



Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council

Understanding the experience of food poverty within Causeway Coast and Glens catchments

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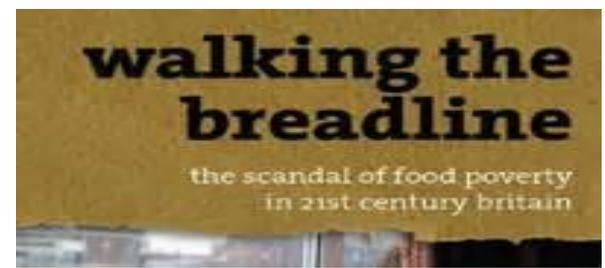
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BACKGROUND



- Food poverty = the inability to afford or access a healthy diet;
- Becoming recognised as a public health emergency;
- No agreed food poverty indicator BUT United Nations estimate 8.4 million people had insufficient food in the UK in 2014 (6th largest economy in the world);
- NI = lower incomes than GB; higher spend on food than GB; coming out of a recession; yet to fully implement Welfare Reform; high level of car-lessness; and consumer concern about the affordability of food;
- Poor affordability and accessibility of food can contribute to social exclusion;
- There are calls for the routine collection and analysis of data to determine the extent of food poverty in NI.

RESEARCH AIMS & METHODOLOGY

AIM:

- To investigate the existence and experience of food poverty by householders in the CCAG local authority area of NI.
- To determine the affordability and accessibility of food and the social impacts of food poverty reported by respondents.
- To understand if particular catchments reported different experiences and appetites for local authority intervention to help overcome food poverty.

METHODOLOGY:

- CCAG staff conducted the fieldwork
- Manual distribution of an interviewer-assisted questionnaire
- N = 362 responses analysed by SPSS Version 22
- Three CCAG catchments:
 - Dunloy, Rasharkin, Cloughmills and Ballycastle (n=81)
 - Coleraine, Limavady and Dungiven (n=188)
 - Portrush, Portstewart and Bushmills (n=41)



Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

- Made up of four legacy Council areas.
- Part of the Causeway Coast and Glens & Mid and East Antrim Joint Working Cluster – funded by PHA.
- Previously worked on a number of projects.
- No baseline data to steer direction of food poverty work.

Data Collection

- Self completed questionnaires – 38 questions.
 - Incentivised
 - Range of questions relating to food availability, food choices, cooking skills, availability of transport, income etc
 - Postcodes
- Linked with *Keep Warm Pack* distribution
- Mara clients
- Freepost envelopes

Agree

Disagree

Disagree

RESULTS

- Food shopping remains a female responsibility: 88% females and 12% males.
- The majority of respondents (68%) lived in two person households or live alone.
- Seven in ten (71%) reported using a private car to get to their main grocery shop; a minority relied on public transport (15%), taxis (5%), walking (4%), and family members/friends (3%).
- Three in four respondents (74%) reported their occupation to be a homemaker, retired or unemployed.
- 80% confirmed that they consider food to be important.
- Almost half (48%) considered affordability to be a key priority when purchasing food – second priority was its nutritional value (29%).
- One in four larger households (three or more family members) also prioritised purchasing food that they know their children will eat.



AFFORDABILITY OF FOOD



- More than half (54%) reported a degree of anxiety about whether their budget would meet their food needs (60% among larger households).
- Worryingly, 41% of respondents (45.7% of larger families) reported being unable to comfortably feed themselves and their families three meals per day all of the time.
- 6% reported rarely or never being able to afford three meals per day
- One in six (one in four larger families) reported missing meals because their food budget was inadequate.
- One in eight (13% of all households) reported missing a meal in the previous fortnight due to budgetary restrictions.
- One in five (22%) reported the unaffordability of having a meal or drink with their family or friends once a month.
- Three in ten (31%) reported being forced to make a choice between food and other essentials (rising to 37.1% of larger households)
- Energy ranked consistently in householders' top three priority expenses.

ACCESSIBILITY OF FOOD

- The majority (69%) reported shopping once or twice a week; but there is an important minority of respondents who shop on a more frequent basis.
- A majority (75%) rely on supermarkets as their food store of choice. One in six (16%) shop in smaller supermarkets and 8% reported shopping in local stores.
- Three in four reported being able to physically access food easily.
- 34% reported a need to shop within a local proximity due to transport restrictions.
- A similar proportion (29%) reported relying on relatives, taxis, public and community transport to access food shops.



NUTRITIONAL ADEQUACY OF FOOD

- Almost half (46%) reported concern about the food they eat – unhealthy; poor diet quality; and lacking variety.
- Almost half (47%) reported difficulty in affording nutritious food.
- 20% reported missing meals.
- 10% were unable to afford meat, chicken or fish at least every second day; and 17% could not afford a roast meat joint or equivalent once a week.
- These findings are comparable to the Health Survey for NI.
- More than one-quarter (28%) reported eating takeaways on a weekly or more frequent basis (increasing to 41.3% for larger households).



FOOD POVERTY BY CATCHMENTS

- *People's experience of food poverty often differed by location:*
 - Coleraine area respondents (44.8%) reported being less comfortably able to afford to feed themselves and their families three meals per day.
 - Significantly more Coleraine (24.6%) respondents reported missing a meal for reasons of their food budget being inadequate than other areas.
 - Approximately equal Coleraine (15.6%) and Dunloy (15.2%) respondents reported that there was at least one day in the past fortnight when they did not have a substantial meal for reasons of unaffordability.
- *Food poverty and social exclusion*
 - A significant minority (ranging between 13% and 42%) unable to afford social activities and outings that their peers may take for granted.
 - Coleraine district respondents reported greater ill-affordability of social activities than their Dunloy and Portrush counterparts (with the exception of attending the cinema/theatre).

RESPONSIVENESS TO INTERVENTIONS

- Respondent support for:
 - Attending cookery demonstrations (71%);
 - Healthy eating seminars (64%); and
 - Budgeting seminars (57%).
- Limited support for:
 - Nutritional labelling workshops (40%); and
 - Allotment seminars (39%).
- Dunloy area respondents were most responsive to suggested interventions.
- Coleraine area respondents particularly supported cooking demonstrations and budgeting and healthy eating seminars
- Portrush area respondents particularly supported healthy eating seminars.
- Coleraine area respondents reported less interest in nutritional labelling and allotment interventions.



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Food poverty has reached a concerning level within CCAG Borough.
- *Affordability* of food is a primary point of concern, and to a lesser extent *accessibility* merits policy attention.
- Respondents were sophisticated in prioritising policy solutions to improve their experience of living in food poverty.
- Policy makers must consider consumers' views in arriving at potential solutions to improve the incidence and experience of food poverty.
- We must continue to address the structural causes of food poverty including income, benefit and employment maximisation, and responsible Welfare Reform if solutions and actions are to be truly sustainable.



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Thank you

Any questions?

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