



Children's Future Food Inquiry

Children in Scotland Response

30 November 2018

About us

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do. By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland. We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

As a key partner in the Future Food Inquiry, Children in Scotland is pleased to be able to contribute. We will share our knowledge and examples of our project work where we know progress can and has been made.

1. Whether there is enough food to eat and what is preventing them from accessing enough food to meet their needs

The UK is one of the biggest economies in the world; in theory there should be enough food for all children, young people and families. Indeed, a 2016-17 House of Commons report suggested that 10 million tonnes of food and drinks are wasted every year¹. Children in Scotland are clear that the main issue for families struggling to get enough food to eat is due to access relating to poverty.

A wide range of evidence from academic research, civil society and government statistics clearly show that many children, young people and families are struggling to access the food they require. A lack of access to

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/429/429.pdf>

food is driving up use of food banks; in 2017-18 The Trussell Trust gave out 170'625 emergency 3 day food parcels². The UK statistics suggest that this was a 13% increase on the year before³. NHS Health Scotland has argued that the existence of emergency food aid provision reflects the growth of episodic and chronic severe food poverty⁴.

This is clear evidence of the level of food insecurity in Scotland and across the UK. Food insecurity has been defined by Dowler et al as “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so”⁵.

Children in Scotland believes that the key driver of food insecurity is poverty. UK Government figures show there were 4.1 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2016-17⁶. Almost one in four (230,000) of Scotland’s children are officially recognised as living in poverty, a level significantly higher than in many other European countries⁷. Economic modelling by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) forecasts a very significant increase in child poverty, with up to 100,000 more children living in poverty in Scotland in 2020 compared to 2012⁸.

This suggests that unless clear, sustained action is taken, food insecurity will increase and many children, young people and families will continue to struggle to access enough food.

We know the hugely damaging impact not having access to enough food has on children, young people and their families. Evidence has shown that many families skip meals and are going hungry due to a lack of access to food.

This can be a particularly acute problem during the summer holidays for families in receipt of free school meals. Research carried out by Kellogg's UK in 2015 found that 41% of parents have skipped a meal in the holidays to feed a child⁹.

² <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

³ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

⁴ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/2222/food-poverty.pdf>

⁵ Dowler, E., Turner, S. and Dobson, B. (2001) Poverty Bites: food, health and poor families. CPAG: London

⁶ [Households Below Average Income](#), Statistics on the number and percentage of people living in low income households for financial years 1994/95 to 2016/17, Tables 4a and 4b. Department for Work and Pensions, 2018.

⁷ Latest 2016/17 Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland figures, CH 15, table showing: relative poverty in Scottish households with children (AHC) 1994/5 to 2016/17, www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/03/3017/downloads (See Associated tables)

⁸ <https://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/comm121.pdf>

⁹ Kellogg's (2015) Isolation and hunger: the reality of school holidays for struggling families, Manchester: Kellogg's, P.2

The risk for families in the summer holiday period has been specifically highlighted in the recent paper 'Advice for the Scottish Government on Addressing Poverty During School Holidays'¹⁰.

The Poverty and Inequality Commission urges us to remember that school holidays make up a quarter of a year, bringing additional costs and challenges for families as a number of key supports for children and families are not provided, such as free school meals, breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, after-school activities and guidance/pastoral support within school¹¹.

Evidence has also begun to show that food insecurity over the summer holidays can have a negative impact on the learning of children and young people. This can further entrench the disadvantage that those experiencing food insecurity are already likely to face in education and have a range of impacts throughout their life.

Children in Scotland has been involved in projects which attempt to tackle this issue at community level. Our Food, Families, Futures (FFF) project aims to provide an answer to the food insecurity many families experience across the summer months. The project provides community-driven play and learning-based activities over the summer holiday period, alongside food for those attending. This ensures a dignified and non-stigmatising approach that meets the wider holistic needs of children, young people and their families. We will provide more detail about the FFF model in response to Q3.

2. Whether they are getting good quality, healthy food and what is preventing them accessing this

Much of our response to Q1 focussed on food insecurity and the fact that many children, young people and families do not have access to food. Food insecurity is also known to be a driver of accessing good quality, healthy food.

It is worth identifying that access to good quality, healthy food is an issue for children and young people in Scotland regardless of their background. The problems we face in this area are stark. 65% of people in Scotland are either overweight or obese, with 28.8% of children at risk of being overweight or becoming obese¹². Diet is obviously a key factor in this. Indeed, 2012 Growing Up in Scotland data showed the impact of consumption of unhealthy food at the earliest stages of life was linked to experience of overweight and obesity in children and young people¹³.

¹⁰ <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Poverty-and-Inequality-Commission-advice-on-poverty-in-school-holidays.pdf>

¹¹ <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Poverty-and-Inequality-Commission-advice-on-poverty-in-school-holidays.pdf>

¹² Brown L, Christie S, Gill V et al The Scottish Health Survey 2014 Volume 1 Main Report 2015

¹³ http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14308/13/00392688_Redacted.pdf

We also know this a key contributing factor in the health issues that Scotland faces in relation to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Children and young people who experience obesity are likely to continue to experience this into adulthood and are at risk of a variety of side effects such as coronary heart disease or strokes¹⁴. Around half a million people in Scotland are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes¹⁵.

However, experience of this is clearly socially patterned and driven by the scale of poverty and inequality in Scotland. Research shows that those living in the areas experiencing highest levels of deprivation tend to have the poorest health outcomes in life¹⁶. It is clear therefore that income, or lack thereof, is a key driver in the health people experience.

This disparity in health also plays out among children and young people. Children and young people from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to enter school overweight or obese¹⁷. This has also been linked to a range of poorer health outcomes later in life such as experience of being obese or overweight later in life and a experiencing a higher mortality risk¹⁸.

The State of Children's Health Report found that consumption of an unhealthy diet was particularly prevalent among children and young people from the most deprived backgrounds who entered school obese and overweight¹⁹. Children in Scotland believes this food consumption is intrinsically connected to children, young people and their families' social position and their experience of deprivation. We ultimately see the solutions in preventing food poverty and tackling deprivation rather than encouraging behaviour change as a sole response.

Evidence has shown that directly shown the link between food poverty and consumption of a poorer quality diet. families experiencing food insecurity are more likely to consume fewer fruit and vegetables²⁰. They are also more likely to have an inconsistent diet that relies on unhealthy products²¹²². Qualitative research has identified that when experiencing food insecurity, parents feel less able to provide their children with a nutritionally balanced diet²³. This highlights the clear impact of poverty on the choices that families need to make about food.

¹⁴ http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/HealthyWeight_SectA.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Health/TrendObesity>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/long-term-monitoring-health-inequalities-december-2017/pages/5/>

¹⁷ https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-05/state_of_child_health_2017report_updated_29.05.18.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-05/state_of_child_health_2017report_updated_29.05.18.pdf

¹⁹ https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-05/state_of_child_health_2017report_updated_29.05.18.pdf

²⁰ Gorton, D., Bullen, C., & Mhurchu, C.N. (2010) Environmental influences on food security in high income countries, *Nutrition Reviews*, 68, 1-29

²¹ <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/14914/1/14914.pdf>

²² Drewnowski, A., Eichelsdoerfer, P. (2009) The Mediterranean Diet: does it have to cost more? *Public Health Nutrition*, 12,

²³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195666316300046>

Indeed, the food environment that families find themselves in encourages this. Evidence provided by the Future Food Inquiry suggests that healthy food is three times more expensive than foods that are high in salt, fat and sugar. For families struggling for money, this will encourage over-consumption of these types of food products.

We also know that place is a key driver of the diet that children and young people from deprived backgrounds are likely to experience. Evidence from Scotland shows that areas of high deprivation have higher densities of fast food outlets. This clearly gives greater access to foods that are high in salt, fat and sugar²⁴²⁵²⁶. This is another indicator of the influence that inequalities have on the type of food children, young people and their families have access to. We expect that across the rest of the UK food outlets of this kind have a similar impact on families.

There are also issues with the advertising and marketing of unhealthy food products to children and young people. Promotions change shopping patterns and encourage buying more of a particular type of product²⁷. According to Obesity Action Scotland price promotions (together with advertising) are the most salient forms of marketing to young people and most promotions involve foods high in sugar, salt and fat (including sugary drinks)²⁸.

The Future Food Inquiry has also highlighted that a high proportion of advertising of unhealthy produce in the UK occurs when families are likely to be watching TV together. Given the impact we know these adverts can have we feel this is likely to be a pervasive influence on the purchasing habits of families.

3. Which policies and programmes are working to improve children's access to sufficient good quality healthy food, and which are not working well?

In 2016 Children in Scotland launched Food, Families, Futures (FFF), our multi-award-winning project addressing food insecurity and its links with education and health, focused on areas of deprivation in Scotland. FFF was created specifically in response to schools we work with reporting that many families in their communities face particular difficulties accessing sufficient good quality healthy food during holiday periods. As we have highlighted previously in this response, this issue can be particularly acute for families in receipt of free school meals and can have a clear knock-on effect on the health, wellbeing and learning of those who experience it.

²⁴ <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1479-5868-6-52>

²⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16242594>

²⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17189662>

²⁷ Tedstone A, Targett V, Allen R Sugar reduction. The evidence for action. 2015.

²⁸ <http://www.obesityactionscotland.org/briefings/> Obesity And Price Promotions

The focus of FFF is on community-driven, dignified and sustainable approaches to tackling holiday hunger. The clubs aim to provide a healthy nutritious meal experienced within a wider play and learning environment for children, young people and families. The clubs also involve parents and offer opportunities for family learning and interaction. Some clubs also specifically focus on building confidence among parents about how to prepare and cook nutritious, tasty and affordable meals for and with their families. The provision of food sits alongside these other opportunities in an effort to tackle the issue at hand, but in a non-stigmatising fashion.

The overarching aims of FFF are:

- To improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families
- To create a supportive environment for parents/carers to bond, listen and engage with their children's learning and play
- To provide the opportunity for children and adult members of families to gain skills in subjects related to health and employability (food preparation for example)
- To engage the wider community (i.e. local organisations, businesses and local groups) to support activities which develop life skills, knowledge and potential employment routes for people
- To make better use of community assets out with the school term
- Foster stronger relationships within the community in such a way the programme continues.

The club programmes are designed for each unique community in line with local needs and priorities. However, there are common features to all of them to meet needs of children and families:

- Central to each day of the programme is the provision of a nutritious meal (meeting high nutritional standards) prepared in the school with the involvement of children and parents
- A range of physical, sport and creative activities building on the strengths of school facilities and other local amenities and resources
- Encouragement for parents to attend as volunteers and/or as participants in skills development opportunities and other information and advice sessions
- An aim to proactively engage with the wider community to contribute to the programme, including children and young people (and their parents) involved in the design of each school community's activity programme and an essential part of the evaluation process.

We have already seen clear benefits to the local communities who have been involved in FFF. Successes include the growing numbers of children and families attending and enjoying the clubs and preparing/eating a daily nutritious meals. From our evaluations, children have told us they also benefit by having plenty of fun and lots to do. They strengthen existing and make

new friendships. They look forward to and enjoy eating with friends. Parents say they feel relief that the pressure of the holidays has been removed and that their children are happy and having fun.

It is also worth identifying that recent academic research has shown the value of approaches that use a model similar to that of FFF. A review by Hillier Brown et al of individual, community and societal interventions to tackle childhood obesity found that community capacity-building approaches are vital for improving health, particularly if they can embed behaviours and principles²⁹.

The Scottish Government also recently published a Healthier Future: Scotland's Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan. The delivery plan lays out aims to half childhood obesity in Scotland by 2030³⁰. We appreciate the Scottish Government's ambition in this area and are pleased to see efforts to tackle many of the health and diet related issues that Scotland faces. We are particularly encouraged by the upcoming consultation on restricting advertising and marketing of foods that are high in salt, fat and sugar. Children in Scotland will be encouraging stricter regulations in both areas.

However, more urgent action is needed in relation to a range of actions across the delivery plan to ensure success in improving the food environment for children and young people. The delivery plan could also be more clearly linked to aims laid out in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan published this year to articulate how poverty reduction targets will link to improving health and diet. Children in Scotland would also encourage similar action by governments across the UK within the parameters we have outlined.

The Scottish Government has also committed to a Good Food Nation Bill. The proposed Bill presents an opportunity for Scotland to meet the food needs of the whole country and support them to access good quality, healthy foods at all times. Children in Scotland is concerned with delays in this bringing forward this legislation. We encourage the Future Food Inquiry to engage with the Scottish Government to call for urgency with the legislation. We would also support engagement with legislators across the four nations, to encourage action such as the Good Food Nation Bill.

4. What new policies and programmes should be considered?

Children in Scotland has advocated for a wide range of new policy responses to create a better food environment for children and young people. As we have articulated, many of the issues relating to food, diet and health are socially patterned. We agree with recent work provided by NHS Health Scotland that food poverty is preventable. It is a consequence of the socioeconomic and environmental context in which people live³¹.

²⁹ <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-14-834>

³⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/healthier-future-scotlands-diet-healthy-weight-delivery-plan/>

³¹ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/2222/food-poverty.pdf>

Given the social drivers that underpin food poverty, we believe there is a need to start with upstream policy interventions that tackle the wider social determinants of health and prevent food poverty from occurring in the first place. We know that there is support for these measures from recent work by NHS Health Scotland and a recent report on 'Dignity: Ending Hunger Together in Scotland' report, we are also aware of a wealth of academic research that supports such interventions³²³³. These upstream interventions should then be supported by downstream policies that support children, young people and their families directly.

Our calls cover a wide range of policy areas that we have traditionally targeted at the Scottish Government. We would also urge the UK Government to take on board similar policies to tackle many of the issues children, young people and families face related to food.

Children in Scotland feels that children, young people and families should have a Right to Food enshrined in policy, legislation and practice. This right should be embedded at Scottish and UK level. We believe it should be underpinned by Nourish's three key principles of a rights-based approach to food as articulated in discussion paper for the Scottish Food Coalition³⁴:

Available - Through access to land and other resources, processing distribution and marketing, and the sustainability of the food system in to the future – including its contribution to and resilience to climate change

Accessible – Both financially and geographically

Adequate - Meeting dietary need, being free from harmful chemicals, and being culturally appropriate – including in how we access it.

Having a right to food that is enshrined in policy, legislation and practice would support children, young people and families by giving a legal foundation for accessing food at all times and in a way that supports positive outcomes.

All measures to tackle food poverty need to be underpinned by sustained poverty reduction measures. Children, young people and families who live in poverty can experience food insecurity and have less income to afford healthy food. The UK and Scottish Governments therefore need to take action that prevents this issue from occurring.

Children in Scotland is in favour of a £5 Child Benefit Top-Up. The proposal would lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty and testimony from

³² <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/2222/food-poverty.pdf>

³³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/dignity-ending-hunger-together-scotland-report-independent-working-group-food/>

³⁴ Scottish Food Coalition. The right to food, Discussion series. 2017

parents has shown the value of the benefit in accessing food³⁵. Our campaign in this area has been focussed on the Scottish Government, however, we would encourage the UK Government to take this step as well. We also are in favour of the Scottish Government showing greater urgency in introducing the income supplement committed to in the 2018 Programme for Government.

Recent research by the IPPR has also shown the value of removing the two-child limit on reducing poverty in Scotland³⁶. We would echo this call and encourage both the Scottish and UK Government to remove or mitigate the policy as appropriate.

Given the clear link between food, health and poverty that we have articulated in this response, we expect these measures to tackle many of the causes of food poverty. We expect them to reduce food insecurity by providing families with access to more income and in turn also supporting them to access better quality food.

We are also in favour of new measures to restrict the advertising and marketing of foods that are high in salt, fat and sugar to support children, young people and families to have access to better quality food. We know these messages have a huge influence on the choices children, young people and families make about the food they buy. However, all such measures must be supported by policies to provide alternative healthy food product, without this we have concerns that the interventions could have unintended consequences for health inequalities.

Children in Scotland believes there needs to be measures to restrict multi-buy offers as these have a particularly big impact on children and young people's decision-making³⁷. We are in favour of restricting the advertising of unhealthy food products pre-watershed and in online spaces that are accessed by children and young people. We approve of efforts to reformulate unhealthy food and drink products and would support statutory limits in these areas.

We also echo NHS Health Scotland's views on the need for better monitoring and evaluation of food poverty in Scotland and in the UK. This should rely on high-level statistical data, but also on qualitative research and community-led research to understand the experiences of children, young people and families.

The Scottish Government and UK Government should learn from the FFF model and roll out holiday clubs based on the principles that underpin this approach. Many Scottish local authorities have provided funding for such clubs. However, we are unclear as to how much guidance or support is being

³⁵ <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CB%20top%20up%20briefing.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.ippr.org/files/2018-05/child-poverty-in-scotland-may18.pdf>

³⁷ <http://www.obesityactionsotland.org/briefings/> Obesity And Price Promotions

provided to ensure these are community-led and provide opportunities for play and learning. As we have articulated above, research has shown the value of community-driven approaches to tackling childhood obesity. Having a community-led aspect to holiday clubs is therefore essential.

The Scottish Government also needs to engage directly with children, young people and families as part of all public health campaigns. It is vital that children, young people and families are involved in the development of any relevant communication, campaigns, and the development of policy and legislation around labelling, advertising and messaging. In this spirit, we believe the Scottish Government should explore children and young people co-producing school dinner menus.