



Food Access & Older People

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Introduction



- Who are we?
 - What do we mean by food poverty/access?
 - Factors which influence food access
 - Older people, diet and health
 - Current work
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Food Access Network



- The Food Access Network - UK is working to tackle diet-related ill health amongst the UK's most disadvantaged communities. By addressing the underlying causes of food poverty, we aim to ensure that *everyone* in the UK has access to healthy, affordable food.
- The Food Access Network - UK currently has a membership of over 300 food projects working to improve the nutrition, health and wellbeing of their local communities. We provide vital support to these local projects through variety of resources including a quarterly newsletter, a range of information and events, and the Food Access Network database.

What is Food Poverty?



“Food poverty means a worse diet, worse access, worse health, higher percentage of income on food and less choice from a restricted range of foods”

Prof Tim Lang, City University

What is Food Poverty?



- Includes a number of factors, not just linked to food
 - Dietary intake of nutritionally poor foods or lack of intake of adequate food
 - Under-consumption of fruit and vegetables
 - Social and physical environment
 - Social capital & sense of community
 - Income & employment
 - Traditions/beliefs & influence of family
 - Food Access – Access, Availability, Awareness, Affordability
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Definitions of Food Access



- ***Accessibility*** –links directly to physical access, the presence of shops and an individuals ability to reach them. The biggest problem is often the lack of food shops in an area.
- ***Availability*** – The opportunities a person has to purchase healthy food. Local shops may not stock healthy options due to a shorter shelf life, lower profit, a perceived lack of interest or a shortage of storage options.

Definitions of Food Access



- *Affordability* – Actual and perceived.
Older people and poverty in the UK.
- *Awareness* – Lack of knowledge or skills required to cook foods from scratch, perceived affordability & misinformation

Malnutrition among older people in the community

- 1 in 10 aged over 65 are experiencing malnutrition
 - Economic burden equivalent to that of obesity - £7.3 billion per year.
 - Breaking the Cycle
 - Policy Recommendations from the ENHA, ILC, BAPEN.
 - Busting myths e.g. ageing and thinness
 - Food poverty has an important role to play
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Food Access and Malnutrition in Older People



- Diet has been found to be strongly related to the availability of food and food choices (Lehmann, 1989; Herne, 1995; McKie, 1999)
- Consumption of a healthy diet may be related to an individual's ability to purchase such goods (DoH, 1998; Cooper et al, 1999; Furey et al, 2001).
- Older people develop coping strategies in order to access food as well as maintain food choice & independence (Wilson, 2003).

Tackling Food Poverty in Older People



- Community Mapping
 - Initiatives often include food, but are not necessarily aimed at preventing malnutrition.
 - Address food access, social exclusion and sense of community.
 - Reach a large number of people and facilitate information sharing.
 - Empowering older people to stay independent, make their own food choices and enjoy food and cooking.
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What do older people think?

“There used to be a big old market on North Street, it was wonderful, you could get everything you needed....it’s changed absolutely”

“They took them all out of the middle and put them round the edge...what use is that to those of us who don’t have cars?”

“Well, it [shopping] gets you out doesn’t it?...it’s about keeping yourself occupied. I’ve been on my own for 15 years and I don’t see how you can get lonely if you’ve always got something to do”

“My friend gets her shopping at the same time, so she’s doing me a favour really”

What do older people think?

“My one pleasure is being able to choose what I eat for myself”

“That’s what makes the difference [between enjoying shopping and not].
We’re still in control of those choices”

“The girl that does my shopping is very good...sometimes she’ll bring things that I don’t want. Still, you’ve got to be grateful for what you can get”

“I have to think about the best way all round to get what I need”

Developing ideas

- Working in partnership with Age Concern England
 - What do older people consider are the biggest issues around food access?
 - How do older people think the problems they experience around food access could be solved?
 - How can we raise awareness/start to address these?
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