

Tackling food and nutrition inequalities: reflections on policy and practice in the UK

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Tackling food and nutrition inequalities: reflections on policy and practice in the UK

- review evidence of problems
- challenges of definitions and policy location
- outline examples of policy initiatives over last decade
- devolved territories – Scotland, Wales
- challenges - future prospects?

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evidence of problems/outcomes: UK national data-households

- National Food /Family Expenditure Survey
- nutrients/head less likely to be adequate in households lowest income decile or non-earning and low income
- since 1980, intakes of vitamin C ↓ by 23%, β-carotene ↓ by 47% in poorest households
- intakes vitamin C, folate, iron, magnesium, zinc, less likely to be adequate in households with >3 children, or headed by lone parent

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evidence of problems/outcomes UK national data-individuals

- surveys on different age groups: infants + young children, young people, adults, older adults; low income households
- lower intakes and blood levels of many vitamins & minerals, especially β-carotene, vit C, calcium, iron, in people from households:
 - headed by unemployed, claiming benefits, manual social class
 - blood levels most vitamins and minerals lower in poorer infants and children
- pregnant women claiming benefits low intakes calcium, iron, vit A, C and folate; missed meals

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evidence of problems/outcomes:

Low Income Diet & Nutrition Survey, 2007, Nelson et al, Food Standards Agency

- **Fruit and vegetables mean portions/day**
Boys: 1.7; 66% eat < 2 portions/day; *Girls:* 2.0; 56% eat < 2 portions/day
Adults: 2.5
- **Non-milk extrinsic (NME) sugars**
Adults: 14% energy (table sugar)
Children: 17% energy (soft drinks); 86% >10% energy NME sugars
- **Total fat**
Men: 79.1g *Women:* 59.4g (meat and products)
Boys: 76.7g *Girls:* 67.0g (snacks)
- **Saturated fat**
Men: 30.4g *Women:* 23.4
Boys: 27.5g *Girls:* 24.7g 94% consume >10% energy sat fat

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evidence of problems/outcomes

LIDNS, 2007, Nelson et al, Food Standards Agency

- **Salt** (excludes added salt)
Children: 2.5x recommended upper intakes; *adults:* 1.5x recom upper intakes
Boys: av 5.3g, 92% eat >3g/day *Girls:* av 5.0g, 87% eat >3g/day
[SACN-recommended upper intakes children 2-10 range from 1.2 to 3g salt/day]
- **vitamins and minerals**
many had mean daily intakes below or close to RNI and a proportion had intakes below LRNI (% depending on nutrient)
e.g. 30% *Women* and ~40% *Girls* 11-18 yrs had iron intakes < LRNI
- **body size**
Adults: ~63% overweight or obese
Children: 35% overweight or obese (mainly)
low levels of physical activity

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poverty and food: living it

- many also **time poor** (caring, >1 job, shift work)
- many **indebted**, paying high interest rates
- rent, local taxes, fuel bills, children's needs, debts, take priority
- food is the 'flexible item' in the budget**
- 'healthy food basket' can cost more where poor people live than where richer live
- many shops and services have vanished from where poor people live: often have little choice
- 'cheap food' is often least healthy
- minimum wage, social assistance often insufficient; stigma from 'free food'

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conceptual issues

- ? is the problem *poverty + deprivation* or *class + cultural capital*
- ? is the problem *aspect of health inequalities* or part of *wider problems*
- ? '*low income*' (absolute) or '*lowest deciles*'
- ? aim to ↓ *differentials* or improve those *worst off*
- ? (household) *income* or *area* factors
- ? target *specific groups* or whole *populations*

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public health policy 1997→2000+

- Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation** 1999
 - improve health - ↑ life expectancy, nos yrs illness free
 - ↓ health gap - ↓ inequalities by ↑ health of worst off
- Social Exclusion Unit 1998 *Bringing Britain together: a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal*** → 18 Policy Action Teams
- NHS White Paper 2000**
- other policy initiatives:
 - New Deal for Communities
 - Single Regeneration Budgets
 - Employment Action Zones
 - Education Action Zones
 - Local Agenda 21

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typical policy responses (not anti-poverty)

- public health sector – promotion healthy eating; 5-a-Day programme

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National School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme
 5 A DAY in the West Midlands
 Summer 2005

The Summer Term

5 A DAY ON AIR!

GET ON AIR
 with our new radio competition

Just Eat More

The National School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme Resources

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evaluation of 5-a-Day

Bremner et al 2006 TNS Social, Big Lottery Fund

Figure 11: Factors considered important when deciding how much fruit and vegetables the respondents eat, percentage of respondents by age

| Factor | <31 years important | >50 years important |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| The money I have available to spend on fruit and vegetables | 23 | 36 |
| Price of fruit and vegetables | 33 | 37 |
| How heavy my shop is to carry | 13 | 46 |



Figure 13: Respondents who expect to increase consumption of fruit and vegetables in the next year, % of respondents by ethnicity

| Experimental Group | White | Black | Asian |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2000-2001 | 22 | 25 | 28 |
| 2002-2003 | 25 | 28 | 31 |
| 2004-2005 | 28 | 31 | 34 |

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typical policy responses (not anti-poverty)

- public health sector – promotion healthy eating; 5-a-Day programme
- improved school food
- subsidised provision fruit and vegetables
 - through schools
 - through social welfare (Healthy Start)

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School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme

What's it all about?

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is a national government programme enabling all children aged four to six to receive primary and special school Education Authority maintained schools for 80p worth of fruit or vegetables each school day. Your child's school has chosen to take part in the scheme.

Because your child's school is eligible to benefit from the scheme, your child will be given a free piece of fruit or vegetable at school each day. They may be given oranges, pears, bananas, kiwis, apples, some eating tomatoes or other fruit or vegetable - it depends what's in season.

Research shows that the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is very popular with schools and parents, with 99 per cent of eligible schools choosing to take part.

Why eat more?

Every child deserves the best start in life. Research shows that good health in childhood is an important building block for health in later life. Eating fruit and vegetables can help protect your child's health in several ways:

- Fruit and vegetables provide many vitamins and minerals that are important for your child's growth and development.
- They can help protect against heart disease and some forms of cancer later in life.
- Eating fruit and vegetables reduces the symptoms of asthma in childhood - especially in children who have a history of breathing problems.

Eating 5 A DAY

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is part of the national 5 A DAY programme. Fruit and vegetables are key to a healthy diet for all of us and experts recommend that everyone eats at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. On average, children in England eat only two portions a day. Many children eat fewer than two. A national survey found that one in five children didn't eat any fruit at all in a week.



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'Healthy Start Healthy Start : Get The Vouchers

Give your kids the best start in life... Families on certain benefits can get free milk, fruit, vegetables and vitamins

What is Healthy Start?

With Healthy Start, you can get free vouchers every week which you swap for milk, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and infant formula milk. You can also get free vitamins. Healthy Start replaces the Welfare Food Scheme.

➔ Watch a quick film to find out more

Pregnant or have children under five? You could qualify if you're on benefits or you're pregnant and under 18.

➔ Check if you qualify

How do I apply for Healthy Start? You will need to fill in an application form to join the Healthy Start scheme. [Click here to apply](#)

➔ Apply now for Healthy Start



£2.80 voucher per week to spend on milk, fruit and veg

Get the new vouchers... to give your kids the best start

Eating well is good for you - and good for your family. It means living healthily.

5 A DAY



Fruit and vegetables are a vital part of a healthy diet. But they are also healthy and very easy to cook. Find out how to prepare and cook the more common vegetables. [Click here to watch](#)

➔ Apply now for Healthy Start

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typical policy responses (not anti-poverty)

- public health sector – promotion healthy eating; 5-a-Day programme
- improved school food
- subsidised provision fruit and vegetables
 - through schools
 - through social welfare (Healthy Start)
- voluntary sector
 - bypass or partner private sector
 - co-operatives, shops, cafes, growing food civil society movements and networks

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local food initiatives

- engage and empower disempowered or marginalised communities – skills, knowledge, opportunities
- local 'ownership' and funding security essential



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typical policy responses

- planning: shopping/retail strategies
- local policies – countries, regions, cities
- public sector working with local retailers

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increasing the local demand for healthier foods

Sandwell, W Midlands using Food Interest Groups for *conversation* and *decision-making* between... health professionals, community groups, schools, food businesses and local residents.



Angela Blair & Rosemary Kyle, Sandwell, W Midlands

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Working with local retailers

from this - shops ⇒ in local authority estate, Sandwell

(picture 2000 by Angela Blair, food access worker, Sandwell Health Authority)



⇐ to this - new display in local shops in Sandwell, 2006



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local retailer (Post Office) 'before'....



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....and 'after' Eatwell - pictures by Angela Blair 2004-6

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typical policy responses

- planning: shopping/retail strategies
- local policies – countries, regions, cities
- public sector working with local retailers
- public procurement and 'alternative' food system initiatives

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local food initiatives

- procurement coalitions and partnerships ⇒ 'foodlinks'
- 'local food' is not a middle class niche
- shifting behaviour



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typical policy responses

- planning: shopping/retail strategies
- local policies – countries, regions, cities
- public sector working with local retailers
- public procurement and 'alternative' food system initiatives
- civil society organisations/ movements
 ⇒ government regulation?
- private sector shifts?

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Governments sensitive to health policies for children

parent power
 'big business' vs children...

National Heart Forum
www.heartforum.org.uk

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Food Standards Agency examples of 'traffic light' labels

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Review Scottish Diet Action Plan 1996-2005

Tim Lang, Elizabeth Dowler, David Hunter, writer Helen Crawley



<http://www.healthscotland.com/understanding/evaluation/policy-reviews/review-diet-action.aspx>

- good work in place; good policy; good institutional leverage; some 'successes'
- enthusiasm and support to warrant revising/reshaping
- lost sight policy overview? (timing/political change)
- lost connection to supply chain
- some inadequacies in data and indicators used
- little 'central command' until recently
- **inequalities, sustainability not central**

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evaluation: main findings

- good work in place; good policy; good institutional leverage; some 'successes'
- enthusiasm and support to warrant revising/reshaping
- lost sight policy overview? (timing/political change)
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- some inadequacies in data and indicators used
- little 'central command' until recently
- **inequalities, sustainability not central**

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Food and Well Being Wales mid-term review

<http://www.food.gov.uk/wales/nutwales/nutritionstrategy/fwbprogress>
 Laura Davis and Elizabeth Dowler, Warwick
 Kevin Morgan, Cardiff; Tim Lang, London; David Hunter, Durham

- wide range activities, projects, joint working; recognition (within public health); better population knowledge
- strengths: provided focus, springboard for policies, networking
- challenges: patchy development; short-term projects; weak coordination (evaluation)
- no engagement with food sector and drivers, strategic work (regeneration); citizen-leading
- needs 'big picture' thinking and practice

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Scotland 2008 food policy – conference april 16th 2008

<http://conferences.holyrood.com/content/view/406/>

following on from evaluation – hope for *'step change' from patchwork local projects*

- food as central, cross-cutting issue
- centrality of sustainability
- widespread consultation process nov-mar
- procurement, local food
- role of food in reducing community inequalities
- public sector role

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future challenges

- cultural shifts – enable poorer to take part
- structural issues: access, availability & price, location and transport
- money needed to take part in society
 - * rising food prices *
- locating responsibility for problems and solutions - individual, local society, state or private sector?
 - manage on social provision or minimum wage if efficient budgeting/ knowledgeable about food?
 - retail and markets (superstores, inner city, e-tailing)
 - fortify cheap foods or 'junk' foods ?
 - partnerships

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