

Food Insecurity in Enfield

(A study by Enfield and The Barnets UNA)

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Summary

Out of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, EBUNA selected SDG2, Zero Hunger, for consideration of the associated targets to the local circumstances. The SDG2 local research depicted in this status report has comprised online search for pertinent data and direct interviews with religious and civic enterprises involved in food aid and insecurity activities in the London borough of Enfield.

The intended audience is all concerned citizens, civic society institutions and local/national government.

The research on SDG2 reflected in this EBUNA report comprises three key sections,

- a) Context setting and data collection
- b) Current conclusions of the research
- c) Our recommendations.

Demographic data was obtained from Council sites using the last Census and the Electoral Roll. Current Food Bank data was obtained by word of mouth and direct interviews with people running them. Multiple Food Banks and Pantries were found, many run by church-based entities and other organisations. We concluded that Food poverty is a subset of poverty, but with more immediate impact on the health and wellbeing of those affected. In spite of the large-scale food banking operations and increasing demand, we found we found limited centralised and coordinated control. There's a need for coordinated national arrangements on food insecurity.

Our research revealed an unexpected scale and depth of the issue that was surprising, unwelcome and unjustified in one of the richest countries on Earth. Food poverty should not exist in modern Britain, nor should food banks. But it does, and they do! We sincerely hope this report will be a small step towards recognition and resolution of this social dilemma in the borough of Enfield, and indeed Britain.

This research and its outcomes are dedicated to the memory of our colleague and long-time Enfield resident, Roger Hallam, who was a co-founder of the UNA branch in Enfield and the Barnets

1 Background

The Enfield and the Barnets UN Association (EBUNA) meets twice a month on the second and fourth Friday, discussing various local and global issues of relevance to the UN and social justice. The emerging consensus for a more active profile in 2024 has been to anchor our local discussions and activities around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To this end, the 17 UN SDGs were reviewed giving special consideration to those with meaningful relevance to local issues in the two North London Boroughs of Enfield and Barnet. UN SDG2 Zero Hunger was chosen for further scrutiny and mapping to local circumstances. Over a number of regular meetings, the SDG2 Targets and Indicators were discussed and a sub-set of Targets with more relevance to local issues were selected and recommended. These are detailed below.

2 EBUNA's Chosen SDG and associated Targets

The preferred SDG and recommended Targets as a backbone to drafting an annual plan of social activities are detailed below. The UK government was fully committed, under previous Conservative Governments, to the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030, and it was at the forefront of negotiating the SDGs. It committed not only to helping poorer countries achieve them, but also to ensuring their implementation in the UK itself. It is incumbent on the present Labour government to do all in its power to ensure food security for all, at the very latest by the year 2030, preferably much earlier.

SDG2 - Zero Hunger (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) 5 Targets and 3 subsidiary Targets a, b & c aimed at 2030:

2.1 End hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

2.2 End all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

2.3 Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

2.4 Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

2.5 Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

2A Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and

livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

2B Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round.

2C Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility.

The UNA London & South East Region Policy resolution 24 [\[1\]](#) relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, also emphasises the UK government's commitment in the 2019 UK Voluntary National Review (VNR) to implement, internationally and domestically, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets.

3 The Approach

A brain-storming session was organised in April 2024 to discuss the proposed Targets and then proceed to map these to the local issues, bearing in mind EBUNA's capacity, competences, local community needs and local action. The idea was to then devise a plan in terms of;

What can EBUNA do directly or in collaboration with other UNA/civil society groups to promote/facilitate a chosen target?

What educational/briefing/dissemination material may be needed to be developed to explain this to others?

Deciding on the scope of the work and collaboration i.e. within the Enfield and the Barnets, with other UNAs.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed to conduct investigation/research relating to food insecurity in the borough of Enfield and collect information and data to explore the root causes of food insecurity. The focus at would be on the most vulnerable groups in the borough, using online search, local Council publications, central Government data sources, interviews, collaboration with other civil society and other UNA groups.

4 Context

Food price inflation peaked at 19% and MPs on the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, who are investigating price fairness, questioned executives from Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Lidl and Waitrose have pointed out that supermarkets enjoyed a 97 percent profits bonanza in 2023 [\[2\]](#). This is concerning since the analysis from the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU), estimates that the production of wheat, barley, oats and oilseed rape may be down by 4m tonnes compared to 2023, a reduction of 17.5%. Compared to the 2015-2023 average, the decline would be over 5m tonnes, or 21.2%. The analysis is based on Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) crop area forecasts and Defra yield data [\[3\]](#). This concern over UK food security may further exacerbate the food price inflation for the consumers.

There are 850 cinemas in Britain today and three times as many food banks, the first instalment of a series by the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown and published in Guardian in June 2024, states. There are 1,200 hospitals and twice as many food banks. There are more food banks than there are

public libraries. The food bank has become such a fixture in our national life that we have almost forgotten that they barely existed until very recently. A mere 35 were provided by the Trussell Trust in 2010 and they had to increase twentyfold to 650 in 2013 and then double again to 1,300 in 2019. With the addition of independent food banks, today's 2,800 food banks and emergency food suppliers are now as recognisable a feature of the British landscape as the local secondary school. Food banks are opening as fast as high street banks have been closing down. Their existence is of course a testimony to the human decency and heroic endeavours of thousands of fellow citizens who feel the pain of others and believe in something bigger than themselves. But the fact that food banks have had to come into existence in one of the richest countries in the world is a scar on our collective conscience and a permanent stain on our country's character. What makes things worse is that the food banks and other charities that have had to take over from the welfare state as a safety net for the poorest citizens are themselves running short of money [4]. Closer to home, the article in the Enfield Dispatch on 4th July 2024 indicates that the number of parcels issued by Enfield's biggest foodbank to residents struggling with the cost of living has almost trebled in just six years, latest figures show [5].

Borough Demographics

All info is from 2021 census. According to the Census, Enfield's population in March 2021, was estimated to be 330,000 (rounded to the nearest 100).

Females make up 52.3% of Enfield's population overall. The distribution of male and female residents by age band is shown in the pyramid chart below. Males outnumber females in every individual year of age up to 20 years, with women outnumbering men in virtually every age thereafter.

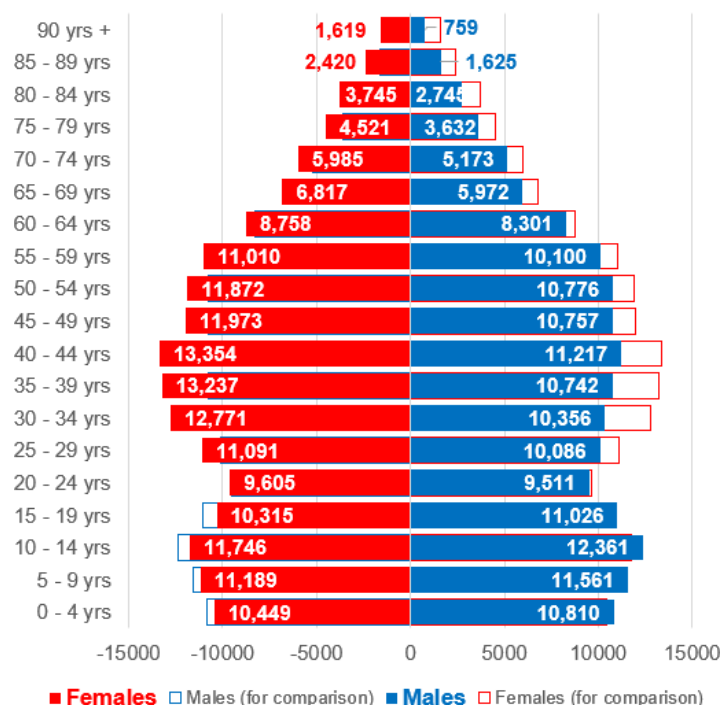


Figure 1 – Enfield population by gender and age band according to 2021 census

Country of passport held	Number of residents	Country of passport held	Number of residents
UK	243,478	Other Caribbean (not Jamaica)	308
EU14, EU8, EU2 countries (not listed elsewhere) *	19,284	Australia	256
Romania	6,620	Malaysia	252
Poland	5,998	Iran	200
Italy	4,249	Other South-East Asia (not Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore)	176
Ireland	4,224	Other Middle East (not Iran & Iraq)	169
Turkey	3,734	Japan	164
Other non-EU European countries **	3,066	South Africa	141
Portugal	2,124	Canada	135
Spain	1,996	Zimbabwe	131
Ghana	1,764	Afghanistan	108
Nigeria	1,185	New Zealand	101
France	1,167	Kenya	76
Other South & Eastern Africa (not incl. Somalia, Kenya, SA & Zimbabwe)	1,080	Somalia	56
Lithuania	959	Central Asia	56
Jamaica	897	Other Eastern Asia (not China, Hong Kong, Japan)	51
South America	802	Hong Kong	44
India	791	Central America	43
Germany	728	Iraq	36
Bangladesh	647	Singapore	33
Other Central & Western Africa (not incl. Ghana & Nigeria)	586	Other Southern Asia (not Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan)	31
Sri Lanka	429	Other Antarctica and Oceania (not Australia & NZ)	9
Philippines	388	British Overseas Territories	4
China	377	No passport held	19,828
North Africa	372		
Pakistan	318		
United States	313	Total	329,984

* includes Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta

** includes Albania, Switzerland, Norway, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Ukraine, Georgia, Montenegro, Russian Federation

Table 1 – Enfield resident population by country of passport held

74% of Enfield's residents hold a UK passport. The next most numerous passport holders are citizens of one of a group of European countries which includes those not specifically listed in the table. This group includes Bulgaria and Cyprus, which are likely to make up a significant proportion of these 19,284 people. Romania, Poland, Italy, Ireland and Turkey are also the passport-issuing countries of several thousands of residents.

a) Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019

The map in Figure 2 shows the locations of the most and least deprived Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Enfield. Dark red areas are those with the greatest deprivation levels.

b) Household Incomes

Estimates supplied by CACI Ltd for 2023 indicate that the mean average gross household income in the borough was around £52,000. This is higher than the UK average of £48,000, but somewhat lower than the London mean of £55,000 (all figures have been rounded).

Enfield's median household income (arguably, a more meaningful statistical measure of the average) is around £44,000, which is the 8th lowest of the 33 London boroughs and lower than the London average. Within the borough, there are clear differences in household income between the western and eastern parts. Median incomes in the most affluent neighbourhoods are around twice those of the least affluent.

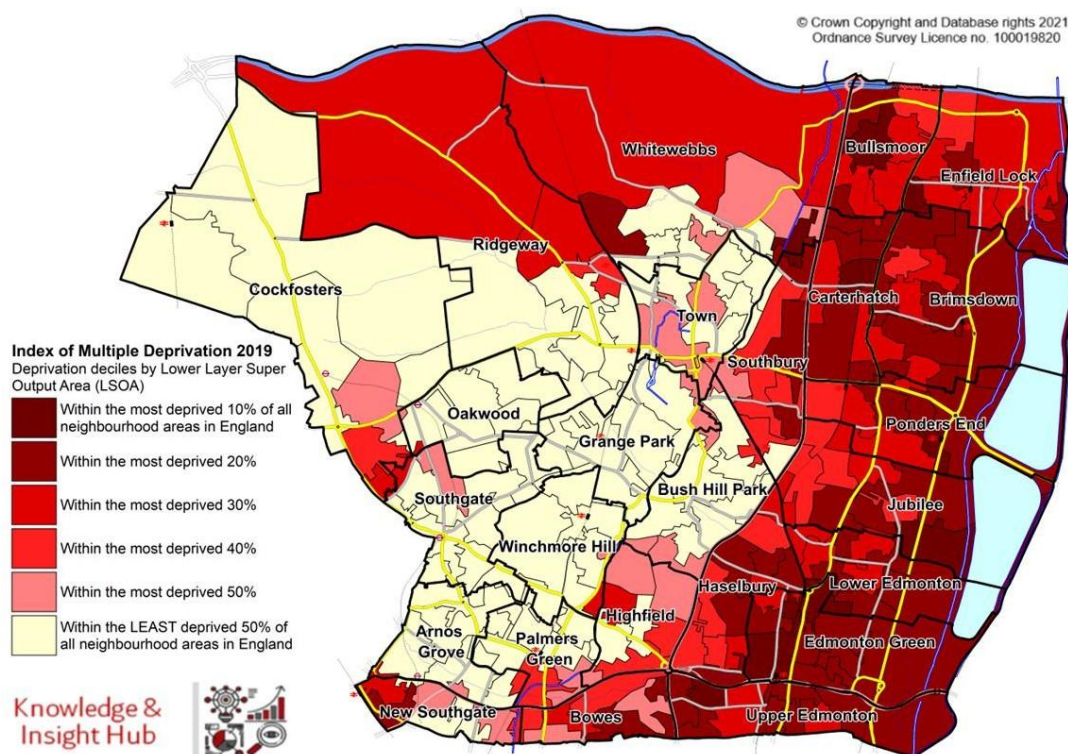


Figure 2 – Enfield Borough Index of Multiple Deprivation

- 10.0% of households in Enfield have an annual gross income under £15,000. This is higher than the London average of 8.6%, and the 8th highest proportion of all 33 London boroughs.
- 32.3% of Enfield households have less than £30,000 per annum – again, higher than the London average, and 8th highest proportion in London.

c) Enfield deprivation in 2023 by the Trust for London

Living standards

The Child Poverty Rate (measured as AHC) was 31% broadly the same as London-wide at 33% - but variations within a borough make the borough-wide average misleading. However, income deprivation, measured against an average household income London-wide, was 1.5 x the mean, indexed at 1.0. (This is a relative within-borough measure.) Overall household poverty was estimated as 33% compared to 25% of households London-wide. Trust for London analyst commented that this was within the London average band; we disagree.

Income and deprivation disparities within the borough

See the maps included at Annex A of the borough's report. All borough deprivation and income maps show every ward to the east of the Great Cambridge Road as suffering high or very high deprivation (either top 10% or top 20% of all wards in England). Almost no western wards are shown as with high deprivation. (In 2015 Chase Ward did, but in that year it straddled east and west.) An important source is the 2019 Report of the Enfield Poverty Commission chaired by Baroness Claire Tyler and supported by the Smith Institute.

Overall economic indicators for Enfield vs Great Britain averages

<i>Key Economic Indicator</i>	<i>Enfield average</i>	<i>Great Britain average</i>
Employed adults	68%	77%
Econ Inactive	30%	21%
Modelled unemplmt	5.6%	3.4%
Median Ho'hd Income	£24,500	£20,500
GVA per worked hour	£44	£36
Enterprises(total)	17,000	6,000
High-growth comps	20	20

Table 2 Comparative Economic Indicators Enfield versus National**d) Housing Benefit and Universal Credit**

As of February 2023, there were 44,723 resident households in the borough (around 35% of all households) receiving state help with their housing rental costs:

- 19,339 were on Housing Benefit.
- 25,384 were claiming the Housing element of Universal Credit. Universal Credit replaces several previously-awarded state benefits.

The full council profile document can be obtained here [\[6\]](#). The London Borough of Enfield is split into 25 areas called wards. Each ward has its own profile document, from the 2021 census, available from the links in Table 3 below, or from the full profile document link above.

e) Ward profiles 2023

The links in Table 3 give a ward breakdown by religion, ethnicity, income etc. NB, this info is based on the 2021 census, so is not taking into account those living outside the system, those who did not fill in the census, those who did not know how to fill it in or those who deliberately gave false information.

Causes of Food Insecurity in Enfield

A study found that in Enfield, one in five adults had low or very low food security, which was similar to the London average of 21%. Foodbank usage is not a good overall measure of low food security, however. The North Enfield Food Bank, Enfield's largest and most established foodbank, has seen a year-on-year increase since it opened in 2012. (See A Food Action Plan For Enfield [\[7\]](#)).

The two agencies with detailed statistics on family poverty in England and Wales are the House of Commons Library and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Both collect data on "absolute poverty after housing costs are met" and "relative poverty after housing costs are met". There were two periods when family poverty (and specifically child poverty) were reduced by several per cent points: 1999-2005 (Gordon Brown's tax credits etc.) and 2010-14 (Cameron and Osborne before the detailed effects of Austerity fed through).

Ward name	Pop Est	Child aged 0-15	Work-age people (16-64)	Older people aged 65+	% All Child	% All Work age	% All Older people	% Not Born in UK	Area - Km2	Pop density (people /sq. km)
<u>Arnos Grove</u>	8,222	1,472	5,112	1,638	17.9	62.2	19.9	38.3	1.8	4,568
<u>Bowes</u>	10,788	1,836	7,543	1,409	17	69.9	13.1	55.9	1.3	8,298
<u>Brimsdown</u>	16,249	3,724	10,812	1,713	22.9	66.5	10.5	41	4.6	3,532
<u>Bullsmoor</u>	11,454	2,506	7,549	1,399	21.9	65.9	12.2	36.4	1.8	6,363
<u>Bush Hill Park</u>	12,709	2,135	7,731	2,843	16.8	60.8	22.4	30.2	2.3	5,526
<u>Carterhatch</u>	12,371	3,012	8,172	1,187	24.3	66.1	9.6	37.9	1.8	6,873
<u>Cockfosters</u>	10,607	1,878	6,456	2,273	17.7	60.9	21.4	34.7	9.7	1,094
<u>Edmonton Green</u>	17,126	3,996	11,520	1,610	23.3	67.3	9.4	49.9	2.9	5,906
<u>Enfield Lock</u>	17,805	4,359	11,883	1,563	24.5	66.7	8.8	40.2	3.3	5,395
<u>Grange Park</u>	9,368	1,600	5,844	1,924	17.1	62.4	20.5	28	2.5	3747
<u>Haselbury</u>	18,135	3,892	12,132	2,111	21.5	66.9	11.6	50.9	2	9,068
<u>Highfield</u>	9,261	1,666	6,027	1,568	18	65.1	16.9	43.5	1.7	5,448
<u>Jubilee</u>	16,548	3,674	10,750	2,124	22.2	65	12.8	46.8	4	4,137
<u>Lower Edmonton</u>	16,553	3,715	11,108	1,730	22.4	67.1	10.5	50	2.2	7,524
<u>New Southgate</u>	11,902	2,114	8,467	1,321	17.8	71.1	11.1	47.5	1.1	10,820
<u>Oakwood</u>	8,756	1,714	5,505	1,537	19.6	62.9	17.6	33.8	1.9	4,608
<u>Palmers Green</u>	11,017	1,883	7,573	1,561	17.1	68.7	14.2	44.6	1.5	7345
<u>Ponders End</u>	13,684	3,416	9,080	1,188	25	66.4	8.7	48.3	3.4	4,025
<u>Ridgeway</u>	12,529	2,166	7,845	2,518	17.3	62.6	20.1	25.7	11.1	1,129
<u>Southbury</u>	15,910	3,484	10,651	1,775	21.9	66.9	11.2	33.7	2.1	7,576
<u>Southgate</u>	14,514	2,667	9,486	2,361	18.4	65.4	16.3	41.7	2.4	6,048
<u>Town</u>	13,516	2,607	8,803	2,106	19.3	65.1	15.6	26.1	2.1	6,436
<u>Upper Edmonton</u>	16,726	3,867	11,351	1,508	23.1	67.9	9	51.8	2.3	7,272
<u>Whitewebbs</u>	13,843	2,879	8,761	2,203	20.8	63.3	15.9	23.5	10.4	1,331
<u>Winchmore Hill</u>	10,400	1,860	6,689	1,851	17.9	64.3	17.8	30.1	2.1	4,952
ENFIELD BOROUGH	329,993	68,116	216,855	45,015	20.6	65.7	13.6	40.4	82.2	4,014

Table 3 -Enfield Ward Profiles

Vulnerable Groups in Enfield

a- Measures of local deprivation

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation combine a range of economic, social and housing indicators to provide a measure of relative deprivation, i.e. they measure the position of areas against each other within different domains. This data therefore provides some useful baseline contextual information for localities in terms of existing deprivation levels, which will influence and inform the scale of impacts due to the rising cost of living. The higher the ranking, the higher the level of deprivation, i.e. 1 is measured as the most deprived area in the Indices of Deprivation.

- a) Enfield is ranked **58-72** out of 317 authorities for deprivation – based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) average rank. This measure is based on population weighted ranks of all neighbourhoods within an area, so an area that is more uniformly deprived will tend to rank higher on this measure. It is a weighted average of the seven IMD domains:

Income Deprivation, Employment Deprivation, Health Deprivation and Disability, Education Skills and Training Deprivation, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment Deprivation, and Crime.

- b) 13.11% of Enfield neighbourhoods (Lower Super Output Areas) are in the 10% most deprived nationally. The domain measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income.
- c) Specifically, with regards to income deprivation, Enfield is ranked **30** out of 317 authorities – based on the IMD average rank. (County level data isn't available for this metric and will display as "no value" if chosen).

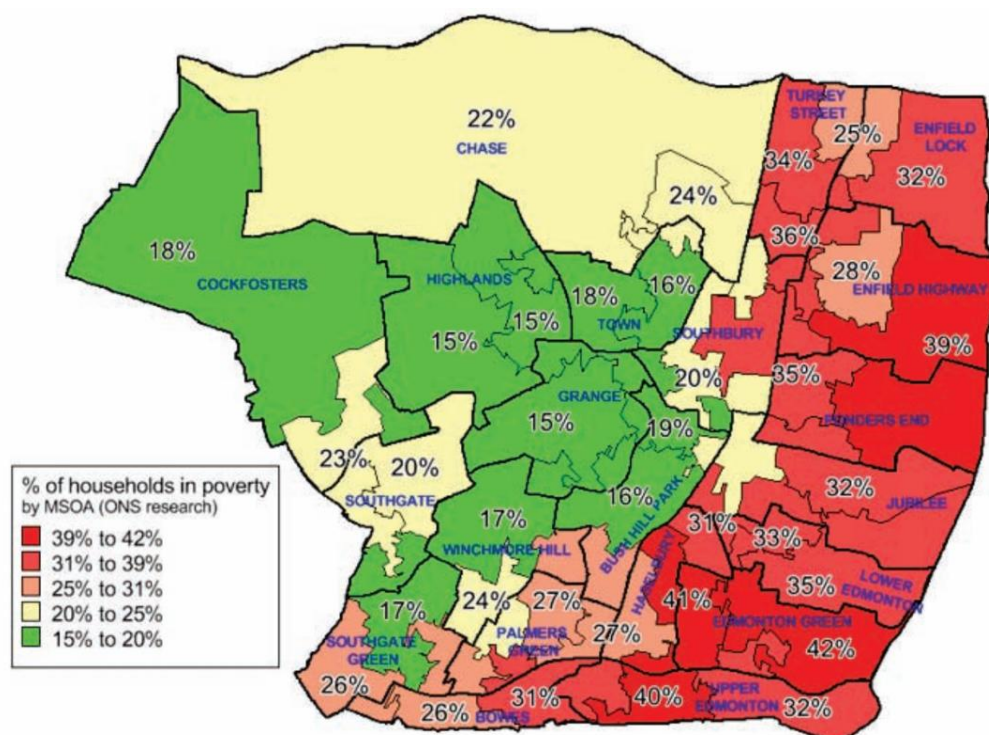


Figure 3 – Enfield Borough's Financial Hardship & Economic Vulnerability

This is taken from the Local Government Association report on financial hardship and economic vulnerability in Enfield that you can find at [8].

b- Child Poverty

In the UK now 20% of children are in relative poverty (no good holidays, inadequate recreation, challenges over clothing budgets) and 16% children are in absolute poverty (inadequate nutrition implied). These numbers are a lot better than the situation in the Thatcher/ Major years 1980s early 90s. Here are some numbers for the borough of Enfield based on Parliament Library Statistics:

	<i>Children in rel poverty</i>	<i>Children in abs poverty</i>
Edmonton	5,300 (18%)	4,000 (14%)
Southgate	1960 (10%)	1500 (8%)
Enfield Nth	3450 (13%)	2600 (10%)

Table 4 - Comparative Child Poverty statistics across the borough of Enfield

Based on J Rowntree Foundation figures there has been no real increase in child (=family) poverty in our borough since 2012 when the Trussell Trust seeded Food Banks around North London, including North Enfield. There has been an increase in public awareness and this has made hard-pressed families more inclined to seek help. Some public cash support (notably child benefit with the two-child cap since 2017) has been squeezed. But other family support (more encouragement to claimants) has improved things.

A study found that in Enfield, one in five adults had low or very low food security. What is causing this need for food banks in Enfield? It is NOT a shortage of food, nor a lack of outlets selling food, but almost overwhelmingly an ability to pay for food. This could be because wages are too low or prices are too high (or people are eating too much/wrong type of food, which is an education issue).

The past twelve years, encouraged by the Trussell Trust, the Felix Project and maybe at policy level the Resolution Foundation, more and more people have chosen to declare their daily food needs as the leading indicator of their wider poverty predicament. This is a social movement driven by increasing public awareness of poverty coupled with specific challenges to the food industry - supermarkets and farmers - which have surfaced as urgent political topics

Families and individuals who get referred to food banks, or just turn up, are hard pressed by the need to get by on the money they have. They reckon (very reasonably) that if they can obtain packages of essential food, perhaps also toiletries etc., for no cash outlay – or in the case of Food Pantries, at subsidised cost – this will enable their weekly budget to cover other equally important needs such as housing and heating. If we are right about the line of thinking in play here, what is represented as “food poverty” is actually an expression of poverty in general.

General poverty has been a key topic for social policy studies since the ground-breaking surveys of Charles Booth in East London [9] and Joseph Rowntree in York [10]. Their “local studies” approach has since been displaced by national surveys done by government departments and agencies. These document the net incomes of individuals (through for example HMRC tax returns) and families (through the annual ONS Household Survey and from administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions and the NHS and 10 yearly Census). An important consequence of the move to national data sets has been that “poverty” has come to be defined as having cash resources below a set percentile of individual or household income: 40%, 50% and 60% have each been used in different reports. This approach clearly relates to relative rather than absolute poverty. However, qualitative studies of individual households together with feedback from social care experts have suggested a poverty line below which people are in complete destitution; this might be 40% of median income. Everything is compounded by the widely varying costs of housing and DWP surveys (for example) try to capture income data after housing costs have been taken into account. Technical and philosophical issues abound in this field. It will serve our purpose in trying to produce a picture of food poverty in Enfield to simply accept that an individual or family asking for help at a food bank is experiencing substantial food poverty which can be partly or wholly relieved by a food package allocation. We can extend this argument to include the supplementary and similar allocation of packages of toiletries and basic household items, which follow the same logic.

The managers we have interviewed all say that they are looking towards a development of national arrangements which will render their work redundant. At the same time, they are planning to expand operations and see rises in “number of mouths fed” in future years. This pessimism about the trend of demand probably rests on expected failure – or at least lack of much progress – in the web of arrangements such as Universal Credit rules; the national Minimum Wage; zero hours employment contracts; regulation of affordable housing options; the cost of borrowing; and the architecture of the welfare “safety net”. In respect of the coming three or four years, we suspect

that their pessimism is justified. This would be in line with recent warnings from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. Beyond the current Parliament, looking towards the 2030s, there are possibilities for greater advances in redistribution from the better-off to the hard-pressed. Perhaps we will see across the UK a revamping of key elements in the societal fabric such as the housing market; the Welfare System; the depth of universal education and health provision.

The latest Food Foundation's report [11], depicts worrying trends in the decline in children's health in England, citing worrying statistics in height, obesity, Type 2 Diabetes and well-being.

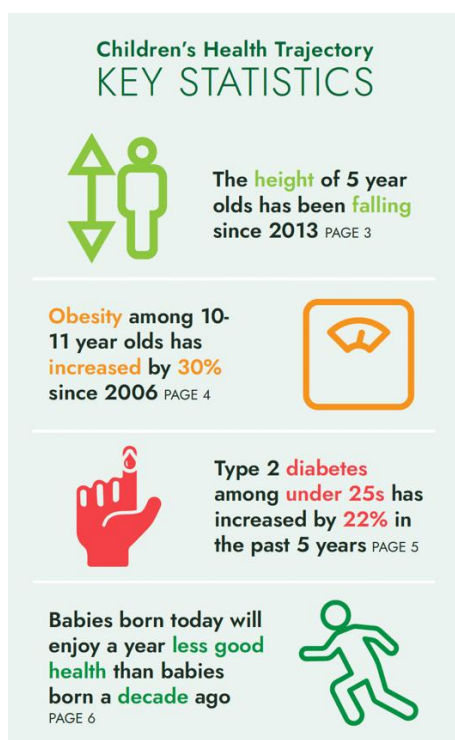


Figure 4 – Food Foundation's Child Health Trajectory in England

5 Existing Food Initiatives and Resources in Enfield

The food aid sector of the local Enfield economy is a recent phenomenon. This section provides a sketch of its make-up and history. Since around 2012 two major food aid charities emerged on the national "third sector scene". These were the Trussell Trust (now titled simply "Trussell") and the Felix Project. Both are anti-poverty organisations focused on food poverty. The Trussell Trust sets a model for running effective food banks. The Felix Project has established a waste-food-recovery supply channel through which fresh foods and also some manufactured foods are made available free to local food banks. Trussell and the Felix Project came to Enfield early in their histories and have formed anchor bases in Ponders End industrial parks for the borough's food banks. We start by describing these, before going on to survey the range of smaller food aid projects around the borough.

a) The Trussell Trust- sponsored North Enfield Food Bank

The Trussell Trust [12] has been sponsoring the North Enfield Food Bank since 2012. Trussell food banks must follow a template for recognising families and individuals in need of a standard package designed to provide adequate nutrition for three days. This involves health and welfare officials giving approved applicants a referral. This leads to access up to three times a week at the Enfield North Food Bank in the headquarters building of the Jubilee Church. This evangelical church holds well-attended services in the Cineworld Cinema a mile away, and some of its adherents support projects like this within the church's active social welfare division. The welfare activities director provides a paid manager and assistant manager and a team of volunteers at the Jubilee Centre to sort and pack food items and serve applicants. Volunteers are trained to be supportive: they offer cups of tea and coffee in a cafe environment where there is counselling as well as the allocated parcel. Users are encouraged to see a CAB-trained money counsellor to help them claim additional welfare benefits. Statistics collected nationally by Trussell suggest that a substantial proportion of clients who receive money counselling are successful in gaining additional welfare cash. However, demand for Trussell-supported food aid has continued to grow over the past decade (with a hiccup during the Covid emergency) so we can infer that help with welfare cash claims has not abated the overall incidence of declared food poverty.

As a "franchised" Trussell Trust food bank, one of the earliest established in north London, Enfield North can be seen as a pathfinder project for the many other food banks which have followed. It is obliged to implement "Trussell rules" in respect of client eligibility and (relatively) standardised food packages. Most new food banks in Enfield have been aware of how the Trussell model operates; many of their leaders have visited the North Enfield Food bank, and its manager, Kerry Coe, has been at pains to explain the Trussell model in detail. However, the "independent" food banks across Enfield, run by widely various community groups have not felt obliged to follow the Trussell example in respect of referrals, access days or standard packages. They have, on the whole, chosen to follow some aspects of the Trussell model and not others. Most insist on proof of Enfield residence (echoing the centuries-old "parish poor law") but are more flexible on other aspects of standard procedure. These independent food banks are described below, along with "food pantries" and "food co-ops" which offer registered subscribing members off-the-shelf food and household items.

b) The Felix Project

The Felix Project is a national charity that saves surplus food for people in need, and increasingly obtains straight-from-the farm materials for processing in its own manufacturing plants. Its North Enfield depot, sited alongside the North Enfield Food Bank, distributes supplies to community groups across North London to support local access to fresh and/or nutritious food going into meals, snacks or food parcels for their clients. The Enfield depot has greatly extended the Felix Project's capacity to distribute surplus food collected from supermarkets, wholesalers, delis and others in the area. Felix Project impact reports say that in 2023 among all end-user clients claiming food packages or meals, 37 per cent were organised community groups and nearly 30 per cent were individual families. These statistics are compromised by overlapping categories, so that community groups will have redistributed what they took to families and individual. Clients who included at least one in-work "breadwinner" are believed by Felix to comprise 53% of all beneficiaries in 2023. Among organisations supplied by Felix, 90% expected food bank demand to rise again. Among the food purveyors supplying Felix Project with surplus food, most supported Felix Project's environmental aims (reducing waste, cutting carbon) equally with social aims. The Felix Project is based in an Industrial Estate warehouse is equipped with high-ceiling stacking systems and two cold stores, one of which is a very-low temperature store suitable for keeping their own-brand ready meals. Until summer 2024 there was a smaller Felix Project centre in Barnet; this has been closed and its operations merged with the Enfield warehouse.

c) Independent food banks in Enfield

Many neighbourhood organisations, most conspicuously faith groups, want to contribute to the food aid movement using whatever resources they have. Some advertise their offer on websites or in the local free newspapers. Others reach clients informally, not necessarily through the official referrals required by the Trussell system. Some faith groups run food banks or kitchens for their own congregation only. Several of the borough's mosques run community meals open to all on special occasions and these can be linked with free food offers. With the help of the Enfield Food Partnership we found twenty smaller-scale food bank operations across the borough, and five food pantries (described below). By adding four other food aid projects this gives a total of 29 food aid facilities which are eligible to be members of the Enfield Food Partnership. (There are other food aid facilities operating with a restricted clientele, such as parents collecting their children from a school at 3.30 pm, or club welfare scheme members.) Most of the well-established providers are members of the Enfield Food Partnership, which is in the process (in April 2025) of completing its Directory of Food Aid in Enfield. Since the partnership's listing is likely to be more comprehensive and current than ours we have confined our data to a simple listing and ask the reader to bear in mind that we are sure some smaller or more private food banks and food package suppliers have been overlooked. Our list in late 2024 comprised these 22 organisations:

- Edmonton Methodist Church
- Edmonton Mosque
- Edmonton Seventh Day Adventist Church
- Enfield Children and Young People's Services (ECYPS)
- Enfield Women's Centre
- Exodus YouthWorx (seasonal packs delivered)
- Feed the 100 (London-wide food packs)
- Meviana Rumi Mosque (breakfasts)
- Muslim Food Service (packs delivered)
- Nanak Darbar Sikh Temple (Kitchen officers)
- Nene Tereza (Albanian community resource)
- Our Lady of Carmel RC Church
- Palmers Green Mosque (special meals)
- Ponders End URC
- Signpost Community Heart, Edmonton
- Southgate Mosque
- St Andrew's Southgate
- St Demetrios, Edmonton
- St John the Evangelist Palmers Green
- St Monica's Palmers Green
- St Peter's Edmonton
- Trinity at Bowes Methodist Church
- Wellbeing Connect Family Services Edmonton.

We have noted cases where the service is somewhat different from a come-and-collect food bank but still involves giving free food, in a couple of cases as a supplement to a community meal. We think it likely that some other faith groups – Jewish synagogues, Hindu centre etc – have free food arrangements within their premises.

In addition to the internal collection arrangements of the above organisations, donations of food come from local supermarkets and smaller stores. There is also a special collection and delivery service at the Food Bank Aid Donation and Distribution Hub depot in North Finchley which serves several Enfield food banks. Several schools and churches in Enfield appeal for food donations which they collect on their premises and arrange to deliver in bulk to North Enfield Food Bank, Felix Project and smaller food banks. Examples are Christ the King RC Church in Bramley Road, which has a food bank support coordinator, and Winchmore Secondary School, where sixth form students organise a special collection appeal at Christmas and some other times.

We have listed other kinds of food aid projects in Enfield in the next sections.

d) The Independent Food Aid Network (UK) and its one Enfield member

The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) was first developed by Seb Mayfield in collaboration with Steph Ellis, Professor Jon May and Chris Sunderland in 2016. The idea for a network of grassroots food aid providers outside of the established Trussell Trust network emerged following Seb's visit to Canada where food banks had already existed for decades. Seb saw the potential for an alternative approach to food poverty as practised in Canada through Community Food Centres as described in his Winston Churchill Memorial Trust report. At first the network's members were predominantly Scottish but recruitment in England has gathered pace during 2021-25. There are now some forty London food banks affiliated with IFAN. There is currently just one Enfield based member of IFAN: Southgate Mosque Food Bank. It should be borne in mind that IFAN, with its roots in certain currents of radical social policy thinking in Scotland, campaigns to put pressure on national and local authorities to improve cash support to hard-pressed households so as to eliminate free food schemes. In 2024 the chief executive of IFAN joined with senior managers of the Trussell trust to conduct a policy review on food poverty causes and cures. This had a central recommendation that the government's Household Support Fund, which is delegated to local authorities, should be redeployed to meet food needs. In practice, it seems likely that the current Labour Government will restrict the size and scope of this fund.

One question which members of the Enfield Food Partnership might want to explore is whether all except for the Trussell-affiliated North Enfield Food Bank might want to be jointly affiliated with IFAN.

e) Food Pantries in Enfield

The idea of a member-based subsidised cost grocery store is more than 150 years old: it is the founding concept of England's and Wales's retail co-operative movement. Perhaps partly because the larger co-op stores across England and Wales faltered, then failed, in the 1970s-90s, the last decade has seen a modest movement towards reinstating the member-based principle in two forms: the food pantry and the food co-op. In Enfield during the years 2018-22 five food pantries were set up. Two of these are Local Authority experiments, based in a stock room in the two largest libraries, at Enfield Town and Edmonton Green for which referral from a social worker or health professional is required before subscriptions of £4.50 are taken. The remaining three pantries are independent of the council and were started by citizens groups, two of which were attached to local Christian churches. In some of these users may self-refer, subject to capacity limits; the table below summarises all five pantries. Among these, the Phoenix Centre's pantry in Bounces Road, Edmonton, is especially popular.

The original idea of a pantry comprised a budget buying club where a subscription of (say) £4.50 or £5 per week enabled a member to select and purchase up to £20 worth from a range of highly subsidised goods. Some hard-pressed families appreciated the chance to purchase rather than receive hand-outs. However, several of the pantries listed here now offer a package of food and household goods worth up to a value limit (such as £20) in the same way as a food bank might provide, so there are no over the counter purchases. This approach requires store helpers to regulate what is claimed and make suggestions as to what kinds of food etc might be worthwhile to take home.

Food Pantries in the Borough of Enfield

Pantry name	Opening hours in late 2024
Edmonton Green Library Community Hub 36 South Mall N9 0TN	Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10.00 – 14.00 by referral
Enfield Town Library Community Hub 66 Church Street EN2 6AX	Thursdays and Fridays 10.00- 14.00 by referral
Phoenix Family Support Centre Pantry 229 <i>Bounces Road</i> Edmonton N9 8LN.	Wednesdays and Thursdays 9.00 – 15.00; Open Access.
Methodist Church Edmonton Hub Pantry 300 Fore Street N9 0PN	Saturdays 11.00-13.00; Open Access
Methodist Church Ponders End Pantry 100 Ordnance Road Enfield EN3 6BW	Saturdays 13.00-15.00; Open Access

While in principle all five Pantries offer “dignity” and “choice”, which should be compelling incentives, the food bank model seems to have attracted the lion’s share of people seeking food aid. At the council’s Food Summit on 26 September 2024, advocates for pantries were asking whether the capacity of the five pantries could be expanded. They thought their model of subsidised provision was in some ways more meritorious than the food bank model. Borough officers said that there was little prospect of increased public-funded support for pantries because of continuing budgetary restraint.

f) A pioneering food coop in Enfield

At April 2025, there was only one known Food Co-op in Enfield. This is the Boundary Hall Food Co-op based in the community hall of the Joyce and Snells council estate in Edmonton N18. This group of mainly female householders living on this large estate was formed in 2022 in response to widely shared worries about the rising cost of living following the Covid Emergency and the repercussions of the Ukraine war. The group is a community association with registered membership paying a subscription at each attendance. It obtains a range of foodstuffs, some donated, some fresh food from the Felix project and some purchased from cash and carry sources. When members attend meetings to collect purchases or allocations they also participate in discussion. This is a fairly small group of around twenty members with strong leadership from elected officers, especially the much-respected chairperson. They have affiliated with the Enfield Food Partnership and have longer term aspirations to find new premises in an adjoining street where they might develop into a community centre with wider functions.

Food co-ops are small buying groups, providing their members with free and affordable groceries, sourced in bulk and distributed at a very low price. Across north London there is a small network of food co-ops linked with CooperationTown, and the Boundary Hall group is affiliated with this. Cooperation Town began in Gospel Oak and has several co-op groups in Camden, using their own warehouse as well as other wholesale sources. They say members can save as much as 40% off supermarket prices. The movement has now appointed a NE London organiser. CooperationTown states in its website: “All co-ops are owned by their members and run according to local needs. Members decide collectively on how to organise and are responsible for the day to day running of the co-op. While each Cooperation Town co-op is independent, the network shares resources and support across the movement.” These attributes hold good for the Boundary Hall co-op.

g) A Community Kitchen: Enfield Cooking Champions

The community kitchen movement has roots in the USA where all big cities have substantial numbers of homeless people living on the streets and subsidised day centres have developed a kitchen capacity. Some are simply soup kitchens while others offer users the chance to do some of their own cooking. Enfield Cooking Champions began by providing meals for NHS workers in the Covid emergency, and also got involved in promoting cooking in some Enfield schools. They describe their later development in these words:

Cooking Champions has become a registered charity and is aiming to expand beyond Enfield. Their website sets out their history as follows: "Cooking Champions, founded by Clare Donovan, first started with children's cooking lessons and food education in schools (earning an Urban Food Award). Then in March 2020, during lockdown, we saw an urgent need to help our community. One single social media post created waves of engagement and support and led us to provide 390+ meals for NHS workers within 24 hours, quickly increasing to over 1,000 meals weekly (thanks to Winchmore Hill Sports Club opening up their kitchen for us to use).

Our team of strangers quickly became a dynamic unit, delivering meals and food parcels to individuals, families, and the homeless. A major milestone was launching our community kitchen in Ponders End in October 2022 (through a Go Fund Me campaign), transforming St. Matthew's Church Hall into the borough's first dedicated community kitchen. In November 2022, we became a registered charity. To date, we've made way over 58,000 meals without missing a week, sharing our passion for food with the community.

We are committed to making this inclusive, accessible space a model for future expansions, aiming to reach wider communities across London and beyond."

Another community kitchen project is London Community Kitchens. They have an ambition to set up a project in Enfield and their representative attended the Enfield Food Summit in September 2024. They can be found at: londoncommunitykitchen.co.uk. They run community cafes in Barnet (Burnt Oak), Brent and Harrow and plan to start a community kitchen and cafe in Enfield.

h) Allotment growers and food banks

There are 36 allotment gardens in the borough. Most of these are run by allotment associations on land leased from Enfield Council. An Act of 1926 gives them long term security of tenure. Keen allotment gardeners grow a lot more vegetables and fruit than their households can consume and some are willing to provide a regular supply of surplus produce for distribution in food banks and pantries. The Felix Project is best placed to be the intermediary in this, and has been exploring links with some allotment associations.

Enfield's local plan includes several sections on the further development and care of green open spaces across the borough. Recently special attention has been paid to the north east quarter of the borough, from Ponders End to Enfield Wash. Within this part of the plan, encouraging food growing is mentioned. However, there is relatively little said about the allotment gardens in Enfield. One allotment garden, Barrowfield Green, includes a special plot run by the Hearts and Helpers

charity for rough sleepers. Their aims include: creating positive spaces and workshops to improve mental health; involving volunteers; providing skills training on subjects such as growing fruits and vegetables, wood work, healthy eating and making a positive home; and promoting healthy eating opportunities. This brings non-gardeners into contact with self-help food growing.

The borough owns Forty Hall Farm sited behind the heritage house. It leases this to Capel Manor College, whose students do work experience with vegetable and flower growing as well as animal husbandry. The farm also runs a scheme for volunteers from the community, some of whom help prepare organic vegetable boxes for sale to households in Barnet and Enfield. There is clearly scope to include the farm in efforts to supply food banks, via the Felix Project. The farm's open days already promote self-help gardening and more of this is planned. We have begun discussion with college and farm leaders on these possibilities.

The council's policies on amateur food growing were included in a published Food Strategy for Enfield. This looked towards three long-term objectives:

- a) Encouraging healthier eating and physical activity as part of a healthier lifestyle.
- b) Supporting and improving the performance of Enfield's thriving food sector.
- c) Promoting food security across the borough.

i) Enfield Food Partnership

The Enfield Food Partnership (EFP) was formed to further the work of the former Enfield Food Alliance. The vision of the EFP is to work towards a sustainable, resilient food system that ensures access to healthy, affordable food for all residents. It emphasises collaboration among local organisations, the promotion of food security, and the support of initiatives that contribute to the overall well-being and sustainability of the Enfield community. It is focussed around actively promoting the redistribution of food to ensure no waste, helping to alleviate hunger and provide wraparound support enhancing the value of organisations through collaboration. The EFP aims to co-create a revised policy on Enfield Food poverty that reflects current needs and circumstances, boost visibility and recognition for organisations, and provide access to training and larger funding opportunities.

j) Overview of the borough's food aid scene in 2025

These notes illustrate the rapid and sustained expansion of Enfield's food aid sector in the years 2012 to 2024.

When we interviewed managers of some of the facilities described or listed above we heard several cautionary remarks on the limits to further expansion. On the supply side, supermarkets are beginning to replace their donations to food banks with schemes for discount shopping by their staff (who also feel a need for some food aid); citizen shoppers might be experiencing "donor fatigue"; and cash support for food banks and pantries is at risk of cuts to both council and central government spending. On the demand side, current forecasts by economists are leaning towards a picture of absolute contraction of GDP during 2025-29, and government spending on cash welfare benefits is set to be reduced in the same period: these trends will certainly increase the prevalence of poverty in the most hard-pressed social groups. It is possible that the food aid providers will see a widening gap between demand for their services and the supply of the food and household goods they have available. We might expect there to be more public debate and charitable appeals to try to close such a gap. It is very hard to predict how such pressures will play out. However, it seems reasonable to observe that there will be medium-term pressure to expand philanthropic food aid projects, given the likelihood that government-funded welfare provision will not keep up with need.

The other notable trend in Enfield during the past decade has been differentiation among food aid providers. The emergence of a food co-op and a community kitchen might be harbingers of further experiment and variation. One topic for discussion within the Enfield Food Partnership has been how far providers are interested in more systemisation and harmonisation of their activities. Already the Felix Project has had an influence as a kind of regulator of the system, insofar as it supplies projects, by requiring a contractual commitment to certain hygiene and storage standards. Members of the partnership steering group have expressed different views on harmonisation, for example in respect of how referrals by health and social workers should be done. Our feeling from the field so far is that differentiation is a stronger force than the search for harmonisation, but time will tell.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

During the period 2012-24, food aid projects dramatically increased in number across Enfield, and especially in the eastern wards of the borough. The establishment of “model projects” by Trussell Trust and Felix Project was an indication that Enfield had significant numbers of “food poor” households and that their needs were intensified by the beginnings of a government austerity drive, cutting some welfare benefits, which was destined to continue in various dimensions until 2020 (when Covid emergency provisions improved Universal Credit and some in work benefits). In addition to the expansion of the two anchor projects, there were a steadily increasing number of smaller neighbourhood initiatives, mainly to provide food banks at places of worship or in community centres; some of these explored alternative food aid models such as food pantries or co-ops. By 2024 Enfield accommodated five different models of food aid provision.

These were:

- Standardised packages for households with a referral (the “Trussell model”);
- Walk-in food banks allowing users to choose their own packages;
- Subscription-based food pantries offering subsidised shopping;
- Community kitchens combining sit-down and take-away meals with shared cooking facilities;
- Member-managed food co-operatives;

(We have excluded from our survey the extension of free school meals by the mayor of London and some individual schools’ provision of foodbank style packages for parents collecting children.)

Overall then, there is strong evidence that increasing numbers of Enfield households experienced “food poverty” in 2012-24 and their concerns met a response in expanding numbers and increasingly varied food aid facilities.

Recommendation 1

Enfield has an established landscape of “expressed food poverty” to meet which, an array of food aid facilities is also established. The Enfield Food Partnership must consider if their remit needs to change in order to support and steer this scene, while also looking towards longer term solutions to food poverty.

There is much that we do not know about the dynamics of demand for food support in Enfield. We have referred to “increasing food poverty” as a social condition based on our knowledge of the rise of food aid. But food poverty is a highly mediated subset of wider poverty conditions. It is likely that some drivers of “household cash poverty” such as rising housing and energy costs had a large effect on demand for food aid in particular years, such as those at the peak of the government’s austerity campaign (2012-15) as well as the grocery-store price explosion following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (2022-23).

It follows from these considerations that “the root causes” of food poverty must lie within the multiple causes of poverty in general. For England and Wales, Joseph Rowntree and the Resolution Foundations have charted the patterns and trends of household poverty in cash terms over the period 2010-24. Their surveys show that the most deprived households suffered increasing pressures on their budgets throughout this period. In addition, the Food Foundation’s recent Food Prices Tracker found that food prices in particular had been felt more severely by lower income households. The Food Foundation sees these price pressures as a national security issue which should be heeded by businesses and government.

We conclude that the demand for food aid was in part a consequence of this intensification of pressures on the least well-off households, but their expressed needs were almost certainly supplemented by other demand from some better-off households. These latter had experienced pressures from interest and mortgage rates, energy prices and similar price shocks which were noticeable during 2015-24.

Among Enfield's direct food aid providers, only the North Enfield Food Bank maintains profiles of its users, yielding data which can be compared with those other localities through the Trussell Trust network which monitors and analyses food aid demand in England and Wales. In 2025 Trussell was joined by researchers of the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) in a study of food poverty across the UK. This concluded that inadequacy of cash welfare benefits was the immediate cause of much food poverty. A panel study of food aid project users' profiles and take-up of aid across Enfield would compare with Trussell's national picture. This might suggest ways forward for policy and practice across the Enfield Food Partnership.

Recommendation 2

Authorities responsible for food security in the Borough of Enfield should scope out possibilities for running a panel study over the coming decade 2025-35 tracking food aid provision and its take-up. Periodic reports from this survey should reach a national audience.

The total volume of food and other provisions claimed from Enfield's food banks and pantries has risen relentlessly since 2012. Food aid has supplemented cash welfare payments in ways which shield its users from state claw-back; this has likely accelerated take-up of food aid. Our case studies of particular food aid initiatives have shown efforts to improve the nutritional value of the packages of food taken home for cooking, supported (for example) by contributions of fresh vegetables from the Felix Project. Nutrition issues have thus been highlighted among the regular users of food aid projects. This has opened an avenue towards "better nutrition" campaigning. There is a need for more information and advice to feed into such campaigning.

Recommendation 3

Authorities responsible for food security in the Borough of Enfield should work with the council's Public Health team to promote consultations using participatory budgeting formats to capture citizens' expectations of the food aid industry so as to assess support for its further expansion either through public money or by way of voluntary donations and volunteering.

A founding principle of the Felix Project, which we found being emphasised by their Enfield leadership, was that food production, distribution and use needs to be radically changed in ways which will substantially reduce carbon footprints and thus mitigate climate change.

Recommendation 4

Environmental conservation campaigns such as EnCaf in our borough should continue to have dialogue, and where possible joint activities, with authorities responsible for food security in the Borough of Enfield in the cause of "decarbonising" food production, distribution and consumption as a key part of a national strategy for zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Further Reading

Online Reports:

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

UK Poverty 2025

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2025-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>

The Children's Society

Shaping the Future of Local Welfare and Crisis Support in England Inquiry Report 2025

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/Shaping%20the%20Future%20of%20Local%20Welfare%20and%20Crisis%20Support%20in%20England.pdf>

CAF Charity Resilience Index

How the cost-of-living crisis is affecting the sector

<https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-research/charity-resilience-index-report.pdf>

Local Government Association

Household Support Fund survey report: June/July 2024

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Household%20Support%20Fund%20Survey%20Report%20July%202024.pdf>

The Independent Food Aid Network

IFAN's Response: Ending the need for food banks as a primary response to food insecurity July 2023

<https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/blog/ifans-response-ending-the-need-for-food-banks-as-a-primary-response-to-food-insecurity>

Published Books:

Poverty Bites: Food, Health and Poor Families by Elizabeth Dowler, Sheila Turner, Barbara Dobson

Publisher: Child Poverty Action Group 13 Dec. 2001

Food and Poverty: Food Insecurity and Food Sovereignty among America's Poor by E. Brooke Kelly & Julia Wait (Editors), Leslie Hossfeld

Publisher: Vanderbilt University Press 30 Sept. 2018

Dynamics of Poverty and Food Sufficiency by David C Ribar

Publisher: Bibliogov 29 Aug. 2012

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<https://www.trussell.org.uk/>