Enough is Enough – Belfast’s response to food poverty
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What do we mean by food poverty?

“inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet ... due to issues of the access to and affordability of food ... with related impacts on health, culture and social participation.”

Friel and Conlon 2004
What are aims of Food Poverty Working Group?

- Increased access to affordable healthy food in Belfast
- Fewer people experiencing food poverty in Belfast
- Place food poverty on the policy agenda
Sustainable Food Cities Award Framework

- Multiagency partnership established to assess and tackle full range of issues
- Living wage being promoted
- Relevant agencies providing rapid referral to hardship funds and emergency food aid
- Relevant staff trained and able to advise on accessing healthy foods and skills training
- Healthy weight services being provided – healthy diet and physical activity promoted
- Efforts being made to maximise uptake of social food provision
- More healthy options available in shops, takeaways, vending machines, catering settings
- City working to prevent food deserts and food swamps
FPWG approach

- Problem assessment
- Data collection
- Landscape mapping
- Coalition and network building
- Relationship building with decision makers
- Develop city-wide action plan
Who is on the FPWG?

- Advice sector – Advice NI, East Belfast Independent Advice Centre, Ligoniel
- Belfast City Council
- Belfast Health Development Unit
- Belfast and South Eastern Health & Social Care Trusts
- Belfast Healthy Cities
- Consumer Council NI
- FareShare
- Food banks – Storehouse,
- Food Standards Agency
- Grow
- Public Health Agency
- Ulster University
Some key facts about food security in NI

• Greater reliance on state benefits than rest of UK
• Not yet seen full implementation of Welfare Reform
• Higher proportion of income spent on food
• Greater dependence on convenience stores as opposed to supermarkets
• National Diet and Nutrition Survey shows NI has some of poorest nutritional habits in UK
What do organisations in Belfast provide people with?

- Distribute food parcels, either through a food bank or independently: 36
- Run courses on nutrition/cooking skills/healthy eating on a budget: 26
- Regularly provide free cooked meals: 19
- Provide low-cost cooked meals (e.g. through a community café): 6
- Provide un-cooked food at low cost: 2
Food banks in Belfast

3 Trussell Trust
6 Independent

11,697 people in NI received three days’ emergency food in 2013 – 2014 from Trussell Trust food banks

▲ 489% over the previous year

4,338 people fed by 5 independent food banks in 2014
The most common reasons for visiting a food bank in Belfast are:

- Low-income
- Benefit delays, cuts and sanctions.

Other reasons include debt, unemployment, homelessness, mental and physical health problems, and having no access to public funds.
Community gardens enable access to fresh food at low or no cost, as well as enabling participants to exercise, develop new skills and make new friends.

14 organisations in Belfast run or participate in community gardening projects.

Belfast City Council also runs 12 community gardens and 6 allotments.
Enough is Enough event
23 March 2015
Enough is Enough Food Poverty
Recommendations

• Rights-based approach
• Address the structural causes
• Advocacy
• Widening the debate
• Promoting availability of fresh, healthy food
• Data collection and measurement
Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
Welfare reform mitigation

... Stormont should pilot strategies to tackle food poverty, potentially through a network of community food shops, social stores and supermarkets.
Enough is Enough
Collaborative Response

• Promoting access to healthy fresh food through community shops/social supermarkets and surplus food redistribution
• Building community food knowledge, skills and cooking
• Tackling child hunger
• Promoting the availability of fresh healthy food through community gardens
• Increasing access to advice and support services
• Determining best practice for monitoring food poverty
• Strengthening advocacy and influencing food poverty related policies