



All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food



**Filling the holiday
hunger gap**

This paper is the collective thoughts from a range of experts who advise the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on School Food.

It is the third publication from the group that identifies a school food related issue, makes key points, sign posts to further information, gives a view and makes recommendations to address the issue of holiday hunger and the use of food-banks through school holidays.

The issue of child hunger sits within the APPG's terms of reference and it is with this in mind that this paper is being published and supported by the APPG membership.

Background

There are approximately 170 non-school days in the year that Free School Meal (FSM) pupils cannot access their entitlement to a school lunch, which is often the only regular hot meal that is available to them during the week.

There is also recognition of increased pressure on families to feed children over the holiday periods where stretched household budgets are struggling to make sure children are fed well, particularly in austere times. Food banks have increased in the UK at an extraordinary rate with no regulation or support from government. Food banks are reporting increases in families trying to access food during non-term-time

- Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) - latest data Jan 2013 shows that 29% of food bank referrals are for families with children
- In 2012-13 food banks fed 465,126 people nationwide. Of those helped 36%, (260,282) were children (Trussel Trust figs as of 14th Jan 2014)
- Research between the TrusselTrust, Fareshare and Tesco's in 2013 stated that "School holidays are a particularly difficult time for families, with more than a quarter of parents saying they can't provide food for all the meals their children need"
- In March 2013 Four out of five teachers say pupils are coming to school hungry (Kellogg's 'Hard to Swallow' report))
- Scottish Government Overview of Food Aid Provision in Scotland by Herriot Watt University study of 8 cities (Dec 2013 stated) 'Respondents expressed a particular concern over the fact that their services feed an alarmingly high and growing number of children'
- Defra Food aid research report by The Food Ethics Council and Warwick University (Feb 2014) makes reference to child hunger and food banks

'Lots of the families, their agencies have had to come and pick up their food parcels for them. Because the families, they're embarrassed to accept help, they're embarrassed to admit that they can't feed their children.' Food bank manager UK.

Research in Lambeth, Hampshire and from one food aid provider who attended the workshop, reported increased demand during periods when families with children are unable to obtain free school meals

The Trussell Trust identified a range of factors that may be triggers for needing food aid, including low income, 'benefit delay', 'benefit changes', delayed wages, domestic violence, sickness, unemployment, debt, refused crisis loans, homelessness and absence of free school meals during school holidays

There seems to be no attempt to compile clear evidence to show the depth of the problem of child holiday hunger or how it might link to the use of food banks by families in need. There is also neither an obvious line of responsibility for this issue nor any apparent government willingness to support research or positive action to address growing concerns.

Currently the government does have a Summer School transition from primary to secondary program targeted at pupils eligible for FSM. Pupil Premium is intended to close the attainment gap and the APPGSF would like to see both these funding streams utilised further for child wellbeing and to close the hunger gap particularly outside term time. Even though formal school education doesn't happen all year round, the fact is that it's significantly affected by behaviours, practices and routines that happen outside the school term. There is a concern that holiday hunger could be having a substantial impact on the developmental needs of children and therefore should be addressed. (Van Stuijvenberg et al. 2001)

In the parliamentary debate into food banks on the 18th December 2013 the issue of Child Hunger and families using food banks was highlighted by Jamie Reid MP. The same issue was again highlighted in the January 13th 2014 HOC debate on welfare reform and poverty by David Winnick MP so the APPG knows the issue is fast becoming a public concern.

According to Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) there are 3.5 million children living in poverty in the UK including food poverty. Lindsay Judge, senior policy adviser for Child Poverty Action Group, said: "It's a national scandal that more families are being referred to food banks in the summer holidays – a time when children should be having fun and parents should be enjoying life." (Independent 6 January 2014)

Adrian Curtis Director – (Trussell Trust UK) 'School holidays are especially difficult for low income families whose children usually receive free school meals or support from breakfast clubs. Finances are sometimes stretched so far that parents are forced to go without food in order to feed their children. Some food banks have started to partner with local charities and agencies to provide additional services during school holidays, such as free meals at holiday clubs for low-income families. Other food banks have opened for additional hours during school holidays to help meet demand, and some food banks have special arrangements with schools liaison officers to look out for the families that they are especially worried about. The experience of food banks, as well as Children's Centres, schools liaison officers and other charities, is that school holidays create problems for families whose incomes struggle to stretch to meet the additional costs of having children at home'.

The APPG on School Food advocates that addressing hunger in school aged children is a collective responsibility of "children's service providers", communities and families and should be a key part of the government's ongoing commitment to end child poverty by 2020. Local Authorities are required by the Child Poverty Act to assess the need of children in poverty in their areas and produces strategies to tackle the issues identified. This need will include food poverty and hunger.

There is no national register or guidance on food banks or minimum food standards that apply. Out with the larger organisations there is no monitoring or training for volunteers. There is therefore a lack of quality data on total numbers of children being fed by food banks or other charitable organisations in non-term time.

Provision and access to quality food fit for their children's needs for a balanced diet when no FSM are available is a problem for the most vulnerable families. We are also concerned at the growth of food banks and the lack of an exit process for those using this often well intentioned voluntary safety net service.

Recommendations

- A signposting service should be developed that aligns to the social security system to address holiday hunger specifically.
- The Government should establish a national register for all food banks in the UK. It should be the responsibility of the LA to identify unregistered food banks. (A model for this could be based on registers run by DoH such as the national joint replacement register)
- Local Authorities should be advised of their duty of care to act on Child poverty and given government guidance and financial support that would allow them to provide food in a community setting over the longer holiday periods.
- Financing of such programmes could also be identified from national allocations for closing the inequalities gap such as pupil premium, summer school funding, public health or via the local health and wellbeing boards and welfare funds so that the meals to pupils are free at the point of service.
- Research should also be commissioned into how families cope with holiday hunger, the scale of the problem and how local services might help struggling families through established routes, both statutory and voluntary. This could also include research into good examples of UK and international holiday feeding programmes. MakeLunch, Magic Breakfast 365 and USDA summer Feeding program.

Useful links to reports, media articles and UK programmes

Press and Media

Trussell Trust 1 in 5 Parents

<http://www.trusselltrust.org/resources/documents/Press/1-in-5-parents-struggling-to-feed-children.pdf>

Families who can't afford to feed their children in the School Holidays

http://www.worcesternews.co.uk/news/worcester/10622804.The_families_who_can_t_afford_to_feed_their_children_in_the_school_holidays/

School Clubs Feeding families caught in heat or eat trap

<http://metro.co.uk/2013/11/19/school-clubs-feeding-families-caught-in-eat-or-heat-trap-4193493/>

Glasgow Parents struggle to feed children holiday time

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/summer-holiday-hell-of-not-being-able-to-feed-children-129226n.21498444>

Cornwall Food Bank Feeds Children

<http://www.piratefm.co.uk/news/latest-news/1211321/cornwalls-foodbank-crisis/>

Publications and Research

Overview of Food Aid Provision in Scotland (Dec 2013)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/8757>

Kellogg's (2013) "Hard to Swallow: The Facts about Food Poverty", The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) for Kellogg's.

<http://www.manchesterfoodpoverty.co.uk/sites/default/files/Facts%20About%20Food%20Poverty%20Report.pdf>, accessed 05.09.13

Nelson, M., Ehrens, B., Bates, B., Church, S., & Boshier, T. (2007) "Low income diet and nutrition survey. Executive Summary", London: TSO. <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/lidnssummary.pdf> accessed 10.01.14

Minahan, D. (2012) "An exploratory study into foodbanks in the London Borough of Lambeth", Lambeth Council, available from author.

Defra (2014) Food aid research report Warwick University Food Ethic Council

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/food-aid-research-report>

Van Stuijvenberg, M E., Dhansay, M.A., Smuts, C.M., Lambard, C.J., Jogessar, V. B. & Benade, A. J. S. (2001). Long-term evaluation of a micronutrient-fortified biscuit dude for addressing micronutrient deficiencies in primary school children

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11796083>

Holiday School Food Programmes

MakeLunch

www.MakeLunch.org.uk

Small but growing faith based charity providing free healthy cooked lunch to FSM pupils in holiday period via 39 volunteer kitchens across UK in 2013 it provided 8,000 meals in non-term time.

Magic Breakfast

www.Magicbreakfast.com

Magic Breakfast piloted non term time breakfast in 2009 during autumn break at locations in London and Yorkshire. The model know as Magic Breakfast 365 fed 1,265 parents and children and is due to run again in Easter 2014 and in currently looking to longer term provision with partner cross sector agencies.

USDA

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program-sfsp>

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was established to ensure that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. Free meals, that meet Federal nutrition guidelines, are provided to all children 18 years old and under at approved SFSP sites in areas with significant concentrations of low-income children.

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