



 UK  
PROGRAMMES





In July 2021, 7.3% of UK households faced food insecurity; just 6 months later, this had risen to 8.8%



In 2022, more than 2 million British adults have gone a whole day without eating because they couldn't afford food



In 2021, 2.5m people used a food bank in the UK, 600,000 more than 2020



2 million British children do not have access to a healthy and affordable diet



In the first 6 months of 2020, over 2,500 children were admitted to hospital with malnutrition in the UK, double the number over the same period in 2019



# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Times are tough in the UK and getting tougher. We are all dealing with higher utility bills. The cost of fuel has gone through the roof.

Food prices have gone up too. And it looks like they are going to keep rising for some time to come. If you have a job that pays a decent wage you can get by. You may need to cut back, but you can ride it out.

But today, a growing number of people in the UK can't get by. Daily they must make painful decisions – do I eat today or pay my council tax bill? Do I put a fiver on the electric key meter or spend the money getting a bus for my hospital appointment? Do I get my children's shoes repaired so they can go and play with their friends? Or do I use the money to feed them?

Having no food and no money means you have no control and no say over your life. It affects your physical health and your emotional wellbeing.

Hunger in the UK is not new. But, in the modern age, the levels of hunger are. In the past two years the cost-of-living crisis and Covid have dragged more people into poverty and hunger.

Around 2.5 million children experienced food poverty between August 2021 and January 2022. As a result, more and more people are being forced to ask for help. Many food banks, community kitchens, food pantries and social supermarkets are seeing record levels of demand. Some are overwhelmed – unable to keep up with this increasing demand.

Many people are skipping meals, going hungry or not eating for a whole day – because they can't afford food. The Guardian newspaper reported that in April 2022, more than two million adults went without food for a whole day because they could not afford to eat.

The newspaper also reported a 57 per cent jump in the number of households cutting back on food or skipping meals over the first three months of 2022, with more than seven million living with food shortages, up from 4.7 million in January of the same year.

Buying decent food is vital for people's health. But often healthy food is beyond people's means. Especially now.

Rising prices are having a devastating impact on millions of households in the UK. Some adults say they are sacrificing their meals so their children can eat.

But when you do this, your blood sugar drops along with your energy levels and mental acumen. It makes life even harder for those trying to bring up healthy children.

And for many people – like those with Type 1 and 2 diabetes, the elderly and pregnant women – going without healthy food at regular intervals is not an option. They have to eat well and they have to eat regularly.

More and more people are relying on food banks, but these often don't give out fresh fruit and veg. And many food banks are facing supply problems as fewer people can afford to donate to them.

# WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

In 2020, for the first time in our forty-year history, Action Against Hunger started working in the UK to tackle hunger right here.

We face an unprecedented crisis and we need unprecedented action. That's why we are bringing our skills, knowledge and experience to bear at home.

Wherever we work internationally, we know local solutions solve local problems. People in their own communities know best how to get things done. Our expertise and our knowledge accelerates and multiplies the work local communities can do. So, we work in partnership with local people, with everyone bringing their skills together for the good of all.

As hunger surges right here in the UK putting greater pressure on food banks and groups trying to help people keep their heads above water, we are pitching in. Doing what we do best: sharing our expertise and knowledge to help people tackle hunger.

Our vision is of a world free from hunger – a world in which all children and adults can access enough healthy and nutritious food with dignity. Today, that includes the UK.

And we're doing that in a number of ways – working with local people and organisations to support 'community kitchens', 'food pantries' and 'social supermarkets'.

A social supermarket is a shop that sells food to people on a lower income at a huge discount. It's like a normal supermarket with a lot of choice but goods are available at a fraction of the price of high street stores.

Food pantries are similar, but members pay a small fee to join and in return they get to choose their own discounted food at a fraction of the high street cost, plus they get access to fresh fruit and vegetables, helping maintain a healthy diet for them and their families. They both buy up high-quality, surplus food. So it's cheaper and so nothing goes to waste.

Community kitchens are different. They provide hot meals to hungry guests – including people who are homeless, families living with food poverty and people who are isolated and lonely. Guests can simply come along without booking and enjoy great food and company in a welcoming community setting. It's about filling hungry stomachs. But it's also about meeting others, making friends and beating loneliness.

At Action Against Hunger, we know local groups are best placed to provide help because they understand what's needed in their very own communities.

But we have 40 years of experience in launching emergency response programmes, with expertise in getting good food to the people who need it. So together with our local partners, we are unstoppable.

## Working in partnership

So far, we've partnered with groups in Manchester, southeast London and the West Midlands, in areas of high deprivation and where hunger levels are rising. We pay the start-up costs and help set up local organisations. With our know-how and money, we make sure our partners have a flying start.

Our London partner, Lewisham Homes – the housing arm of Lewisham Council – is a good example of how this works.

Members living in Deptford – a part of the borough of Lewisham where deprivation levels are seriously high – pay a weekly fee of £3.50 for a food package that would normally cost £40. Lewisham Homes even delivers to people's doors when they are house-bound and unable to visit a food store.





Alys Exley-Smith, Community Relations Manager at Lewisham Homes, explains the thinking behind this model. “Food stores are sustainable and enable residents on a low income to access low-cost food including fresh produce. They encourage communities to come together and be part of something.”

For many people in the UK struggling to make ends meet and feed their families, having to resort to food bank carries a great deal of stigma.

“We need to ensure no one is too proud to ask for help when they need it,” says Alys. “We’ve found that a community store is something people want to be part of.”

These food services respond to local needs and ensure the most vulnerable families in some of the poorest regions can get healthy and affordable food with choice and dignity.

Food banks can be life savers. But they are only a short-term solution. Normally people can use a food bank only a few times while they get back on their feet. But often people need more help for longer.

Also, they offer very little choice. They often don’t have fresh food or fruit and vegetables. They normally only provide basics such as rice, pasta, bread and tinned food. These might be filling, but they’re not nutritious.

Action Against Hunger and our partners make sure the people we help not only get filling food, but healthy and nutritious food as well. This is so people can thrive and not just survive.

We have supported our community partners to provide emergency food provision for families and individuals struggling to get hold of food and essential items during the pandemic.

This has been a new experience for our partners. So we’ve helped them learn the skills needed to keep their projects going. And it’s working. In just six months in 2020, our partners delivered more than 6,000 meals to 600 families.

But we’re not stopping there. We want people to be excited about food. So we teach people how to cook great, healthy and nutritious meals. And we work with some of our food and hospitality partners – such as Tenderstem Broccoli and YO! Sushi – to run healthy cooking workshops as well.

We are also reaching out to other parts of the country. For example, we’re working with Somerset County Council to help them set up a network of food pantries across the county.

And we want to go further. Now more than ever, we must support communities in the UK who are suffering as well as individuals and communities in some of the world’s poorest countries..







# JAY & ALLA'S STORIES

Jay, from Deptford, London, gets help from Lewisham Homes. "Without this place I don't know what I'd do," he says. "We pay £3 and walk out with quite a bit of food. You can also pick and choose what you want from what you don't want.

"A lot of foodbank places you can't – they normally give it to you in a box and you take what you're given. Whether you eat it or not, whether you like it or not, that's just how it is. But here it's slightly different. They should open up more of these places to be honest. I really do think so."

Alla, from Smethwick in the West Midlands, has two children aged five and three. When the pandemic struck, her husband lost his job.

Alla says: "The loss of his salary has meant that we are struggling to make ends meet and are relying on family to help us financially".

The loss of work and money took an emotional toll on Alla and her family. Her husband suffered from guilt and Alla lost confidence.

This is where Smethwick Church Action Network (Smethwick CAN) stepped in with our support. Not only has Smethwick CAN provided Alla and her family with food, they have also helped Alla get state benefits to turn her financial situation round. In turn, she has got her confidence back and helped her husband deal with the guilt he feels for not being able to support his family. And now they are able to support their family together.

**Contact us for more information, we would love to hear from you.**

For individuals, trusts or foundations - [Philanthropy@actionagainsthunger.org.uk](mailto:Philanthropy@actionagainsthunger.org.uk)

or - if you are corporate - [Partnerships@actionagainsthunger.org.uk](mailto:Partnerships@actionagainsthunger.org.uk)

Together, let's take action against hunger.