

## **Exeter Food Poverty Issues: Summary**

Food Poverty is on the rise in Exeter. Over the last 2 years there has been a 33% increase in demand for food parcels for children at Exeter Food Bank (EFB). Overall, over the last 2 years, there has been a 25% increase in demand for food parcels and EFB have been supplying on average 106 food parcels a week<sup>1</sup>. In conjunction with these food poverty statistics, health indicators related to diet are also concerning. Almost 30% of children at age 10-11, and more than half of adults, are overweight or obese. Over a third of adults are not eating the recommended 5 a day of fruit and veg and deprived Exeter wards host some of the highest density of fast food outlets in Devon<sup>2</sup>.

Whilst Public Health Devon have begun to compile statistics on Food Poverty, Exeter, like most areas in the UK, has insufficient evidence on Food Poverty and the impact it has on those experiencing it. In 2018 Food Exeter were awarded Food Power Food Poverty Alliance funding to begin work to investigate and work on Food Poverty issues in Exeter. We were also awarded funding by The University of Exeter towards this research and holding the summit. We have been collecting preliminary evidence and building partnerships through our work so far:

- Food Poverty in Exeter online survey (*13 respondents*)
- Fair Access to Food Workshop 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2018 (*18 participants representing 17 organisations*)
- Interviews with Exeter Foodbank clients July 2018 (*12 interviews*)

### **Headline preliminary findings from our research**

There are two key issues exacerbating food poverty in Exeter:

- **Welfare Issues, specifically Welfare Reform**  
Welfare reform has had significant negative impacts on benefit claimants as their benefits are being stopped, reduced or benefit applications delayed. These processes have led claimants to experience food and fuel poverty, precarious accommodation and homelessness, physical and mental ill health, accrue debt and more.
- **Precarious Employment**  
Life changes such as job loss and health changes create crises that led Foodbank interviewees to apply for welfare, which led to food bank use. Interviewees reported that experiences with insecure work exacerbated food poverty and mental ill health.
- Other key issues reported: **LifeChanges – Mental/General Health – Issues experienced by Vulnerable Adults – Child Hunger – Food System/Access to food**

### **Action Points for Positive Change**

Strategic and community-based action is required to address Food Poverty in Exeter. Community-based services providing food education and reskilling, food services such as community cafes and social food enterprises that improve access to healthy, local food and food sharing could all help in addressing food poverty. However, for services and enterprises to be successful in addressing food poverty in Exeter, they need to be accompanied by council led policies that address the impacts of welfare reform and more effectively support frontline services.

**By Dr. Rebecca Sandover**  
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<sup>1</sup> Statistics from Exeter Food Bank 2018

<sup>2</sup> Statistics from Public Health Devon – Devon Food Poverty Dashboard 2018