

Good Food for ALL

Do we have the ingredients for
a well-fed north Edinburgh?



Pilton
Community
Health
Project

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Executive Summary

On 1st December 2014 Pilton Community Health Project (PCHP) brought together 40 local residents and workers to discuss food poverty in the area and answer the question *'Do we have the ingredients for a well-fed north Edinburgh?'*

We know that there is a rise in food bank use in the area, and also a corresponding rise in voluntary activity to support people in the area to eat well (or, in some cases, at all). We wanted to bring people together to get a local perspective on what is going on, and to hear what local people wanted to change to help them and their neighbours eat well.

Therefore we structured the day to

- recognise and learn more about best practice at a local, city wide and national level
- hear more about local people's experiences of food poverty or working with people in food poverty
- hear what local people want to change to achieve a vision of a 'well-fed north Edinburgh'.

We learned

- Poverty and food poverty are intrinsically linked and therefore we need political action to reduce poverty. This includes making policies that create well paid secure jobs, reduce in-work poverty and introduce a fairer social security regime.
- Local people are feeling the effects of food poverty; those identified include feeling shame, being isolated, negative health effects and experiencing social stigma.
- Communities and local organisations are already doing all they can to tackle food poverty but many participants felt this was a sticking plaster and could mask failures in the welfare state. More recognition and support needs to be given to local projects, particularly those run by local people.
- Local people and organisations need to continue to improve how they work together to tackle food poverty.

So, do we have the ingredients for a well-fed north Edinburgh?

We do have

- skilled and able people who can support others to eat well
- good knowledge and practical skills
- local community groups and organisations with skills and knowledge
- good local infrastructure to come together to tackle these issues.

We are lacking

- sufficient household income for everyone to afford enough good food
- accessible, affordable, fresh food.

Local people and organisations are working extremely hard to overcome food poverty and we have the skills, willingness and abilities to work together on this issue. However, we cannot end food poverty 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 towards 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.

Pilton Community Health Project is committed to working with residents and organisations to achieve a vision of a well-fed north Edinburgh.

Introduction

Food poverty has been a significant issue in the North Edinburgh area and beyond over the last few decades.

More recently the issue has become highlighted again with the unprecedented rise in the numbers of people using food banks. Through PCHP's work delivering food activities¹ and the work of others active in the Food for Thought forum we know that food bank use is only the tip of the iceberg. Many other local residents use a range of coping strategies to feed themselves and their families and feel shame if they need to ask for help. Having to make difficult choices like whether to heat or eat certainly places making healthy choices further down the list of priorities.

Community initiatives to tackle food poverty

Local people have already taken initiative and are supporting each other to eat well through community groups. Examples include the Muirhouse Community Shop, the various community gardening groups in the area, lunch clubs, community cafes and efforts from local community members to start regular community meals.²

There are also 3 food banks operating in the area, the Trussell Trust, the Basics Bank and a new food bank through Muirhouse Community Shop.³

Most of this work is voluntary and unpaid, and support for these initiatives is in short supply.

National research

In Scotland the latest data shows large increases in emergency food aid by all providers. The Trussell Trust alone provided food aid to 71,428 individuals between April 2013 and April 2014 from its 47 food banks in Scotland. This represented a 400% increase on the previous year.⁴ The reasons consistently given by food aid providers and people having to turn to emergency food aid in all areas of the UK are now well known; benefit sanctions, delays to social security payments and low income are, by far, the main factors.

Economic Factors

Over the last decade, many contributing factors have all played their part in creating the current situation

- Since 2003, food prices have risen 47%, overall energy prices increased by 153.6% and average rent levels rose by 30.4%
- Over the same period, wage levels have not kept up with these increasing levels of inflation, rising by only 28%.
- There has also been a loss of high paying manufacturing jobs and an increase in large numbers of low paid jobs.

The general economic trends over this period are mirrored by household income spending levels on food, fuel and housing, with a combined proportional increase from 36% in 2003 to 40% in 2012. The impact among families with the lowest income levels was even greater, with an increase from 31% to 40%.⁵

All these factors and others have led to the huge increases in numbers of people struggling to make ends meet, and being left with no other option but to turn to emergency food aid.



On the day:

The outline of the day looked like this

- What is food poverty? A national perspective, human rights approach to food and the scale of the problem nationally
- What does food poverty look like to us? Small group discussions
- What's going on in north Edinburgh Projects from around north Edinburgh that alleviate aspects of food poverty tell their stories
- Lunch cooked by residents
- Broomhouse Health Strategy Group How a partnership approach in Broomhouse makes for best practice in alleviating food poverty
- Best Practice nationally – what makes a good food poverty intervention, drawing from research by the Poverty Alliance (Scotland)
- Our solutions small groups discussions to explore
 - What does a well fed north Edinburgh look like?
 - What resources do we have in north Edinburgh and surrounding area?
 - What else do we want/need?
 - How do we get to where we want to be?
 - Who is involved?

1 <http://pchp.org.uk/projects/food>

2 More info on these at www.foodforthoughtforum.org.uk

3 More info on these at www.foodforthoughtforum.org.uk

4 Trussell Trust 2014

5 All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom (2014) Feeding Britain, A Strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Setting the scene - what is food poverty?

A national perspective

Bill Gray, Programme Manager at Community Food and Health (Scotland) used Professor Liz Dowler's (University of Warwick) definition of food poverty to set the scene.

“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”

He highlighted that regular, permanent access to good food is a basic and fundamental human right. The right to food needs to be included in the Scottish Government's action plan for human rights as it develops.

Significant numbers of people are in crisis and are using food banks and this is widely depicted in the media.

Bill told us about the less widely publicised 8 out of 10 people who were worried about the price of food and the 4 out of 10 people who find the cost of food as a source of stress. These are people with chronic low income and food poverty. The vast majority of people in need, don't use food banks. The solution should not be just to help people through short term crisis, but to look at longer term solutions.

He also emphasised how important it is to recognise and celebrate the positive role food plays in our lives and in our communities.



What does food poverty look like to us?

We asked participants to discuss, in small groups, what they understood by food poverty and what it looked like to them.

Some of the images they recorded were disturbing.

An empty cupboard

A Morrison's trolley full of tins for the 'poor'

It's a huge increase in the number of people looking for the 'social welfare fund' at the North office

Reduced choices

It has no face publicly

Feed the children –do without themselves

Guilt of asking for help from friends and family –and feeling they'd exhausted that help

Here are the key issues that were discussed:

It's about poverty

People talked about a 'poverty premium'; how people on low-incomes are forced to spend an increasing percentage of their incomes on fuel, housing and good quality food. It's not possible to separate out food poverty from the 'rest of' poverty and associated issues e.g. poor housing, cost of fuel, social isolation, not having access to basic white goods e.g. cookers and fridges, issues of addiction, etc. People talked about 'extreme budgeting', needing to know how much the food cost and the fuel costs to cook it.

Job security and pay

People talked about how zero hour contracts, low pay and temporary work make it difficult for people to budget and make ends meet. 'Why isn't the minimum wage being challenged?'





Social security

Benefits issues, particularly the sanctions regime, were identified as a key cause of people being thrown into crisis situations where they needed to visit food banks.

Welfare state?

Many questioned where responsibility for people who are in food poverty lies. Large numbers of volunteers are working in the area to alleviate the worst situations, through emergency food aid *'foodbanks are growing in numbers'* and initiatives that seek to provide food security, but many felt that this was the State's responsibility. Some felt pressure to donate to foodbanks when local schools are collecting. *'Foodbanks didn't create the problem'. 'It's framed as charity, when it's a political issue'. 'The government are relinquishing responsibility'*

Effects on health

Many spoke about how food poverty was affecting their health *'[there's] not time to care about health – never ending vicious cycle (work, feeding the kids...).'* People talked about the health effects of a lack of nutritious food, or feeling lethargic.

Social effects

Many talked about children being fed while 'parents skip meals' but still there are 'kids going to school without food'. There was discussion about how it affected people's ability to live a normal life: *'not inviting folk for fear of 'wasting' money' 'bad tempered' 'lack of concentration of children at school'*.

One person wondered

'Can underfed people live and work effectively and happily?'

Stigma

People talked about feeling guilt and shame and being worried. 'people leave seeking help until absolutely necessary'. They were embarrassed to ask repeatedly to borrow money from friends or family *'feeling they'd exhausted that help'. 'People blame themselves' but some recognised wider social determinants.'* ... stigmatisation is a massive part of it – the physical effects of not eating can't really be separated from the social discrimination of class in the country'.

Price and quality of food

People were really aware of higher cost of good quality and/or fresh food; and also its unavailability in the area. *'Poor quality food just to fill up kids – not fresh/healthy'. 'have to choose quantity over quality – high fat high salt foods provide more calories per pence'. 'Big packs'* in shops mean people can't buy in smaller, more affordable, quantities. There was also a discussion about Monsanto's control of the genetics of seeds.

Food education

There was an acknowledgement that not everyone in the area has the skills and knowledge to cook well and affordably. This included knowing where food comes from and how to store food so as not to waste it. This meant some were *'resorting to ready meals instead of cooking yourself'*

What's going on in north Edinburgh: a sample of local solutions

Granton Community Gardeners ⁶

Tom Kirby spoke about the work of the community led and run group. Over the past 4 years the group has opened at least 4 garden plots in the area. The land is used by local residents to grow fruit and vegetables, with over 2 tonnes being produced in the last season. This provides free fruit and vegetables for all those that work on the plots. The group is growing all the time because of the strong social bonds it creates. This means they can also run community meals and more recently have started the Gardeners' café. Surplus produce is used in the café. It operates twice a week and is a place for people to meet, eat and find out what is going on in the area. Food is free, but everyone is encouraged to contribute in kind. The social impact of this volunteer work is at least as important as the meal some really need.

Fresh Start

Angus Maclean spoke about the work the charity does to help individuals and families that have been homeless get established in their new home. This includes providing

- essential items to set up their home, such as white goods and cooking utensils
- social support
- practical support through painting/decorating
- support to develop home maintenance skills
- training and employment opportunities.

Due to the increase in people living in food poverty they have been running volunteer led cooking groups to provide basic cooking skills and healthy eating knowledge. They are also providing white goods to people who request them in order to have facilities to cook and store food (4 homes per week on average).

North West Food Bank (Trussell Trust)

Volunteer team leaders, May Dunn and Barbara Sangster, from the North West Edinburgh Food Bank talked about their experience of working in the area. They found the main reasons people are forced to use emergency food aid

are benefit sanctions, payment problems and on-going low incomes. The tensions of doing the work were apparent.

'I feel like I have people sitting on each shoulder. One telling me we have to keep running the food bank because people are starving and one on the other shoulder telling me that the more we do the less the state will do.'

They also spoke about other help they try to offer people, such as signposting to other agencies that could help with some of their longer term problems.

Best practice nationally

After a delicious, affordable, nutritious lunch provided by members of Granton Community Gardeners, we looked a best practice from further afield.

Broomhouse Health Strategy Group

The food bank in Broomhouse is generally regarded in the City as illustrating best practice with respect to emergency food provision. The partnership approach clearly has many advantages for people who need to use the foodbank.

Lucy Aitcheson, from Broomhouse Health Strategy Group (BHSG), spoke about how the group work with the foodbank which is run by the one-stop shop advice shop, next door. BHSG runs a fruit and vegetable shop to which is able to supply fresh fruit and vegetables for food packs which foodbank staff distribute. The foodbank can also refer in to cooking classes which are run in the same location by BHSG.

The combination of the advice that the one-stop shop are able to provide and the community health support coming from BHSG means that people using the foodbank get all they need in one place.

Lucy told us the foodbank staff say recipients of food aid often find it difficult to ask for other support. But, gradually, as they get to know staff and what is on offer they can find further solutions to the problems that have brought them to the foodbank.

She was also keen to emphasise the social elements of the work they do, including street parties.

Poverty Alliance research

Mary-Anne Macleod has been conducting research that aims

- To understand the roles which emergency food aid providers are playing and how they connect with each other and with other services
- To help emergency food aid providers to better link clients to mainstream services
- To contribute to addressing the growth of food poverty in Scotland

She was very clear about the impact that food poverty was having on people, using quotes to let them speak for themselves.

"I would rather crawl on my hands and knees over broken glass than go to a food bank." Darren

"like it's your fault, like I didn't deserve it and I was stressed about going in the first place and they asked me five hundred questions." Caroline

"They were a bit run off their feet, it was quite overcrowded they were kind of letting too many people in, so they were, there was a big roomful, we were all jammed up, sitting on seats drinking tea and coffee, you could hardly breathe, there were people practically sitting on your leg. I kind of thought that was a bit messed up, in that way." Emergency food aid recipient, Glasgow

The research revealed that the emotional and practical support were as important as the food. Those emergency food providers with advice agencies on site who were able to offer support and advocacy immediately were particularly valued. The research highlighted that friendship and kindness help raise people's dignity and self-worth. It is important to break down the 'them and us' barriers.



"The food banks, in my opinion is a sticking plaster, it's the underlying cause that needs to be dealt with"

Providers of emergency food stated the need to deal with the causes of food poverty, and that the emergency provision was necessary, but not enough to deal with the problem.

"The food banks, in my opinion is a sticking plaster, it's the underlying cause that needs to be dealt with. We talk about what needs to be done, well we are giving people food, why can't other people give them the means to feed themselves – i.e. don't cut their money, or give them nothing to live on" NHS staff, Edinburgh

"the food is part of that but it should also be much more about accessing the mentoring and advocacy support to help them actually deal with the problem which the hunger stems from." Emergency food aid provider, Aberdeen

Key messages for policy makers from the Poverty Alliance

- Develop a human rights based approach to food.
- Address in-work poverty: increased minimum wage, promotion of Living Wage, increase benefits
- Review punitive sanctions regime
- Develop plans for a preventative approach to food poverty

6 <https://www.facebook.com/grantoncommunitygardeners>

Our solutions: what needs to happen in north Edinburgh?

We spent the rest of our time in small group discussions looking at what we want to happen in north Edinburgh. We started by looking at what we want to achieve; moved on to exploring what resources we already have, and ended by discussing what needs to change.

Each group discussed the following questions.

What does a well-fed north Edinburgh look like?

Participants generally agreed that the vision developed by members of the Food for Thought Forum was useful

'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.'

'Our members are working towards aspects of this shared vision, and we believe that by working together we are stronger and better able to contribute to the flourishing of North Edinburgh.'

What resources do we have in north Edinburgh and surrounding area?

Local organisations and networks and links between them

The area has good networks, including the Food for Thought Forum⁷, and links between community groups and other organisations. These are clearly recognised as important to achieving a vision of a well-fed north Edinburgh. Some of the groups mentioned include food banks, Muirhouse Community Shop, Pilton Community Health Project, community gardens, lunch clubs, community cafes, Granton Information Centre, Community councils, North Edinburgh News, schools and colleges.

People

We have a wealth of paid and unpaid workers in the area with time and enthusiasm to change things and achieve a well-fed north Edinburgh.

Infrastructure support

For example funding, training, networks or the skills, knowledge and networks to know how to get these.

Skills and knowledge

Projects have good understanding of food poverty on the ground. Most groups also said that local people have skills and knowledge to provide good food for themselves and their families. PCHP often sees local people sharing their cooking skills with neighbours and/or volunteering with food related projects.

Access to land

Access to land, new housing and therefore new communities moving in and good public transport. One group also spoke about the collective income of the area.

What else do we want/need to achieve a well-fed north Edinburgh?

- We agreed that we need a clear aim and vision, and accompanying strategy to tackle food poverty in the area.
- All the groups spoke about a need for community campaigns or a better collective voice on this issue to influence changes in policy. Using a human-rights approach may be helpful. People wanted control to be more local and government policies to support better jobs and pay (living wage), reduce in work poverty and changes in the sanctions regime. The role of business in food provision was also raised.
- We need better support and recognition for the contribution local people and organisations make to improving food culture, and supporting people to eat well. This needs to happen in the media (changing the blame culture) and through long term resourcing and support for local work, particularly that carried out by volunteers and community led organisations.



- There was talk of better use of the Food for Thought Forum to become a collective voice, and also optimise current resources, share best practice and link things together. There need to be better links to Council services and further exploration into land that could be used to grow food locally.
- Many groups spoke about providing more accessible and affordable good food, either through local shops, a fruit and vegetable van, community cafes. The need for realistic cooking programmes was also raised.

‘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.’

Who needs to be involved

The Food for Thought forum was identified as key to bringing together the right people to work on this issue. The group should include

- Local residents, particularly those experiencing food poverty
- Community groups
- Others who can support e.g. local schools with land that could be used for food production

The group needs to reach out to those with power and/or knowledge to support their work, including

- Those with knowledge of the current research on food poverty in Scotland
- Politicians
- Supermarkets
- The media



Conclusion

Do we have the ingredients for a well-fed north Edinburgh?

After a day of informing ourselves and discussion can we answer this question?

We learned

- Poverty and food poverty are intrinsically linked and therefore we need political action to reduce poverty. This includes making policies that create well paid secure jobs, reduce in-work poverty and zero-hour contracts and introduce a fairer social security regime.
- Local people are feeling the effects of food poverty; those identified include feeling shame, being isolated, negative health effects and experiencing social stigma.
- Communities and local organisations are already doing all they can to tackle food poverty but many participants felt this was a sticking plaster and could mask failures in the welfare state. More recognition and support needs to be given to local projects, particularly those run by local people.
- Local people and organisations need to continue to improve how they work together to tackle food poverty.

So, do we have the ingredients for a well-fed north Edinburgh?

We do have

- skilled and able people who can support others to eat well
- good knowledge and practical skills
- local community groups and organisations with skills and knowledge
- good local infrastructure to come together to tackle these issues.

We are lacking

- sufficient household income for everyone to afford enough good food
- accessible, affordable, fresh food.



Local people and organisations are working extremely hard to overcome food poverty and have the skills, willingness and abilities to work together on this issue. However, we cannot end food poverty 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 towards 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.

Pilton Community Health Project is committed to working with residents and organisations to achieve a vision of a well-fed north Edinburgh.



Useful links

Pilton Community Health Project

For information on what PCHP does and to download this report www.pchp.org.uk

Food for Thought Forum

For links to community food projects in north Edinburgh
www.foodforthoughtforum.org.uk

Poverty Alliance Scotland

For further information on Mary Anne Mcleod's research
www.povertyalliance.org/news_pubs/press_releases/foodpoverty_research

Food Aid Scotland

For useful links for those providing emergency food aid www.foodaidscotland.org

Community Food and Health Scotland

For support and information for community food projects in Scotland
www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk

Trussell Trust

For more information on food poverty in the UK
www.trusselltrust.org/stats

Participants List

NAME	ORGANISATION
Andrew	Strada Resident
Anita Aggarwal	Pilton Community Health Project
Angus Maclean	Fresh start
Ann Stevenson	North Edinburgh Arts Centre Garden
Barbara Robertson	Resident
Barbara Sangster	North West Food bank
Bill Gray	Community Food and Health (Scotland)
Chris Clyne	Changeworks
Clare Symonds	Pilton Community Health Project
Dagmara Lukowiec	Edinburgh Community Food
Darla	Food Project
Dave Pickering	North Edinburgh News
Diane Devlin	Public Health Practitioner
Donald McDonald	Granton Community Council
Ed Wolbers	Granton Community Gardeners
Emma Witney	Edible Edinburgh
Fiona Henderson	Craigroyston Community High School (pupil)
Gabriella Popa	Resident
Israel Salinas	Resident
Jane Oliver	Community Food and Health (Scotland)
Joe Jones	Pilton Community Health Project
Julie Smith	Timebank
Kirsty Duff	Pilton Equalities Project
Lucy Aitcheson	Broomhouse Health Strategy group
Mandy Rudden	North Office Business manager
Mariana Forsyth	Granton Community Gardeners
Mary-Ann Macleod	Poverty Alliance Scotland
May Dunn	North West food bank
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Natasha Org	Pilton Equalities Project
Nathalie Nogues	Granton Community Gardeners
Nicoletta Primo	Student coalition against poverty
Pat Able	Resident
Peter Faassen de Heer	Public health division, Scottish Government
Razia	Granton Community Gardeners
Sandrine Sienche	Feast
Shabana Diori	Resident
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Tom Kirby	Granton Community Gardeners
Tracy McGillivray	Health Promotion, NHS Lothian
Valla Moodie	North Edinburgh Arts Centre
Willie Black	Resident



Acknowledgements

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All participants

The **team of facilitators** who helped us out on the day.

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