Agenda

• Definitions and methodology
• Analysis of the strengths and limitations of three existing policy responses:
  • Food banks
  • Food stamps
  • Educational programmes
• Summary and proposal
• Questions
Dual definitions

• **Food poverty** — Inability to access food that can comprise a proper diet. Not all about hunger, but rather about gaining adequate nutrition to “attain and maintain health”. As such, can also include issues of access, availability within communities. (Bristol, 2013)

• **Food insecurity** — Not simply hunger, nor is it a lack of access to food that can comprise an adequate diet. Results specifically from a lack of financial and other resources. Not a measure of a single day’s hunger, but rather the “episodic and cyclical” nature of hunger.

• **Our definition** — For our purposes, we have chosen to look at both food poverty and food insecurity. This is for three reasons: data on food poverty alone are difficult to come by; high level of overlap between the two; most closely mirrors the common conception of food poverty
## Financial Crisis and Food Poverty

### Table 3: Trends in proportion unable to afford meat/chicken/fish, 2003–11

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Sample average</td>
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<td>5.6***</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.7***</td>
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</table>

Notes: Data Source: EQLS, 2003–2011. Significance stars refer to change in 2007 and 2011 vs. baseline year of 2003: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.
Methodological Challenges

- Lack of universal definitions, standards of measurement
  - Inadequate international data
  - Country-specific data have different focuses
- Hard to differentiate from simple poverty
  - Nutritious foods cost more ‘per calorie’ than low-nutrition foods
- Necessary to control for other economic variables
  - Food prices, commodities, utilities, transportation
Food banks

Food stamps

Educational programmes
Rise of Food banks (UK)

- Foodbank explosion in UK - 500,000 people reliant on foodbanks, Oxfam estimate (2013)
- Charity/volunteer run
- Not Government policy but...
  - Job centres directing people to foodbanks etc.
  - Piecemeal funding - £2.9 million
- A ‘policy’ or a gap in policy?
UK Stakeholder Map

High power

Low power

High interest

Low interest

Department of Work and Pensions

Other Gov Departments

Politicians

Local Councils

Media

Food Bank providers

Food Industry

Charities

Food Insecure households
Food banks users – unrepresentative

- Not a reliable proxy for food insecurity.
- Canadian - annual national surveys of food insecurity (Loopstra and Tarasuk 2015)
  - Major differences to foodbank user ‘sample’
  - Less were dependent on welfare
  - More were employed or homeowners
Food banks – accountable? Safe?
Proposal: a Rights based system

- UN right to ‘highest standard of health’ could be basis for government responsibility
- Need accountable government structures
  - Department for food insecurity?
  - Or create new responsibility – based on national survey
Food stamps: definition

• This policy relates to **means tested food vouchers** for people on no or low incomes

• People are typically given either vouchers or electronic cards that can only be spent on food, usually with some restrictions (e.g. no alcohol, cigarettes)

• This is a **redistributive policy** that is effectively provided by a range of private sector companies (i.e. the stores people choose to redeem their food stamps at, as well as the electronic cards that money is loaded onto)

• In some cases, recipients are required to meet **behavioural eligibility criteria** such as proving they are actively searching for jobs or that they are employed (Immervoll) or passing a drug test
Comparison: UK vs. USA

**USA**

- The *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides food-purchasing assistance
  - It is a central element of the US social safety net and has been available nationwide since 1975
  - Current SNAP uptake rates are at all time high
  - In practice, many households combine SNAP and cash to buy food
  - In order to determine eligibility, household income and assets are taken into account

**UK**

- Pregnant women and parents with a child under four years old may be eligible for *Healthy Start vouchers* to help buy some basic foods:
  - This is a means-tested scheme providing vouchers to spend with local retailers:
    - From November 2016, Universal Credit became a qualifying benefit for Healthy Start
    - All pregnant women under the age of 18 are eligible
  - Pregnant women and children over one and under four years old can get one £3.10 voucher per week. Children under one year old can get two £3.10 vouchers (£6.20) per week
  - This can be spent on milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables or infant formula
Analysis: impact of food stamps in the USA (1/2)

- **Economic impact:**
  - SNAP expenditure closely follows economic cycles
  - SNAP plays the role of an automatic stabiliser
  - Hoynes and Schanzenbach (2009) found that households react to cash transfers and food stamps similarly
  - SNAP is the second most effective US programme (after EITC) in lifting people out of poverty
  - Can act as a stimulus during an economic downturn
  - Given the general wage stagnation/decline in jobs available for low skilled workers, there is an increasing need for a social safety net to supplement earnings to enable families to maintain incomes
Analysis: impact of food stamps in the USA (2/2)

• **Impact on children:**
  • Studies how that food stamps have had a positive impact on infant health by reducing low birth rates (Stanford study)
  • Foetal Origins Hypothesis: receiving adequate nutrition during pregnancy will prevent the body from invoking irreversible biological mechanisms based on the assumption that it will be nutrition deprived

• **Impact on overall health:**
  • There is an observable “food stamp cycle” whereby the calories and nutrition declines over the course of the month (Shapiro 2005, Hastings and Washington 2010). Some studies link this to unhealthy coping strategies such as fasting and bingeing
  • There is fairly consistent evidence that SNAP reduces food insecurity (see studies on comparing the same families pre and post SNAP)
  • SNAP participants consume, on average, fewer fruits and vegetables than non-SNAP participants and are more likely to be obese. However, it is not clear if the relatively poorer nutrition reflects SNAP or poverty and its influences
## Limitations and potential modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Potential modifications</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since all households purchase food, there is a risk of the development of a secondary market in food stamps (Cave). However, in the US fraud rates are declining</td>
<td>Distribute benefits in shorter timeframes (e.g. weekly) to prevent people from running out of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a degree of paternalism implicit in these schemes and it ignores the degree to which people might have poor life or budget management skills (Cave)</td>
<td>Provide people with more support for purchasing certain types of healthy foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people who are eligible do not apply for various reasons, including the complexity of the programme and the fact that they might not know they are eligible. People who are elderly, eligible non-citizens, or those who are working are the least likely to participate in SNAP</td>
<td>Raise awareness of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some poor people live in food deserts and may not have sufficient access to fresh, nutritious food. In addition, some people may still choose to purchase unhealthy foods, leading to a problem with nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strict eligibility criteria can make food stamps costly and complex to administer. However, this may also boost electoral support for the programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some critics argue that food stamps redistribute too much money to the private sector (for example, in the USA Walmart takes in c. 18% of the total US outlays on food stamps)</td>
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Food banks

Food stamps

Educational programmes
Educational/behavioural responses:
Definition

• Nutrition guidelines
  • Aim: increase availability of fruit and vegetable and provide more lower fat school meals and snacks
  • E.g. school meals and snacks (Cullen 2007), school health programs (Perry 2004)

• Regulation of food and beverage availability
  • E.g. limit access to and availability of unhealthy foods from vending machines and other food sold in school campus (Cullen, 2006 & 2007)

• Price intervention
  • Incentives for healthy food (Tak, 2010)
  • Not many studies discovered controlling unhealthy food i.e. through tax (Jaime, 2009)
Comparison: UK vs USA

**USA**

**National**
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-ED)
  - Provide educational programs and conduct social marketing campaigns that increase the likelihood that people eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget.
  - Plan Shop Save and Cook class series
- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
  - Aim to improve low-income families' nutritional wellbeing
  - Educational programs focus on four areas: 1) diet quality and physical activity, 2) food resource management, 3) food safety, 4) food security
- The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program must follow the US Dietary Guidelines
  - Lunches must provide one-third of nutrient needs and breakfast one-quarter
  - 31 million children in 100,000 schools across the country every day. Half are children from low-income households, many of whom also eat breakfast at school.
- School-based physical education programs
  - Carol M White Physical Education Program provides grants to LEAs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to initiate or enhance physical education programs

**UK**

**National**
- Health, exercise, nutrition for the really young (HENRY) (2015) involves local public health departments, NHS trusts, and children services
  - Practitioners training to work with young families
  - Preventive and targeted group programs to help parents adopt a healthier family lifestyles
- National curriculum support
  - Support materials and training for schools to implement nutrition and cooking aspects

**Local**
- Free school meals (Bristol)
  - 13,300 pupils out of 48,900 enrolled (27%) were entitled to FSM and 11,500 pupils (24%) were claiming.
- Food plan (Leicester)
  - Joint up effort with nursery, adult social care, young people services, food banks, and business to tackling different aspects of food poverty, e.g., cooking class, support food and drink manufacturing firms, food hall as focal point to provide fresh food
Analysis: impact of Educational programmes (1/2)

• Improvement on food security status
  • The number of lessons completed by compared 15,846 individuals who had completed 6+ lessons in EFNEP to 300 individuals who had terminated prior to graduation. (Dollahite et al, 2003)
  • Participation was significantly associated with the degree of change in food insecurity score.

• Improvement on food consumption behaviour and dietary intake
  • Burney et al (2002), compared Tennessee EFNEP participants with nutrition education and collected food receipts with those without education or collected food receipts
    • The intervention group that collected receipts saved approximately $10.00 a month and the uneducated control group spent an average of $5.52 more on food per month.
Analysis: impact of Educational programmes (2/2)

• Financial impacts
  • Promotes resource management behaviors, in combination with SNAP benefits, can help families make their food last until the next paycheck and SNAP benefits arrive. (Kaiser, 2015).
  • Short-term interventions can change attitudes and increase financial savvy related to purchasing healthy foods. (Rustad et al, 2012; Dollahite et al, 2014)
Limitations and proposed modifications

### Limitations

- Challenges of measuring effectiveness
  - Evidence of effectiveness is limited, and no studies of cost-effectiveness were identified. (Jaime, 2009)
  - The self-selection bias of needier households into the program (e.g., SNAP-ED, EFNEP)

- No clear link between knowledge gain and behavioural changes
  - Freeman et al (2003), Bullen et al (2004): all participants (school children) understood differences between healthier and unhealthier food and drinks, but this could not modify their behaviour

### Proposed modifications

- Better research evidences
  - Tailored nutrition education (Hawkins 2008; Eyles, 2009)
  - Understand behaviour constructs, learning style, preferred media for target audience
  - Meta analysis: Promising strategy to improve dietary behaviour among all adults in long term (>6m)

- Develop multi-strategy nutrition education interventions (Meiklejoh et al, 2016)
  - Statistically significant impacts on anthropometric and dietary intake measures
## Summary

<table>
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<th>Key benefits</th>
<th>Food banks</th>
<th>Food stamps</th>
<th>Educational programmes</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provides emergency response to acute need</td>
<td>• Money must be spent on food, thereby also improving foetal and child health</td>
<td>• Some studies showed people purchased more healthy foods for cooking and improved their finance management skills improved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key limitations</td>
<td>• Not accountable</td>
<td>• People may continue to consume unhealthy foods</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Not representative of the food insecure population</td>
<td>• In practice, does not reach the entire food insecure population</td>
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<td>Proposal</td>
<td>• Accountable government department responsible data collection</td>
<td>• Create incentives for people to purchase more healthy foods</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Raise awareness of programme</td>
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Implementation process

1. Press brief
2. Data collection: national food insecurity survey
3. Evaluate policy
4. Create a responsible department
5. Allocate resources and implement policy
6. Policy trial: RCTs to analyse the efficacy of cash transfer vs. food vouchers + education
7. Information exchange with other relevant departments (e.g. education, local councils, the NHS)
Key readings


Interventions Designed to Increase Adult Fruit and Vegetable Intake Can Be Effective: A Systematic Review of the Literature [http://jn.nutrition.org/content/135/10/2486.short](http://jn.nutrition.org/content/135/10/2486.short)