - <http://pchp.org.uk/projects/women-supporting-women>

Why people are facing acute food insecurity

'Money's going down but the price of food is going up' RESIDENT

'There's a lack of human face, a lack of relationship. If you don't tick this box, you'll be sanctioned. The fact that you're in a hospital and can't make that appointment is irrelevant ...' WORKER



'Staff at the job centre have said that they don't understand the rules themselves. They're just trying to work with a system that is not workable' WORKER

'... they give [them] the money but not somebody who can help [them]' WORKER

The circumstances that cause people to arrive in a situation where affording enough food is difficult are well documented¹¹; it's about benefits difficulties, job insecurity and low wages. The apparent lack of concern and, sometimes knowledge, from staff at the Benefits agency makes difficult situations worse. Often an individual's full circumstances, for example, lack of cooking facilities or illness or disabilities, are not taken into account as decisions are made and this exacerbates already difficult situations.

The affordability and availability of food were also mentioned; further details of this are found later in this report.

How people cope

'I go to shops when things have been reduced. You buy what they've got' Resident

'If I am really stuck on a weekend and have already had to borrow from family during the week, I've had to use pawn shops to avoid causing an argument' RESIDENT

People experiencing food insecurity have a wide range of coping mechanisms. These range from making the 'cheap' choices in the supermarket, to borrowing from family members to skipping meals.

People tell us that food or meals at community events is a reason for them to attend. We also hear that while they are taking part in community events, particularly food related activities, they share information on where to get affordable food.

'Women tell us that the free hot meals offered at FooTEA is an added attraction to send their children to the Spartans club' WORKER

'While participants might not discuss food insecurity, they are often keen to share tips on where to get ingredients cheaply and what could be substituted for more expensive ingredients.' WORKERS



¹¹<https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502395.pdf>

2 What are more dignified approaches for supporting those experiencing food insecurity?

Community food activity in north Edinburgh

There are a wide range of local community food initiatives in the area, including those projects that took part in this study. It is clear that some residents are using some of these community food activities to provide some food for themselves and their families, regardless of whether the activities have been designed to do so.

The Food for Thought Forum's *community food map*¹² lists all the community food initiatives that we are aware of in north Edinburgh. It contains community cafés, lunch clubs, community gardens, cooking groups, community meals and events as well as the food banks operating in the area. Unfortunately we don't have space to describe them all here. We are providing one case study to illustrate how community groups working together are providing dignified responses to food insecurity.

Referrals from GP surgeries and other local agencies, to the foodbanks and local food initiatives were also recognised as important by residents. Lunch clubs and cafes are, for some, the only reliable ways of getting hot, nutritious meals. There is a wealth of community gardens in the area which are also producing and sharing food.

Experiences in dignity

'You never feel right going to those places. You feel you can't provide for yourself. It's like you're begging. It's the feeling you get if you've not been brought up that way' RESIDENT

'I feel good because I get some food to eat but bad because I'm not buying food with my own money' RESIDENT

[They tell me] 'It took me half an hour to get the courage to come here' ... 'I've been sitting outside for an hour' WORKER

'They're nicer and more discreet; the food packs from there have better food in them, stuff you can make meals with. At other foodbanks you'll just get random stuff' RESIDENT



Foodbanks, as the quotes above illustrate, continue to be a place of last resort for people who are experiencing acute food insecurity. In some cases, they will only go if there is a risk of children going hungry. However, residents did tell us that the locally developed foodbank at Muirhouse community shop (as described in the case study) was a better choice.

'when times are hard they won't be refused hot food and drink when crisis hit' WORKER

'Going to the cooking club each week also helps as we get to have a meal together and take any extra food and ingredients home as well' RESIDENT

'we help at the community gardens. We grow vegetables and all the people that help do the work get to take vegetables home. All the people round here will gladly help themselves. You help grow and then you can take away. It feels less like freeloading. You feel you planted that and you helped' RESIDENT

Residents are telling us that initiatives that are for and by community members are easier and more comfortable to use; they feel more dignified. These initiatives are also providing food, and in a way that residents feel comfortable with, even though they may not have been designed to do this.

¹²A full list of the community food initiatives in north Edinburgh that PCHP is aware of can be found at www.foodforthoughtforum.org.uk

CASE STUDY 2

Communities connecting

Old Kirk and Muirhouse Church has held a small benevolent fund for many years. They use it to support people in crisis. This fund was available through a small number of Church volunteers. The fund is enhanced by food donations from the congregation. Food was kept at the Church, so support was available through the Church when it was open, or the individuals involved 'out of hours'.

Volunteers had been providing emergency help from their homes, but in the past few years, demand had become difficult to manage. Essentially, people in need would arrive at volunteers' homes and ask for what they needed. One volunteer said 'People were usually desperate by the time they got to us'. That there was no need to 'prove' that their need was genuine was important. The volunteers had also put a lot of thought into how to best use the fund and had extended the provision beyond food to include things like phone and electricity meter top-ups.

As the need increased the Church looked for alternatives, and when Tenants and Residents in Muirhouse (TRIM) opened the community shop, it felt like a natural progression to embed the food provision there.

Residents still don't need a referral to receive food from the foodbank in the shop. There is no stigma attached with going to the shop, as it's a popular place for community members to gather, shop, and find out more about what is going on. In addition, through their ongoing connections with the Old Kirk and Muirhouse Church, if people are in particular need they are also signposted to the Fund the Church holds. The shop maintains a list of 'helpful services' in the area and signposts residents. Residents can supplement what they get from the foodbank with affordable items from the shop.

During this study residents have clearly told us they feel more comfortable going to the community shop than other foodbanks.

The connections between activists from the Church and TRIM, plus their local knowledge and the sensitive approach they have all taken, is what has made this project work.

3 What should Pilton Community Health Project be doing in response to food insecurity in the future?

Pilton Community Health Project was very specifically exploring what support it could offer in the future. This question was directed at workers in community food initiatives in the area. 4 clear themes for the future arose.

1 Enabling collective action and voice

There was recognition of the value of a local community food network that enabled

- Practical support. This included issues like collective buying and storage of food for the use of local community initiatives to save time and money, sharing equipment and having volunteers who were willing to work across more than one project; a 'bank' of volunteers who were trained and supported. There was also some desire for shared learning.
- A 'voice' for local initiatives. The particular issue that came up was about how local groups access kitchens in public spaces and the suggestion that there needs to be a community kitchen in the area.

2 On-going support and training for volunteers with local community food initiatives

Many volunteers in the area have already taken advantage of training offered by PCHP, particularly food hygiene and first aid training. This was valued and should be continued and expanded to include a wider range of training like organic gardening, volunteer management etc.

3 Support to local initiatives to secure funding

Many initiatives identified that they needed more or more secure funding to continue. '[we're] running on donations, but it's not much'. Worker

4 Information sharing

There were two issues with this. One was about residents getting the information they needed to access all the support they needed and the other about sharing information about events and activities.

4 What messages should we send to decision makers?

1 Food is a human right

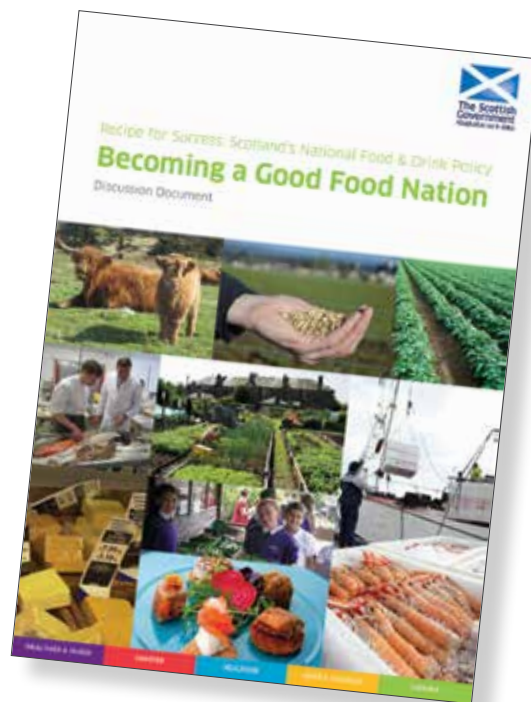
'We need to move away from the foodbanks. We need to see food as a fundamental human right' WORKER

'They need to realise that food poverty is a symptom of poverty, there's more that needs to be fixed than just the food.' RESIDENT

'We need to get into parliament to say what we feel, what we've been through. They need people like us in Parliament that are going to stick up for the poor.' RESIDENT

The residents, particularly, thought that the government, at all levels, should be doing more and that responsibility to alleviate food insecurity lay with them.

While foodbanks were often recognised as necessary safety net, they clearly had their limitations, and were not thought to be a long term, sustainable or dignified solution.



2 Employment and wages

'When my partner is working, there's enough food at home, but his work is very unstable, some months he doesn't have much work, then we struggle.' RESIDENT

'The government need to be able to force employers to take on people to work.' Resident

[They said] 'I never thought it could be me' WORKER

Many raised the issue of the lack of well-paid secure jobs in the area. There was some discussion about the barriers to work, including lack of childcare and support to find work. The second quote above refers to how difficult it is for people in the area to secure work and, for us, raises issues around invisible barriers to people obtaining work.

Workers are also telling us that there are an increasing number of families needing to resort to the foodbank despite at least one adult being in employment¹³.

3 Benefits

'We've had people who are told they're not fit for work and so cannot get JSA. Then they go for their medical and they're told that they are fit for work so they cannot get ESA.' Worker

'And when I tell them I'm dyslexic they just tell me if I can't do it myself, to get someone to help me. If I didn't have my partner, I'm on my own' Resident

'The rules used at the job centres are too stringent and there are a lot of injustices in the way people are treated' Worker

'My partner is self-employed, and one time broke his leg so couldn't work. We weren't entitled to any help so we were struggling.' Resident

A large number of issues were raised about benefits. Generally, there was a sense that the system should be easier to use, more flexible and more dignified. People thought that there should be more and better information available about what could be claimed from job centre staff and others. There were lots of comments about different benefits, what could be claimed and the barriers to claiming them.

¹³This is consistent with data from the Feeding Britain inquiry.
<https://feedingbritain.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/food-poverty-feeding-britain-final-2.pdf>

4 Housing

'It takes a long time to rehouse people. Temporary and B&B accommodation pose a lot of problems. Cooking facilities are not available and food cannot be heated up' WORKER

'If their kitchens are not well equipped or they have to cook just for one, they find it easier to buy ready meals. If you don't have a freezer you can't cook in bulk' WORKER

Housing issues are affecting people's ability to feed themselves in a number of ways. Firstly, rising costs mean that increasing proportions of income are being spent on rent rather than on food and we are seeing more people in temporary or poor housing with inadequate or completely missing cooking facilities. Secondly, there is a strong sense locally that any funding available for housing in the area is being spend on new housing, rather than on maintaining existing stock, including kitchens and bathrooms. Finally, many workers talk about residents who lacked basic equipment in their homes like cookers, fridges and freezers.

5 Supermarkets and excess food

'Reduce supermarket waste. Onus should be on the supermarkets to seek out people who need food' WORKER

'Supermarkets must be made to pay more to dispose of waste food. Then, they'll make more effort to seek out those who need the food' WORKER

'Supermarkets bin food should not be allowed and they should have an obligation to give it to whoever could benefit from it, in a dignified way, so people do not feel embarrassed.' RESIDENT



A few people raised the issue of waste food from supermarkets and how it is used. There was the feeling it should be the supermarkets' responsibility to ensure that it could be used by those who need it, and in a dignified manner.

6 Availability and affordability of fresh foods locally

'I don't feel so bad about spending money on fruit, but it's not good having to travel around looking for deals when the stuff falls off trees..... There are some places around, there's a shop in Stockbridge that's amazing for fruit and it's all really cheap.....I use it quite a lot; there are punnets of strawberries for 50p.' RESIDENT

'I have to go to the halal shops in Leith or Asda, Asda is the only supermarket selling halal meat....it was very difficult when I didn't have a car, transport is expensive and it was difficult with the kids.' RESIDENT

'I think for the new development in Muirhouse, there needs to be more shops with more locally grown produce.' RESIDENT

'A lack of shops in the local area means many residents are having to travel out of the area to do their shopping, this is particularly difficult for our older residents.' WORKER

Residents and workers are telling us that the lack of local shops selling affordable good quality fresh foods is still an issue. The issue seems to be amplified for particular groups; those without a car, older people and those with particular dietary needs.

7 Support and funding for local projects

'The government needs to put more money into community-grown projects' WORKER

'We provide food at some events. There's worry that if funding is cut, this will be the aspect that goes. But it is needed' WORKER

[a key challenge is] 'funding – lack of security.' WORKER

Community food initiatives are offering a more dignified ways for residents to get food, but need more secure funding and better recognition.

Discussion

It's about poverty and a right to food

Residents and workers in north Edinburgh tell us that government at all levels should be doing more to alleviate food insecurity. It's very clear that community food activities, including foodbanks, have a role to play in providing food to those experiencing food insecurity. However, PCHP is increasingly concerned that efforts to support community food 'providers' are moving responsibility¹⁴ for providing food or the means to buy it, from the state to individuals. For this reason PCHP believes the **Right to Food** should be enshrined in legislation.

To solve food insecurity everyone needs to have adequate income. While this issue remains the highest priority, we will not address it in this report other than to repeat our previous conclusions, below, and encourage decision makers to hear the messages from the community of north Edinburgh as detailed above.

'Local people and organisations are working extremely hard to overcome food insecurity and have the skills, willingness and ability to work together on this issue. However, we cannot end food insecurity without action from Government on the following issues

- Living wages
- Job creation and security
- Social security and the punitive sanctions regime
- Better recognition of the contribution that this local community makes toward improving its own food culture and access to affordable, fresh, healthy food and further support for this.
- The role of business in the provision of food.'

Conclusions, Good Food for All report 2014¹⁵



Mental health impact (and on services)

Through the interviews that we carried out, it's very clear that being in food insecurity has an impact on people's mental health. They feel judged, they feel shame. This shame can trigger negative self-images and beliefs of having less worth than others. They worry about if there will be enough money to feed the family until the next pay packet. They are continuously making decisions about what to buy and when and where it is cheapest. This additional anxiety will exacerbate any existing conditions, and in some cases, could be the cause of mental health issues¹⁶.

Our therapeutic colleagues at Pilton Community Health Project tell us that severe food insecurity is present for **most** of the people they are working with. It's often not possible to make progress with the therapeutic intervention while people's immediate worries are not addressed so workers will often have to stop their work to address these pressing needs, by, for example, making a referral to a food bank.

At a time when mental health services are stretched to breaking point it is imperative that this precious therapeutic time is used effectively for working with people's mental health.



¹⁴For further reading on this issue see *First world hunger revisited: Food charity or the right to food?* Edited by Graham Riches and Tiina Silvasti <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/spol.12246/full>, and *Thinking and acting outside the charitable food box: hunger and the right to food in rich societies* Graham Riches see <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09614524.2011.561295>

¹⁵<http://pchp.org.uk/resources/good-food-all-do-we-have-ingredients-well-fed-north-edinburgh-conference-report>

¹⁶For further reading see <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/early/2013/08/26/jn.113.178483.abstract> and also <http://proof.utoronto.ca/resources/fact-sheets/#health> for further reports on the impacts on health and health spending

Community food hubs

We welcome the ongoing discussion at Scottish Government level about what more dignified responses to food insecurity look like. We've heard the term 'community food hub' many times and want to explore what this means.

We believe that community food hubs need to be defined and brought to life by the communities that they serve.

In north Edinburgh, PCHP believes the Food for Thought Forum is already a good example of the community food hub idea. While spaces are important, the community food activity in north Edinburgh happens because people want it to. Residents have begged, borrowed and stolen¹⁶ the spaces they use for community food activities. The spaces aren't always perfect, they are not always available at the best times and the oven is NEVER big enough, but people make things happen because they care about each other and the food they eat. The commitment they offer to this work cannot be over-estimated.

While we don't measure the impact of all the community food activity¹⁷ in north Edinburgh, evaluation from the work we do, tells us that community food activities:

- Give people the opportunity to meet others and make friends¹⁸
- Encourage people to eat more healthily
- Provide opportunities for people to share and learn skills
- Help people think differently about food and the barriers to eating well

The Food for Thought Forum has a vision: *'We believe everyone in North Edinburgh should have access to a tasty, enjoyable, nutritious diet. We want food to be a central part of our thriving community, bringing people together to grow, bake, cook and eat.'*

'We want to see our community skilled and empowered to grow and cook good quality food for their families, friends and neighbours, and to see more local employment opportunities created in the production, distribution and preparation of the food we eat.'



This vision asserts that community food activities are a tool for building strong and prosperous communities, as well as feeding people. Much can be done to support this valuable community building, but it needs to be very clear that this work is voluntary and NOT put the responsibility of providing food for neighbours on the shoulders of community activists.

Building local food economies not only helps people get affordable, good quality food locally, but also builds communities and has the potential to offer some longer-term solutions for individuals in terms of work and incomes.

If it can be agreed that community food activities are valuable and important, we need to look at creative ways to support them.

We believe that The Community Empowerment Act offers some opportunities for a way forward through closer working between communities and local government that this should bring. Progress in north Edinburgh offers cause for optimism, however, in these times of austerity, we need to remain realistic about what can be achieved and how quickly. Other agencies also have a role to play in the development of community food hubs. These must include food suppliers and producers, as well as others who can provide resources, facilities and support.

¹⁶Poetic licence, nothing was stolen for the purposes of community food activities in north Edinburgh

¹⁷See case studies <http://pchp.org.uk/about/case-studies> and more information available on request. Community Food and Health Scotland has published extensively on the impact of community food activity see <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/scphrp-community-food-and-mental-health-March-2014.pdf> <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CFHS-from-the-ground-up.pdf> <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CFHS-Factsheet-Feb-2015.pdf>

¹⁸<http://pchp.org.uk/resources/everyone-can-cook-recipe-book>, <http://pchp.org.uk/resources/cook-and-taste-recipe-book>

Moving forward – what can be done to support a community food hub in north Edinburgh?

There is a number of things that could be done to enable this network and the activities within it to grow and blossom into a local food economy.

Community Development support

'PCHP can see the value of using a community development approach to support groups and individuals delivering community food work in the area. Indeed, some of the activists involved are supported by us, through mentoring and training, to deliver food activities. However, local community development services which could support the development and growth of community food initiatives have been decimated over the last 20 years. While the Community Empowerment Act and Community Learning and Development Regulations are welcome legal developments which should provide opportunity for the growth of services that build community capacity, in reality, community development remains an easy cut in times of austerity and reducing local authority funding. Projects such as PCHP are often bound by funding restrictions to deliver services that funders want rather than services that the community wish to develop. The principle of community led development has been diminished within the voluntary sector and is not particularly well understood by local government. It will be important moving forward that funders enable an element of flexibility and support for community led work. It is encouraging that the Big Lottery for example is recognising the importance of this and there are signs that local government in Edinburgh is beginning to shift in this direction through new priorities around community capacity building and asset development. This should be encouraged.

This research shows that people appreciate food initiatives that are small and local, it is therefore imperative that government and funders find ways to continue to support these kinds of projects. Small community based projects that could make a significant difference to food insecurity are sometimes invisible to government. Organisations like PCHP, through the Food for Thought Forum, could help shine a light on these community projects and channel resources.



In north Edinburgh PCHP would like to see more support to the Food for Thought Forum so it could further enable

- More effective support, delivery and co-ordination of community food initiatives
- Better support and training for activists delivering community food initiatives
- Better understanding of the barriers to eating well that residents in north Edinburgh face and potential solutions
- Money to be directed to small groups of individuals who are delivering valuable community food activities but have no desire to set up committees or bank accounts
- Better access to facilities
- A more credible voice in local community planning discussions
- Better visibility and wider networks with, for example, advice agencies.

Improving food supply

In the course of this study a number of issues have arisen around how residents access affordable food. The local authority, Scottish Government as well as local suppliers have a role to play in improving the situation for residents.

- This research has highlighted again the need for more food suppliers in the Muirhouse area. The new development there should provide an opportunity for more detailed exploration of what shops or other supply system would make it easier for residents to access the food they need at an affordable price. **PCHP recommends that this issue is included for discussion within the small area locality action plan for the Pilton area.**
- Local community initiatives are already using surplus provided by supermarkets and this is clearly valued and useful. However, there is a sense that it could be better distributed if there were more time to co-ordinate where the food could be best used. **PCHP recommends further discussion with supermarket providers, Fareshare and the Food for Thought forum.**
- Food supply in Scotland is dominated by the supermarket providers. Often they are providing the most affordable produce for individuals and this needs to be recognised. However, we believe there are a number of things that supermarkets should do to improve access and affordability to those in most need. These include:
 - Selling more food products loose i.e. to enable individuals to buy 1 egg
 - Build stores in identified food deserts, particularly if these are in areas of multiple deprivation
 - Provide more support to local initiatives that are distributing surplus food, by, for example, distributing food with delivery vehicles or channelling waste disposal savings to local groups to enable them resource their own transport

If supermarkets are not willing to undertake further actions on a voluntary basis, PCHP would suggest better regulation.



Removing barriers for community food activists

Local activists are frustrated by how difficult it is to access kitchens and other spaces in public buildings when they want to deliver community food activities. **We would all welcome an open discussion with the local authority about the easier use of schools and community centres.** A new community food facility that would enable more community food activity would be welcomed by some. **The new development in Muirhouse could provide an opportunity to develop a facility for community food activities and this should be explored with the Localities team in north Edinburgh.**

Through discussion with activists during the course of our work we are also aware of a fear from local activists who are in receipt of Benefits. The rules around **volunteering and receiving Benefits** need to be clearer and Benefits agency staff should explain these to anyone receiving Benefits. Fundamentally, we believe that anyone undertaking voluntary work should not feel at risk of being penalised by the Benefits agency for carrying out unpaid work. **The Department of Work and Pensions should provide clearer guidance on this issue to remove the 'fear factor'.**

Many of the groups we are working with don't have any paid staff and some are not even constituted. We find that they want to focus their limited time on the work they set out to do and enjoy. PCHP believes that residents who are volunteering their time should not be forced to join committees and open bank accounts in order to be able to access funds to carry out their activities. **There needs to be an open discussion about how money for more dignified responses to food insecurity can be delivered to small local groups.**

What Pilton Community Health Project WILL do

Listening to workers and residents over the past few months has further developed our understanding of the community food sector in north Edinburgh. PCHP is committed to providing ongoing support to the Food for Thought Forum network in north Edinburgh. As always, we will work with partner agencies locally and nationally to fulfil the following. Particularly we will:

- Continue to provide regular networking opportunities. These provide opportunities for activists to meet and share ideas. We explore common difficulties and their solutions. All kinds of spontaneous and beneficial connections occur.
- Continue to provide and develop training opportunities for community food activists and volunteers. We will offer support to local groups in recruiting food volunteers.
- Provide support to activists delivering community meals in north Edinburgh
- Further develop how PCHP involves activists and residents in planning and decision making
- Seek ongoing and additional funding

We feel strongly that we want to further develop the network; the individuals within it and the links between them. However, in order to do this we need to increase our own capacity or be allowed to use existing funding more flexibly. If we are able to secure ongoing funding we'd also like to:

- Develop the capacity of the network to feed into local and national strategy and policy development. PCHP believes strongly that residents in north Edinburgh have significant knowledge, experience and insight to share with policy makers. We are particularly keen to feed into the new locality structures and food policy within Scotland.
- Widen the network and explore how to work with advice agencies and others that could support those experiencing severe food insecurity e.g. social workers/advice workers.
- Further develop links with all food suppliers to co-ordinate the most affordable and effective means to supply community projects' needs.
- Develop links with other businesses to seek mutually beneficial relationships that strengthen the network and fulfil its vision.

We believe that the development of a recognised community led food hub will enable the Food for Thought forum's vision to become a reality. Our communities are 'hungry for change'.

CASE STUDY 3

Unintended outcomes

Sean Fitzharris^[2] runs MAD (Mums and Dads) cooking classes in north Edinburgh and is supported to do this by Pilton Community Health Project. He is also an active member of the community in north Edinburgh and we were delighted when he agreed to join our Food Advisory Group that has assisted in this study. He agreed to carry out 3 interviews as well as supporting us to meet with MAD (Mums and Dads) cooks. He went to Fidra court to discuss the bi-weekly community meal activists in the tower block run. He came back with a helpful interview. While he was there, he agreed to help them by doing their shopping in his car once a week.

[1] Women Supporting Women - <http://pchp.org.uk/projects/women-supporting-women>

[2] Find more of Sean's story here <http://pchp.org.uk/about/case-studies/men-making-meals>



Acknowledgements

Pilton Community Health Project would like to thank the following for their contributions that made this report possible.

All the community food activists and volunteers in north Edinburgh who inform our work and contribute immeasurably to the health and well-being of the community in north Edinburgh.

Local community groups that took part in this study

Special thanks to the residents who shared their difficult experiences with us. Thank you for trusting us.

Basics Bank at Granton Baptist Church

Chat Café

Cooking Club at Pilton Community Health Project

Fidra Court

Granton Community Gardeners' Café

Muirhouse and Old Kirk Lunch Club

MAD (Mums and Dads) Cooking

Food advisory group

Sean Fitzharris

Laura Munro

Alan Fisher

Sarah Johnson

Others

Jacqui MacDowell at Community Food and Health (Scotland)

Lesley Greenaway

All our colleagues at Pilton Community Health Project

This work was supported by the Scottish Government's Fair Food Transformation Fund.

Please cite this report as 'Hungry for Change' PCHP, Edinburgh, September 2017.

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