

LAMBETH AND WANDSWORTH FOOD POVERTY REPORT

2019/2020



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HUNGRY FOR CHANGE



Introduction

Aims of report

Throughout our time spent at Be Enriched, weeks were spent observing the work taking place in community canteens across Elephant and Castle, Tooting and Battersea. Across all canteens it became evident the level of dependency many have on services such as these for community support as well as access to nutritional meals, demonstrating the high demand and lack of access to affordable, nutritious food throughout these communities.

Having observed this, research was undertaken to determine why these barriers to accessing affordable, nutritious food exist, as well as the steps that could be taken to reduce this. Initially, in order to get a better understanding of the issues occurring and their prevalence, secondary research was conducted regarding how to define food poverty and its causes such as; accessibility, availability, affordability and awareness of how to cook nutritional meals (Sustain, 2020¹). Leading on from this, in consideration of the time frame given, a narrowed approach was taken focusing on one key theme deemed as most vital. In this case, it was determined that availability of transport, including cost of transport, capacity and frequency were key limiting factors in the availability and access of good quality foods as there is a significant research gap concerning the effects of transport on access to nutritional and affordable food. It will be argued throughout this report that improvements to public transport are inextricably linked to the access and availability of fresh food, particularly in areas with high levels of vulnerable residents. This initial thesis will be supported by the analysis of current transport modes and the availability of fresh affordable produce. This will be achieved through qualitative research in the form of a survey for key stakeholders in Lambeth and Wandsworth, with hopes of identifying 'food deserts' throughout both boroughs.

The findings from this report will provide local councils and governments with initial findings to inform future research and strategies to combat food poverty and improve the lives of those suffering throughout both Lambeth and Wandsworth. In a time in which poverty and deprivation in the UK is concentrated in cities, this research into 2 major boroughs of London is crucial².

The following report outlines our secondary research regarding distinctions between food insecurity and food poverty, the causes of food poverty and its varying levels, as well as the social determinants of health, looking at the UK as a whole as well as London specifically. The report also includes analysis from our primary research, demonstrating what can be understood from it as well as the limitations for our research. The report concludes with a summary of our findings and recommendations for improvement and potential policy interventions will be given.

¹ https://www.sustainweb.org/foodaccess/what_leads_to_food_poverty/

² <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42383299.pdf> (pp15)

Food insecurity vs food poverty: definitions

In order to analyse the prevalence of food poverty in Lambeth and Wandsworth, it is first vital to ensure there is a mutual understanding of the concept of food poverty in its entirety. Many pre-existing documents and reports often use the terms food poverty and food insecurity interchangeably, stimulating controversy. However, after extensive research, it has been concluded that within this report that whilst food poverty and food insecurity have different meanings, food insecurity is still a significant factor contributing to food poverty and it is thus essential to understand the relationship between food insecurity and food poverty when exploring and measuring the extent of food poverty³, and not to exclude the term food insecurity from this research. Thus, for the purposes of this report the following definitions have been adopted and applied.

Food insecurity:

'when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life'⁴

Food poverty:

'the inability to afford, or have access to, food to make up a healthy diet'

In sum, food poverty with the influence of food insecurity, encompasses the availability of food throughout communities as well as its affordability and can lead to heavy reliance on friends and family, neighbours and community initiatives or local governments⁵. Food insecurity can still exist without the influence of food poverty however, food poverty cannot exist without food insecurity⁶.

Causes of food poverty

As inferred previously, food poverty cannot be traced to one individual factor or cause, it can be influenced by economic, cultural and social factors⁷.

Coe: 'food poverty does not simply occur due to a lack of money but also develops as a result of a number of other factors, such as; lack of knowledge, skills or equipment to prepare healthy foods'⁸.



Figure 2: A diagram from the Food and Agricultural Organisation indicating the relationship between the economy and food poverty.

³ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/fundamental-causes/poverty/food-poverty>

⁴ <https://www.sustinweb.org/foodpoverty/whatisfoodpoverty/>

⁵ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/fundamental-causes/poverty/food-poverty>

⁶ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42383299.pdf> (pp4)

⁷ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42383299.pdf> (pp20)

⁸ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42383299.pdf>

Figure 2 illustrates how the cycle of poverty can be perpetuated by food insecurity, leading to poor health and development and consequently low economic output. Subsequently, those of a low economic status are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of food poverty and insecurity.

Summary of other factors affecting food poverty:

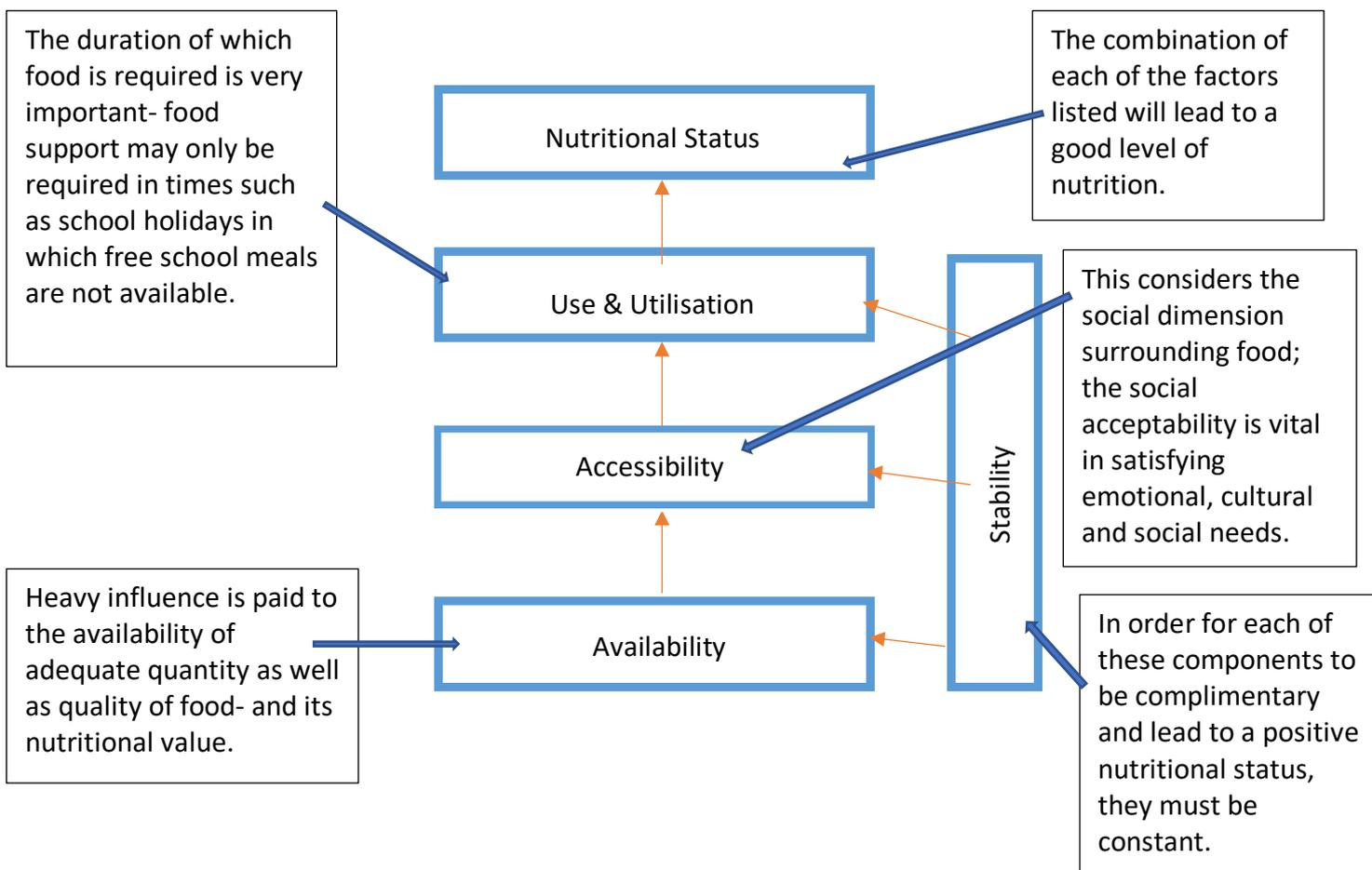


Figure 3: Diagram produced by the Food and Agricultural Organisation, highlighting the concept that a plethora of factors must come together in order to secure a good nutritional status and prevent food poverty within a community.

Levels of food poverty

It is vital to note there is no definite boundary to experiencing food poverty and being free from food poverty; there are varying levels of food poverty. The fluid nature of food poverty can be

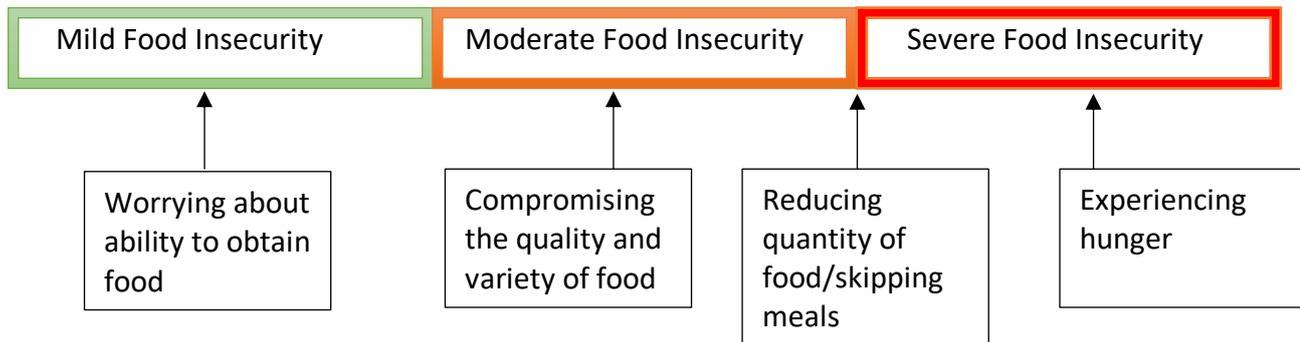


Figure 4: Diagram illustrating the scale of food poverty that exists throughout communities, adapted from the Greenwich Food Poverty report, 2017.

Different approaches are required in order to effectively combat different levels of food poverty in the short and long term, ranging from crisis prevention to long-term solutions.

THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH:

The social determinants of health provide an additional lens to view food insecurity, by taking socio-economic, cultural, political, commercial and environmental factors into account. These factors shape the conditions in which people live in, adding nuance to the experience of food poverty and insecurity.

According to the Health Foundation, the definition of a healthy person is 'someone with the opportunity for meaningful work, secure housing, stable relationships, high self-esteem and healthy behaviours.'⁸ This definition demonstrates the importance of a strong social environment to health, which is therefore related to the experience of food insecurity in the United Kingdom. For example, as identified by Hernandez & Blazer social variables such as those stated can amplify risks to infection, 'the adoption of risky or health-promoting behaviours' and have significant impacts on the functioning of the immune system (2006⁹). The inability thus to participate in meaningful work and be financially stable can have adverse effects on the food you can afford and subsequently the habits you adopt, and the health consequences therein.

According to the Office for National Statistics, 48% of adults aged between 21-24 earned less than the independently set living wage of £8.75 for those working outside of London and £10.20 in London¹⁰. The repercussions of these figures are translated into the growing number of people living in poverty in the UK. A lack of access to affordable, healthy food is a key determinant of health. Low affordability may preclude individuals from having a balanced diet, therefore increasing the risk of chronic disease or illness. Data suggests that it costs three times as much to obtain the required energy from healthy food in comparison to unhealthy food.¹¹ This lack of affordability, coupled with media messaging – only 1.2% of advertisement funding is allocated to promoting vegetables compared to 22% on confectionery and unhealthy foods leads to the

⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK19929/>

¹⁰ <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/issues/work/london-living-wage/>

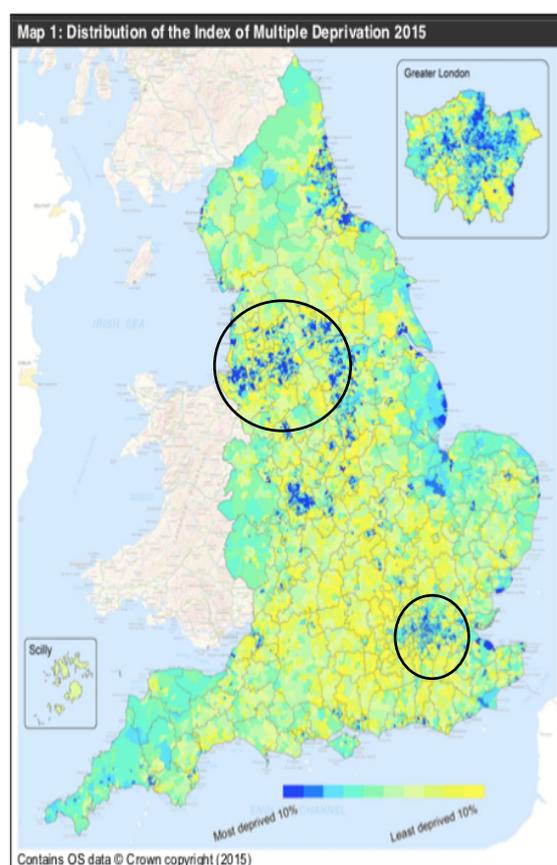
¹¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/news/food-and-diet/healthy-foods-expensive-claim-is-unrealistic/>

overconsumption of unhealthy or junk foods.⁹ This report will analyse the impact of the complex interplay of the above factors surrounding food insecurity in the UK.

Food poverty: A national scale

Evidence suggests that deprivation exists throughout England, however, higher rates of deprivation coincide with large urban areas. These areas include London and regions North West England. Furthermore, it is difficult to present a holistic view of food poverty in England due to the lack of a singly unifying scale to collate information. Using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation provides a helpful tool to measure food poverty as they consider 37 different indicators which cover 7 domains of deprivation and combine them to produce the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015¹².

In a national context, the least and most deprived areas in England have remained the same since reports in 2004,¹³ due to minimal movement of neighbourhoods between deciles at the extremes of the distribution. Food poverty and insecurity are steadily worsening, with 400,000 children not having access to fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day, despite 96% of adults viewing healthy foods as a necessity for children¹⁴.



Despite Cornwall not being among the 20 most deprived local authorities, there are huge disparities within these regions in relation to food poverty.

There is a concentration of deprivation in large urban areas including London and areas in the North West of England.

Figure 4; Distribution of the Index of Multiple Deprivation

¹² The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 Statistical Release

¹³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835115/IoD2019_Statistical_Release.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-adult-necessities-uk-2012>

Leading on from the data presented in figure 4, a report averaging data from 2015 to 2017 estimated that 2.2 million people in the UK were severely food insecure¹⁵. This is the highest reported level in Europe and means that the UK constitutes 20% of all severely food insecure people in Europe.¹⁶ The data clearly demonstrate that food poverty in the UK is worsening; between 1st April and 30th September 2017, Trussell Trust provided 586,907 three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis; compared to 519,342 during the same period in 2016, indicating a 13% increase.¹⁷ In addition to this, the Trussell Trust state that there was a 5146% increase in emergency food parcels distributed between 2008 and 2018. Furthermore,

London exhibits the third highest amount of distribution of emergency food supplies in the UK. This increase in need is due to various factors including, but not limited to; growing income inequalities, rising financial pressures and an increasing cost of living. This is illustrated by the cuts to family welfare as a percentage of the overall GDP, for example, the proportion spent on the budget for "Family and Children" Welfare has fallen to a half of its 2010 levels. Food poverty in the UK is quickly becoming a nation-wide issue, with increasing pressure placed on local councils and the government to create greater provisions for those in need.

With this in mind, 22% of the UK adult population was living in poverty in 2012, with a further 10% vulnerable to poverty, meaning they were not yet deprived but had a significantly low income compared to the majority of the population and so were at risk of falling into poverty long term. Significantly, the number of people identified as falling below minimum living standards doubled since 1983, with more children in 2012 leading impoverished and restricted lives compared to their peers in 1999. These stark statistics are further emphasized by data from the Trussell Trust, highlighting the distribution of emergency food aid across the UK and Northern Ireland, showing it as a nation-wide issue.

Food Poverty London

In a time of increasing austerity, the government throughout London attempted to create 'a London living wage' to reflect the expenses of living in London encouraging employers to pay employees a minimum of £10.55/hour. It is argued that if citizens are paid this rate then they will have sufficient funds to afford essential items for themselves and their families, however the important fact to note with the introduction of this ideology, is that it is a choice of companies employers - it is not compulsory nor enforced by the government.¹⁸ As a direct consequence of this, the take up of the living wage by companies throughout London was slow, with a significant proportion of the workforce still in a category described as 'low paid'. Whilst 23,000 employees are said to have benefitted from the proposed scheme, the number of employees in London earning below 60% of the median wage has increased from 4.8 million employees in 2012 to 5.7 million in 2014,¹⁹ indicating that nearly 1 million more people are likely to face difficulties meeting their basic needs. With this in mind, households with an income of less than £15,860 would need to spend approximately 42% of their disposable income to meet their dietary needs.

For a large number of families this is not feasible. Whilst unemployment levels have decreased from 430,000 individuals in 2011 to 280,000 in 2016, the guarantee of work is still not enough to

¹⁵ <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-adult-necessities-uk-2012>

¹⁶ <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/pse-research/attitudes-adult-necessities-uk-2012>

¹⁷ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2017/11/07/foodbank-demand-soars-across-uk/>

¹⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/london-living-wage>

¹⁹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/irj.12132>

provide financial security, with the 58% of individuals living in poverty coming from working families - the highest the figure has ever been.²⁰.

In combination with rising levels of poverty and lack of coverage of financial costs from employment, housing costs equally play a vital role in the prevalence of poverty throughout London. For example, the trust for London²¹ state that private rented properties within London are more than twice the average for the rest of England, with the cheapest two-bedroom home at the very bottom of the property ladder pricing at £1,250 per calendar month, in comparison to £500 for the rest of England. In addition, the amount of social housing in the last 5 years has dramatically increased by 26% throughout London, in comparison to 19% across England. Subsequently, the number of children in London living in social housing and in poverty have increased by 40,000 giving a total of 290,000. Although there has been an increase in social housing, it does not guarantee that this housing is affordable, and more often than not, it is not leading to families seeking cheap alternative options for food, such as fast food and ready meals.

The above findings are emphasised by research carried out by the London Food Strategy report,²² which reveals that 4 million adults and children in London are currently at risk of going hungry, with a 394% increase in visits to foodbanks across London between 2011-2013. In the current economic climate, families and adults alike are unable to afford food, with the limited amount of food within their budget typically being low priced fast food, subsequently leading to a 19% increase in the number of people admitted to hospital with malnutrition within the same period of 2011-2013. These effects are often felt most prominently by adults within families of young children, with 33% of adults in London skipping meals to feed their children. As a result it is clear, that food poverty and income as well as the social determinants of health therein are all inextricably linked, with food poverty becoming increasingly prominent throughout society.

Our survey

From our time spent volunteering at the canteens, we were able to gain qualitative evidence through speaking to people about their experiences with food insecurity, either personally experienced or through others. Areas in Wandsworth such as Roehampton repeatedly arose in conversation surrounding poor transport links to areas with affordable supermarkets. Residents reported a level of isolation in this region who were unable to access shopping centres comparable to those in other Greater London boroughs such as Croydon and Merton. It then became evident that the availability of sufficient public transport impacts the access of residents to sources of healthy, affordable food produce. If there is in turn a shortage of such infrastructure, it is expected that a higher level of food insecurity would be present. In view of these qualitative claims, this research has chosen to focus on a more precise area of public transport and distance from healthy food suppliers such as supermarkets. In the future, it would have been beneficial to extend the list of suppliers to include local produce found in markets and sustainable organisations, in order to create a more accurate image of the spending patterns across Lambeth and Wandsworth.

The survey questions attempt to gain insight into the demography of Lambeth and Wandsworth. Transport is inextricably linked to the existence of poverty, as coined by the spatial mismatch and entrapment theory.²³ This theory asserts the fact that spatial barriers are exacerbated by financial

²⁰ <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/news/27-londoners-poverty/>

²¹ <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/news/27-londoners-poverty/>

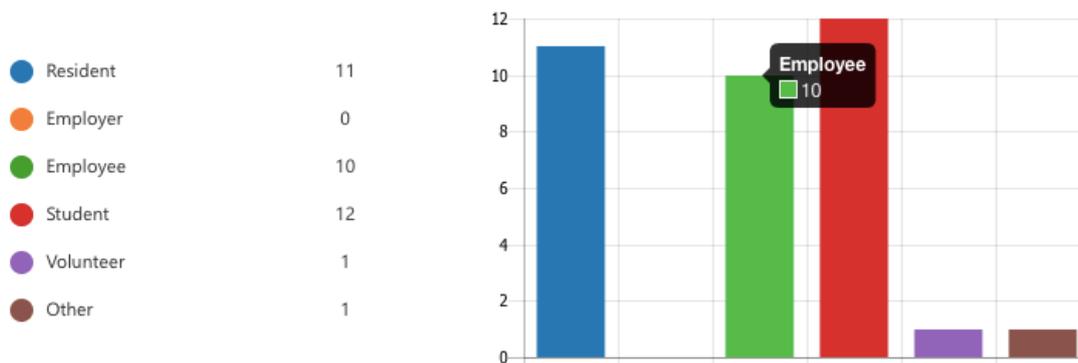
²² The London Food Strategy, Greater London Authority, 2018

²³ Christine Jocoy and Vincent Del Casino, (2010) *Homelessness, Travel Behaviour and the Politics of Transportation mobilities in Long Beach, California*, California State University: Long Beach),

factors such as income, thus citizens who are on the lower end of the income spectrum are generally more likely to live in areas with more affordable housing. However, these areas are often poorly connected via transport. This in turn makes it increasingly difficult to access supermarkets and well-paid jobs, highlighting the three-fold effect of jobs, transport and spatial location. The questions throughout the survey allow for understanding of the ways in which transport can affect the type of shops individuals utilise, and the subsequent effects this has therein on the amount of their individual income per month they can expect to spend on groceries. Subsequently, this survey builds on preceding research, aiming to further exemplify the above interrelated issues.

1. Thinking about one thing you do in Wandsworth or Lambeth, are you a...

[More Details](#)



2. What is the first part of the postcode for the above activity?

[More Details](#)

35
Responses

Latest Responses

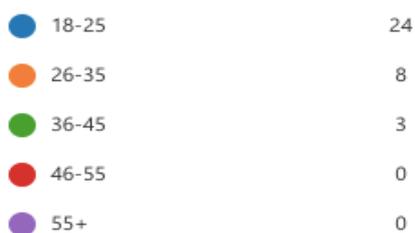
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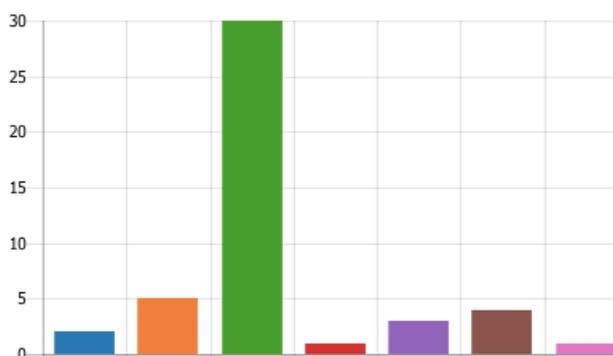
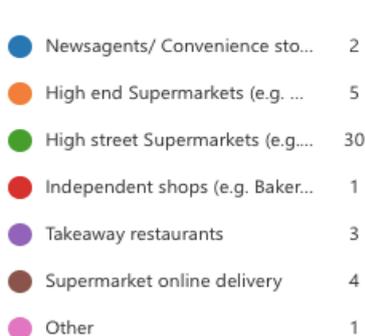
3. How old are you?

[More Details](#)



4. Where do you normally buy your day to day food?

[More Details](#)



5. As a proportion of your monthly income, which percentage best constitutes your expenditure on food?

[More Details](#)

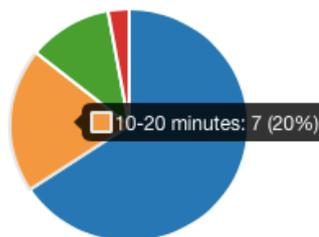
Less than 10%	10
20-40%	24
50% and Over	1



6. How long does it take you to get to the shops from the postcode you told us about?

[More Details](#)

Less than 10 minutes	23
10-20 minutes	7
20-30 minutes	4
Other	1



7. What is your main mode of transport to the shops?

[More Details](#)

Walking	26
Cycling	0
Public Transport	4
Driving	4
Other	1



8. As a proportion of your monthly income, which percentage best constitutes your expenditure on transport?

[More Details](#)

Less than 10%	12
20-40%	19
50% and Over	3



9. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, how would you rate the frequency of bus routes around the postcode you told us about?

[More Details](#)

35
Responses

4.31
Average Number

10. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, how would you rate the frequency of trains from your nearest station to the postcode you told us about?

[More Details](#)

35
Responses

4.26
Average Number

11. Do you find that there is a lack of availability with seating on your main mode of transport?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	16
● No	17
● N/A	2



12. How far does the existence of good transport links affect your ability to access healthy food? (1=No impact 5= Huge impact)

[More Details](#)

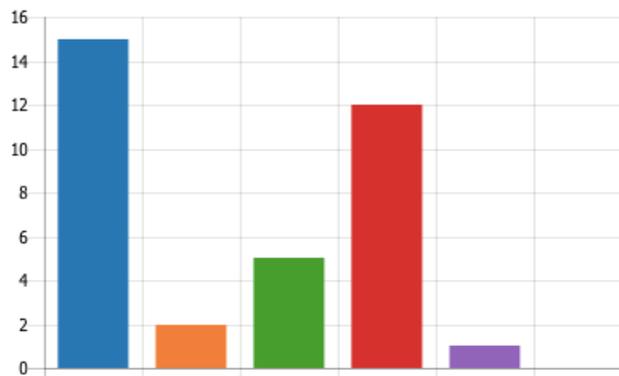
35
Responses

2.17
Average Number

13. Which of these best describes your ethnic group?

[More Details](#)

● White	15
● Mixed	2
● Asian or Asian British	5
● Black or Black British	12
● Prefer not to say	1
● Other	0



Analysis:

As illustrated throughout 'the aims of the report' section above, this objective of this report is to illustrate that transport and its impact on access to affordable and nutritious food are a key issue in the existence of food poverty. This research defines food poverty as the inability to afford, or have access to, food to make up a healthy diet. Thus, if individuals are spending more than 50% of their average monthly income on grocery expenses or have to travel more than 20-30 minutes to the shop, as indicated by questions five and six, it could be assumed that these individuals are experiencing some level of food poverty.

As a result of this, primary research, in the form of a survey has been delivered. The survey has been completed by a relatively large range of ages, with students aged 18-25 being the most popular demographic.

The respondents of this survey were generally impressed with the research that is being carried out and were a great source of help in promoting the survey across different professional platforms such as LinkedIn. The survey was completed electronically to avoid difficulties in extracting the results, however, due to its sharing via online channels, this inadvertently excluded elderly demographics and those who are on lower incomes from taking part in the survey. It is interesting to observe the racial split with the majority of respondents identifying themselves as white, in accordance to census data. However, over half of the respondents were non-white, and this more closely represents the diversity present in Wandsworth and Lambeth.

From this survey, we have been able to gain a clearer idea of the current availability of food sources in Wandsworth and Lambeth. However, the sample size collected for this survey does not have an adequate amount of data to analyse. As a result, it has been difficult to identify clear trends and anomalies within this qualitative research.

The results show a high proportion of students, which is to be expected, particularly with the postcodes that are associated with King's College London. We therefore anticipated to see a larger proportion of food being recorded as sourced from newsagents and convenience stores due to the local availability surrounding the university. Instead, the overwhelming majority of respondents have selected High Street Supermarkets as the main source of their day to day food. This demographic split is largely due to the fact that the survey was electronically distributed among the research team's networks. As a result, there is a lack of representation of deprived groups who may not have access to the internet in order to complete the survey. In the future, it would prove useful to make the survey more accessible by providing electronic devices on which respondents can complete the survey, or a paper format which can be shared among the canteens, schools and other channels in the public sector.

In retrospect, it would have been useful to distinguish between High Street Supermarkets and their 'local' equivalent due to differing prices and availability of fresh food produce. The initial aim of the survey was to identify areas of food deficit, yet it suggests that there are in fact areas of food surplus at the peak of Wandsworth. A proportion of 66% of respondents reported that the shops were within a 10-minute walk. This provides an explanation for the results given to question 12 which have an average rating of 2.17 as to the impact of good transport links affecting the ability to access healthy food. It may therefore be beneficial to send this survey to a different demographic of people, as currently, this demographic consists of predominantly students and young working professionals. Thus expanding to include, both students, young working professionals, working age adults in their 46+ and also those who are 65+ would allow for the collation of data from a wider range of respondents, whilst creating a holistic view of the current issues with food availability in areas of food 'deserts.' It would also prove to be beneficial to ask a larger set of specific questions to help discern whether the respondents are residents in food deserts.

Suggestions for the future

From this research it is hard to conclude whether the individuals surveyed are affected to some extent by food poverty, because as previously mentioned, many factors contribute to food poverty and thus it is hard to make a definitive statement on the basis of one factor- transport. However, it may be concluded that in this demographic alone, those 18-45, there does not seem to be a causal relationship between transport availability and access to healthy foods. For example, the majority of those surveyed do not travel farther than 20 minutes to get to the shop, and the majority of individuals surveyed spend only 20-40% of their average monthly income on food,

with a significant proportion spending less than 10%. Subsequently, this indicates that there is not a level of dependency on public transport to access healthy foods. In the future it would be beneficial to use a bigger sample size which is more representative of Lambeth and Wandsworth. Furthermore, a higher amount of vulnerable people would need to be involved in order to have an accurate image of the link between transport and access to healthy foods. In order to gain contact with such groups of vulnerable people, housing associations would provide a good means to distribute the survey. This research would also benefit from having questions which are more specific in order to possess a stronger relevance to the research aims. In terms of analysing the impact of food poverty on a larger scale, in relation to transport and access to food, further research is needed.

This research suggests that a multi-level approach is necessary to successfully provide tools for the future, including both government bodies such as local councils, as well as those directly affected and the charities and businesses that support them. This multi-level proposal would involve a grassroots approach with focus groups being run in local communities in collaboration with the London Councils for Lambeth and Wandsworth. To that end, there would therefore be greater scope to develop a closer analysis into the affected groups.