

# Brighton & Hove Food Partnership Media Statement



## Food Poverty

The following has been compiled by Emily O'Brien, Food Partnership Project Manager. Emily is available for interview and additional comment.

### **Key messages**

There has been an increase in food poverty in Brighton & Hove, with the number of food banks rising from two to ten. Food poverty is not just about money but can be about access to shops or cooking skills or equipment. We have a list of resources that can help at [www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice](http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice)

We work with local food banks to ensure that when people visit one of our local food banks, alongside their food parcel they receive the support or advice which will help to solve the problems that sent them there in the first place.

Our response to food poverty should be about more than food banks. At the heart of our food strategy lies a commitment to ensure that everyone in the city is able to access healthy, fresh and sustainably produced food.

### **Frequently asked questions:**

*Is food poverty increasing in Brighton & Hove?*

Yes. In 2013 the number of food banks in the city increased from 2 to 10. At our food banks networking meetings, food banks consistently report an increase in demand. We also talk regularly to housing and advice workers who report that they are coming across increasing numbers of people experiencing food poverty

*Why does food poverty matter?*

Poor diet plays a large role in ill health including poor mental health. Poor diet can result in malnutrition. Conversely a diet of cheap but unhealthy food can also lead to obesity. Diet related ill health the NHS in Brighton & Hove over £78 million pounds in 2010.<sup>1</sup> Food poverty can also contribute to low birth weight babies; childhood mortality; dental problems; trips and falls in older people; low educational attainment; bullying; poor concentration; difficulty maintaining a job, antisocial behaviour and crime.

*Where can I donate to food banks?*

If you would like to donate to food banks please do so through local non-profit organisation Fareshare, who collect food – including surplus food from supermarkets which would otherwise go to landfill - and distribute it around to city to food banks and many other community projects. They have collection points in main Coop supermarkets and some council offices. Fareshare need cash even more than food and you can donate through their website <http://www.faresharebrightonandhove.org.uk/>

### *Where is my nearest food bank?*

There are now around 10 food banks spread throughout the city. Nearly all the food banks in the city need a referral – you can't just turn up at them. Our website includes a list of food banks and also information about access or referral information. There is also information about alternative sources of support for people experiencing food poverty

### *Aren't food banks full of 'scroungers' who have big TV sets at home but just want free food?*

Some national media coverage has painted a picture of food bank recipients that we don't recognise locally. We work closely with many of the food banks in the city and are confident that whilst there are always a small minority of people who will try to abuse any system, the vast majority of people accessing emergency food are in genuine need. All the food banks in the city have systems in place – mostly needing a referral from an advice agency or similar trusted organisation – which ensures that help is going to those who need it most. We hear far more often about people who are ashamed to visit a food bank than we do about people abusing them.

### *What is Brighton & Hove Food Partnership doing to reduce food poverty?*

The food partnership thinks it is wrong that in the seventh richest country in the world, we are seeing an increase in food poverty.

Many of 'answers' to food poverty lie outside of our control locally as they concern issues such as wage levels, and benefits levels, sanctions and caps. Locally we

- Work with food banks and other emergency food providers
- Keep a webpage which lists the support and resources available to people in the city who are experiencing food poverty
- Offer training in basic cookery skills, and 'eating well on a budget' training and advice
- Deliver food poverty awareness training to advice and housing workers, and other frontline workers and volunteers in the city
- Support anti poverty initiatives such as the Living Wage campaign
- Work to understand the changing picture locally and to share that information with decision makers in the city

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<sup>i</sup> See *Spade to Spoon: Digging Deeper, a food strategy and action plan for Brighton & Hove*  
<http://www.bhfood.org.uk/food-strategy>