

**HUNGER AMONGST CHILDREN DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS:  
A written submission to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger (APPG)**

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## **BACKGROUND ON THE MAYOR'S FUND FOR LONDON**

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1. The Mayor's Fund for London is a social mobility charity.
2. We empower young Londoners impacted by poverty to acquire the skills and opportunities they need to secure employment, climb the career ladder and escape the threat of poverty. Our charitable activities focus on wellbeing, skills, employment and enterprise. 33,000 young Londoners across all 33 boroughs were impacted by our projects in 2015.
3. Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, is our patron and we are an independent charity.
4. Our unique position enables us to bring together key stakeholders from the public, private and third sector, including young people themselves, to consider the challenges faced by young Londoners and to build solutions.
5. We played an influential role in securing statutory funding for school breakfasts by supporting a three year school breakfast programme for London in partnership with Magic Breakfast and the Greggs Foundation.
6. We welcome the opportunity to input into the All-Party Parliamentary Group's inquiry on hunger amongst children during the school holidays.

## HOLIDAY HUNGER: THE CHALLENGE

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7. The London Food Poverty Profile report by Sustain (2015) - '*Beyond the Food Bank*' - gave a stark snapshot picture of the current challenges to address in the city around non term time (holiday) hunger<sup>1</sup>. Approximately 1.5 million children in the UK qualify for free school meals, but there is no provision during school holidays. That amounts to 170 days of the year when children from poverty-stricken families have little or no access to healthy food.
8. There are an estimated 220,000 London pupils living below the poverty line who are not enrolled in Free School Meals. That means 18%, or one in five London pupils, are at risk of hunger during the school day.
9. Over half a million children in London will struggle for food during school holidays; this is expected to increase as 700,000 young Londoners were living in poverty by the end of 2016. The number of children living in working households that fall below the poverty line has increased by 70% over the last decade.
10. With no free school meals or teacher support, hunger and social isolation are now a reality for many young Londoners.
11. Health services report that the BMI of poorer children increases dramatically in the school holidays. This is thought to be because these children engage in less activity and eat a poor diet. Teachers also report malnourished children returning to school after the holidays having fallen behind compared to their peers. Many young people will never claw back this learning and health disadvantage to fulfil their potential.
12. Research tells us that families and the communities are affected too. Some parents are skipping meals to feed their children and increased household, fuel and food bills cause stress and uncertainty. This can lead to debt, poor diet and further social isolation.
13. Holiday hunger among children in a city as prosperous as London cannot be accepted.

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond the Food Bank: London Food Poverty Profile (2015)  
[https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/london\\_food\\_poverty\\_profile\\_2015/](https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/london_food_poverty_profile_2015/)

## HOLIDAY HUNGER: GOOD PRACTICE

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14. In January 2017, the Welsh Government announced a year of (2017/18) funding of £500k for 'Lunch and Fun' clubs in areas of need during the school summer holidays. This follows the success of 'Food and Fun Wales' - an award winning school holiday enrichment project<sup>2</sup>. This will help thousands of disadvantaged children from across Wales to eat well, stay connected to services and engaged in positive fun learning activities during the long summer break. It is a welcome move to improve the health and life chances of children from low-income families and a great step towards tackling child poverty. It also supports Wales' Well-being of Future Generations Act which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.
15. It is important to note however that the delivery of the Wales solution mostly takes place on school premises.
16. We've learnt a lot over the last few years, working with schools to provide healthy breakfasts for hungry children in some of London's most disadvantaged areas. We supported nearly 850 children with school breakfasts in 2016, and since the start of the project in 2014 over 14,400 breakfasts were delivered in partnership with Greggs Foundation and Magic Breakfast. We've now turned our attention to the school holiday provision.
17. In 2016, we piloted a new scheme to help community groups working with children in some of London's most challenging areas during the holidays to provide healthy food. It proved highly successful<sup>3</sup>, providing a healthy meal and more for less than £5 per child per day.
18. As part of the pilot, we found that there were concerns around the logistics/costs of staffing and opening up school premises during the summer holiday. We also learned that the recruitment of schools required a much longer lead in time (six months according to the Local Authority Catering Association (LACA)). There are numerous schools already providing provision across London but with little time to build up relationships with the Local Authority.
19. We did, however, receive an overwhelmingly positive response from existing community organisations that were already attracting children and young people, and had programmed

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<sup>2</sup> Welsh Local Government Association (February 2017) [Food and Fun School Holiday Enrichment Programme 2016 Evaluation Report](#)

<sup>3</sup> Mayor's Fund for London Holiday Provision Pilot (October 2016) <http://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/The-Mayors-For-London-More-Than-Just-Food-Pilot-Evaluation-Oct-2016.pdf>

activities and the staff structure in place to deliver the food element of the Kitchen Social programme.

20. We therefore worked with 14 existing clubs across seven London boroughs to provide healthy meals and a range of social development activities during the school holidays and delivered over 4,000 meals to more than 600 children and young people. As well as food and social activities, children learnt new skills like cooking and budgeting. In some cases, safeguarding issues were highlighted and addressed. Local organisations benefited too, by developing new capacity, capability and employment, thus better enabling them to respond to the issues they faced in their communities.
21. We launched **Kitchen Social** in 2017<sup>4</sup>, a new type of campaign to not only extend the pilot activity across London but also bring together politicians, the food industry, foundations and communities to raise profile of the issue and end holiday hunger.
22. Kitchen Social has already gained the support of the Mayor of London, Greater London Authority, and many London boroughs and local communities. The innocent foundation is supporting the campaign and we hope will be the first in an alliance of food businesses, brands and retailers.
23. The programme has been designed to be transferrable to other locations, but for the purposes of this document, we are describing the London scenario.



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<sup>4</sup> Kitchen Social; good things to eat and do <http://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/kitchen-social-great-things-to-eat-and-do/>



“My children have been attending the hub and they enjoy all the activities as well as the food.

As a parent it's good to see my children **making new friends, being active and eating healthy food** as at home they just watch TV and eat junk food. The programme also helped us a family.

Not only did it give me some much needed free time but it has **impacted positively of the family budget**. They are always telling me when they get home how much they love attending.”

(Parent, Willesden Green hub)



“We had an **18 year old that had recently left home** and living in a hostel. She had decided to get involved with the pilots as a volunteer. We noticed that she was eating the available food with appetite.

This grabbed our attention and allowed us to have more conversations with her which **highlighted the difficult situation** she was now living in, especially in terms of **food insecurity**. We have now assisted her assuring she gets the available help through correct services.”

(Youth Worker, Harrow hub)



‘My experience at the Summer Programme taught me how important it is to show how healthy options can be fun as well as cheap. To educate not just through videos or books but through taste! I learned that sharing **my experience of cooking on such a larger scale** encouraged lots of parents to change in terms of the meals they went on to provide at home.

It was fantastic to see how many **children who were not vegetarian accept and enjoy my menus** and most of all loved my cooking!’

(Cook, Brent hub)

## **KITCHEN SOCIAL: A MAYOR'S FUND FOR LONDON SOLUTION**

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24. We believe working with existing grass-roots networks to be a far more effective approach in delivering a holiday food provision programme as it allows access to a much larger audience. Not only are the costs attached to opening schools during the holidays avoided, but there is also the opportunity to better target hard to reach children, especially those who have a hard time at school during term-time and would be reluctant to return in the holidays.
  
25. We are now working with a wide range of community based organisations from adventure playgrounds, youth centres, libraries, churches and faith groups, community and leisure centres to name just a few. Kitchen Social will help to create an environment where children, young people, their families and carers can feel comfortable to play, explore new ideas, make new friends, learn and get a good balanced **free** meal during the holidays.
  
26. Work is already underway to roll out the programme across London and, over the next three years, we plan to have:
  - a. Established **330 Kitchen Social 'hubs'**
  - b. Delivered **300, 000 meals**
  - c. Supported **50, 000 children and young people**
  
27. Tackling holiday hunger is at the heart of Kitchen Social, and we've established that it is about much **more than just food**. It also looks at general mental and physical well-being and social integration. The hubs will not only ensure attendees receive a balance meal, but also offer young people the opportunity to get involved in the preparation of food and learn life skills linked to shopping and budgeting that will help them outside of the hub. Young people will be encouraged to join in with physical and social activity which will maintain their level of fitness.
  
28. It is believed that the establishment of these spaces is a key step in reversing the three main growing trends seen over the last 30 years - holiday hunger, social isolation and children falling behind in their education.

29. The following list outlines the criteria each hub must adhere to, which will ensure the hub not only reflects the ethos of Kitchen Social but also meets the required quality assurance:

- a. Be located in an area of high deprivation
- b. Run an open access centre (free for children and young people to attend) or be charging a minimal fee of up to £5 per day on condition that the charge does not increase to cover food provision
- c. Already be providing or have funds to provide a wide range of physical and educational activities during the holidays (minimum of one hour per day)
- d. Provide at least 20 days free food provision over the year for a minimum of 20 children and young people. 75% of meals must be hot cooked meals.
- e. Ensure the food provision adheres as closely as possible to food based standards (training will be given)
- f. Ensure a safe, fun, stigma-free environment, where everyone is treated with respect
- g. Agree that no child that asks for food will be turned away
- h. Have all statutory policies around child safety and safeguarding in place and operational
- i. Invite parents to participate and get involved
- j. Provide a family setting for their meals

30. In addition, each hub will agree to:

- a. Attend our training on project management, cooking and volunteer management
- b. Complete and pass a Quality Assurance Mark
- c. Proactively market Kitchen Social holiday provision
- d. Proactively collect data for organisational, local and national evaluation
- e. Use relevant evaluation to make continuous improvements to their Kitchen Social hub and to share good practice



## SUSTAINABILITY

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31. At least 71% of the clubs involved in the pilot activity indicated to continue the programme.
32. We believe that a long term sustainable solution is only achievable through partnership across the private, public and charitable sectors. Although we are presently working with individual hubs and will continue to do so, our aim is to create a steering group in each Local Authority which will represent key stakeholders across the voluntary, statutory and business sectors to ensure the roll out of Kitchen Social best fits the need of the local community.
33. This partnership will not only ensure we reach those most at risk, thereby increasing our intended impact, but also guarantee the delivery model is linked into the public health strategy, obesity strategy children's services and education.
34. During the early stages of this programme development we are and will continue to work with individual hubs with the intention of developing a steering group once a cluster of hubs are running in a borough.
35. To help hubs reach the right level of readiness and quality we will provide a support package which includes:
  - a. Holiday Provision Handbook and Training - this covers the 10 main principles of setting up and running a holiday provision hub
  - b. Cooking Handbook and Training - includes tips on budgeting, batch-cooking, school food standards and a selection of 40 tried and tested recipes
  - c. Volunteer Management Handbook - helps look at recruitment, motivation, progression and training of volunteers
  - d. Funding - hubs will get a fixed financial support package of which the majority needs to be spent on food, however it can also assist in ensuring the kitchen equipment needed is bought and staff and volunteers are given the necessary training
  - e. Platforms - to share good practice, identify new approaches and trends, signpost existing and new opportunities across London via website, newsletter and meetings
  - f. Networking opportunities - our aim is to work across the private, public and charitable sector to build a solid infrastructure supporting holiday provision for the long term future

36. The pilot also taught us that although delivery models across clubs vary, the need for support and physical resources (such as a toolkit and training) was universal. Operational areas, such as cooking know-how, volunteer management and marketing, were also highlighted where support was lacking. This knowledge has allowed us to identify a charter for success and build a comprehensive support package for future hubs.
37. We are also spearheading a Kitchen Social Quality Assurance Mark (QAM) and evaluation framework that can easily be adopted across the UK. Once an organisation registers its interest in becoming a hub, the Kitchen Social team will support them in working towards achieving the QAM. It will not only cover statutory criteria that must be adhered to but will also list actions and elements of quality that a new organisation must be able to deliver before the mark is awarded. Only when the minimum criteria are met can the new organisation be acknowledged as a Kitchen Social 'hub'.
38. Kitchen Social will appeal to a wide age range however some hubs may choose to focus on specific groups. Indeed, we anticipate that the majority of the service will be used by children aged under 16 years old but the programme overall will cater for young people up to the age of 18. Young people over the age of 18 will be encouraged to join as volunteers in exchange for the benefits of attending the hub.

## **BROADER CAMPAIGN**

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39. Kitchen Social is only part of the solution - holiday hunger is a huge challenge that can only be overcome if we work and campaign together. There are many excellent community organisations that understand their local context and challenge, but which are unable to provide food or would like to offer a much higher quality of provision.
40. Through Kitchen Social, we want to help join up the dots across London and support these groups to:
  - a. Improve and scale-up quality, reach and provision
  - b. Evidence and showcase best practice and achievement
  - c. Convene a unified voice for change
41. Working with the Kitchen Social hubs and 50,000 young Londoners, we will gather evidence to make a case that there should be a statutory responsibility resolving the impact of food poverty in the holiday periods as well as at term time.
42. We will campaign alongside other London institutions, charities, businesses and individuals to demonstrate the positive educational, social and health benefits that holiday food provision would bring all young Londoners.
43. This is just one part of a much bigger food poverty agenda across London and the UK, which is in part bound up in welfare reform but also includes issues such as the sugar tax, take up of support such as Healthy Start vouchers, gardens, surplus food, obesity and health, etc.
44. We are aware, that if tackled badly, solutions (such as soup kitchens) could harm community cohesion but we are encouraged by the fact that when done well, the provision of good food provides a focus for communities to address other issues.

## IMPACT

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45. We believe Kitchen Social will undergo a process of continuous improvement as we learn from hubs delivering the programme. Having a comprehensive advisory group made up of our key stakeholders will ensure that Kitchen Social does its best to help children and young people at most risk of holiday hunger, social isolation and falling behind in their education.
  
46. Working with partners across the UK, we will be developing an evaluation framework that all Kitchen Social that will prioritise the key impact measures we should be collecting for holiday hunger to ensure we can develop a case for change. Examples of some of these measures are:
  - a. To raise the profile of holiday hunger and the negative impact it has on young Londoners
  - b. To develop a campaign for systemic change
  - c. To identify and help 330 community organisations across London, to develop a healthy food and social development offer over the school holidays
  - d. To develop a simple but user friendly evaluation framework around data collected from Kitchen Social
  - e. To develop skills of children, parents, community volunteers
  - f. To develop local community capacity

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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47. Current levels of child poverty and the mounting issue of food insecurity is unacceptable. There needs to be a better examination of the underlying causes in child poverty and of how the forecasted rise can be stemmed.
48. This said, we recognise that there are always going to be children who fall below the poverty line, therefore, a temporary fix is not the answer. Children who live in homes struck by poverty need a safety net all year round
49. Food is a basic human right. If a child is assessed as needing support while at school their needs should not be ignored in the holiday period, when all the good work at school can be undone.
50. We feel that all UK parliaments should follow the example set by Wales and set aside funding to address the issue of holiday hunger and food insecurity.
51. We would like to see central government explore the creation of a statutory responsibility for the issue.
52. We feel strongly that support should be delivered in local communities by local organisations but they need resources to be able to do that.
53. We do not think the solution requires significant capital or infrastructure investments.
54. We believe that a lot of existing organisations such as affiliated youth clubs and church groups can be supported by good training and relatively small amount of cash to improve their offer.
55. We believe that government should initiate ring-fenced funding with the aim of eliminating food insecurity in the school holidays within 10 years. This should be associated with a UK research programme to inform long term policy and support the sharing of good practice and evaluation to under pin sustainable approaches.