



**Voluntary Action Lewisham**

Supporting local charities ■ Creating stronger communities

# PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE

Tony Nickson Director, VAL

Sustain Webinar

3 March 2016

# Food Poverty

“The explosion in food poverty and the use of food banks is a national disgrace, and **undermines the UK’s commitment to ensuring that all its citizens have access to food** – one of the most basic of all human rights”

*Below the Breadline*

*2014*



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# Health & Wellbeing

- The adverse changes of circumstances had taken a severe toll on people's physical and mental wellbeing.
- The number of primary and secondary diagnoses of malnutrition in England rose from 3,161 in 2008-09 to 5,499 last year

*National Inquiry 2014*

# Children at risk

“Large numbers of children are fed by food banks in London. Many children in our schools arrive hungry.

The survey conducted for this report shows that over 95% of teachers who responded said children in their schools regularly went without breakfast.”

Over half said this was because families could not afford food. These children’s health, educational attainment and life chances are threatened by hunger.

This is shameful and is completely unacceptable.”

***Fiona Twycross – London Assembly Member – Zero Hunger London, March 2013***



# The Lewisham Experience

**Putting Food On The Table  
Understanding Food Poverty:  
Exploring Food Bank Use  
In Lewisham**



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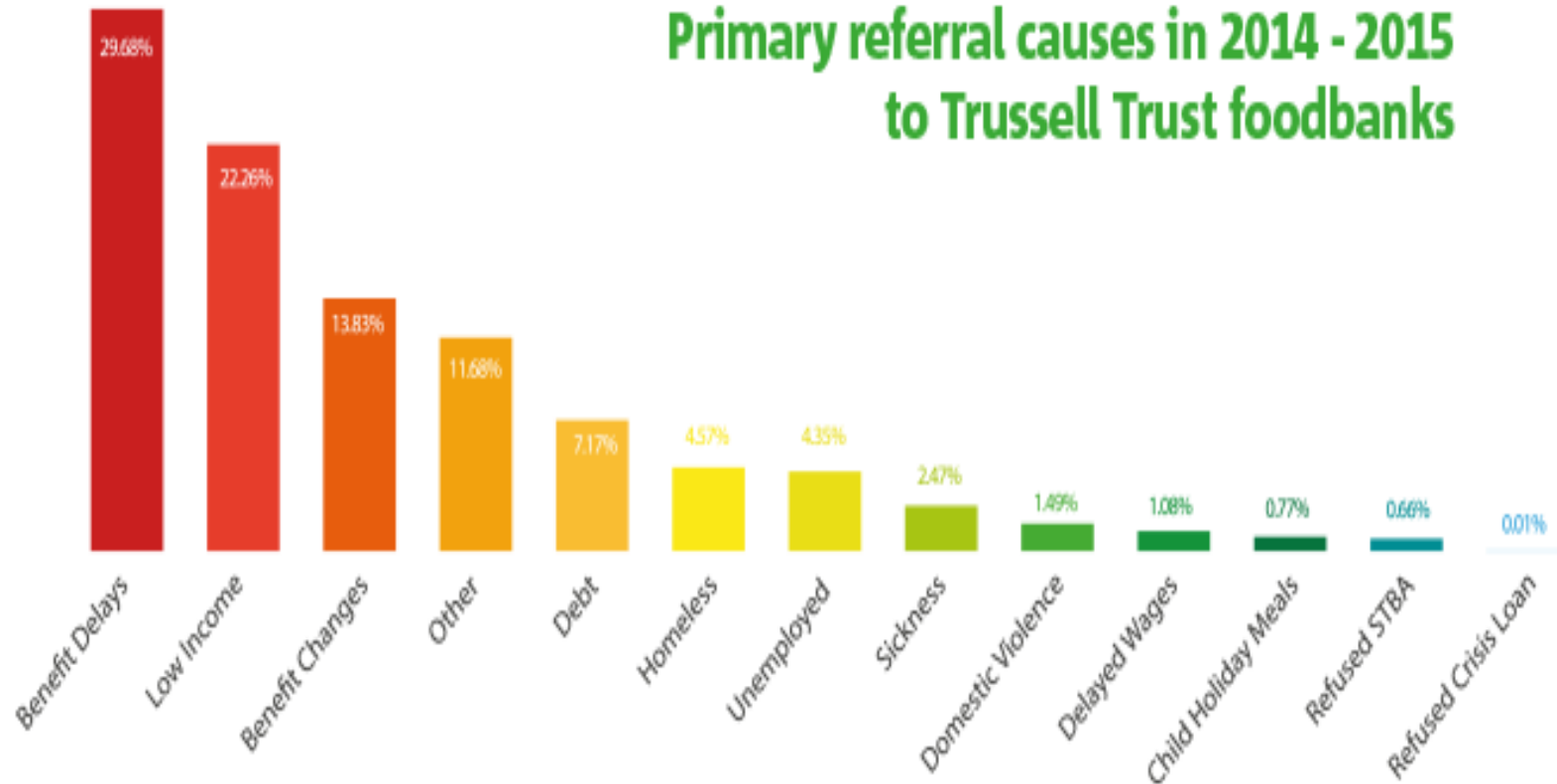
**2014**



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# Main Referral Causes

Primary referral causes in 2014 - 2015  
to Trussell Trust foodbanks



# Money problems

*“[they]...sanctioned my money...I have a 10 year old .....  
What happened was.. I had a medical appointment... I phoned  
in to cancel... they said ‘that’s fine...they’ll send me a new one.*

*What they did was stop my benefits ... they stopped [benefits]  
the same day that the doctor’s surgery diagnosed that I have  
extreme joint pain.*

*food bank user in Lewisham*

# No 'type'

*“A whole range of people use the bank including those previously wealthy, for example self-employed people who have been unable to work for a while and have reached the bottom of their savings. Other examples are people from the refugee centre and job centre”*

*food bank worker in Lewisham*



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# Public Health Concerns

## Obesity

**Children** – identified at risk of obesity

- 1 in 10 children in Reception year (aged 4-5 years)
- 1 in four children in Year 6 (aged 10-11 years)

**Adults** – excess weight (overweight or obese)

- Nearly two thirds of adults
- 45% of pregnant women at their booking appointment

## Malnutrition

- 30% of adults admitted to care homes or hospitals are malnourished

## Food poverty

- Estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 children in Lewisham sometimes or often go to bed hungry due to a lack of food or have had to skip meals as there is not enough food to eat.
- Not all eligible families benefiting from the National Healthy Start scheme (value at least £900/family )

## Food waste

- Average family could save £700 per year by reducing food waste in their own homes



Lewisham – some of the challenges



# Bringing People Together

- VAL and Goldsmith's University of London – small scale scoping paper
- Public Health research
- VAL, Goldsmith's and Lewisham Public Health: Health and Wellbeing Board endorsement
- GCDA, Public Health, and VAL – leading to...



# Food Summit



# Sustainable Food Cities

- Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public
- Tackling food poverty and increasing access to affordable food
- Building community knowledge, skills and resources relevant to food and food matters
- Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy
- Transforming catering and food procurement
- Reducing food waste and the ecological footprint of the food economy

# Food Partnership

- Working group established
- Second 'summit' event looked at
  - Sustainable Food Cities approach
  - Findings and recommendations of *Beyond the Food Bank – London Food Poverty Profile*
  - An initial plan based on the 6 SFC themes
- Lewisham's new 'Food Partnership' inaugurated

# What have we learned so far?

- Better understanding of what we're already doing
  - Unicef Baby Friendly
  - Living Wage Borough
- Raised questions about how work can be co-ordinated better
- Partnership already linking activity
  - Healthy Start Vouchers – Food Banks
- A Plan! – First steps





# Challenges and Learning

- Addressing 'poverty' is complex - food poverty is immediate/visible (food banks)
  - Yet the response is holistic
- Establishing common vision – public health, frontline support, social justice activism
- SFC framework adaptable to local needs
- Focus – wide range of activity already, but still poverty, linking, co-ordinating, assessing impact

# Some Thoughts

- Leadership – maintaining momentum, minimal resources, ‘core group’ commitment
- Build relationships – friends bring friends
- 7<sup>th</sup> richest country...
  - ...lets it's children go hungry
- Frustration – Morale...
  - ...the long haul
- Local action – and more

