

Food price increases

Overview of the issue

Data from July 2021 indicates that almost 6,000 people are supported weekly through community emergency food providers of which 17% are children.

Food and non-alcoholic drink prices were 5.9% higher in the year to February 2022 on the official CPI measure of inflation. This is up from 5.1% in February and the highest rate of increase since September 2011. ¹

High energy prices for both supermarkets and their suppliers are leading to price rises expected to continue throughout the year.

Following the war in Ukraine, in March the UK National Farmers Union has warned that food prices will rise due to the conflict and the disruption to food output may last for years.² This is because Russia is a major exporter of fertilisers and has put restrictions on exports. Ukraine's Black Sea ports are transportation hubs for exporting certain commodities, including grains and they have mostly been shut.

On 7th February New data released by the Food Foundation reports that 8.8% of households (4.7 million adults) have experienced food insecurity in the past month. This has increased from 7.3% in July 2021. 3.6% (1 million adults) reported that they or someone in their household has had to go a whole day without eating in the past month because they couldn't afford or access food (up from 2.6% in July). This clearly shows that soaring energy and food prices, along with the removal of the £20 uplift to Universal Credit are having a devastating impact on millions of people across the UK.

62% of households have experienced higher energy bills; and 16% of UK households have had to cut back on the quality or quantity of food to afford other essentials (e.g. energy bills). Meanwhile 59% of households are worried that increased energy prices will mean they have less money to afford enough food for themselves/their family.³

Brighton and Hove Food Partnership support a network of providers of food-based services including food banks, meal providers and lately the development of small membership-based community shops where people pay a fee for a fixed number of items. This second model provides more sustainable food support for people that can be accessed in an ongoing way. Food banks were previously meant to be short term use, however in Brighton, food banks identified that 27.1% of users needed

¹ House of Commons Library briefing 'Rising Cost of Living in the UK' 14th April 2022 [CBP-9428.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

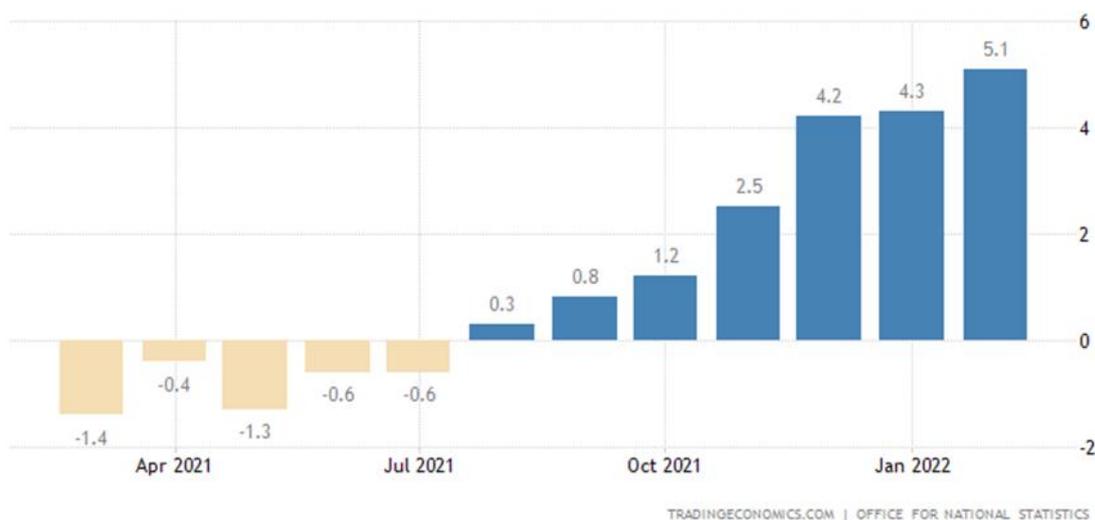
² As above

³ [New data shows food insecurity major challenge to levelling up agenda | Food Foundation](#)

help indefinitely (July 21 Emergency Food Report). People consistently have difficulty affording food after other bills like rent and utilities⁴

Our regional level of food poverty is slightly higher than the national average at 11.3%, however comparably this is not as high as London and the North East. Overall, 59% of all households believe that they will have to cut back on food bills to pay their utility bills going forward. Black Asian and Minority Ethnic households are almost twice as likely to be in food poverty. It is reported that 43.6% of households on Universal Credit have suffered food insecurity in the past six months compared to 8.5% of those who are not on Universal Credit. Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) estimates that the cost of food for families with children in poverty will go up by £26 per month.⁵

Food Inflation over 12-month period



National reports identify that food insecurity levels have risen to the highest yet ([Jan 22\) Food Foundation](#) See Round 9

The cost of food has increased. The cost is expected to increase more in future due to fuel price increases, inflation, the war in Ukraine and global supply chain issues. [Child poverty action group](#) estimates that the cost of food for families will go up by £26 per month for families in poverty.

The cost of living will rise about £20 per week for most family types. Significantly affecting families with children. [New Economics Foundation](#) estimate that 23.4 million people will be unable to afford the cost of living in Spring.

⁴ Citizen's Advice Brighton and Hove report on 'The post-pandemic impact on poverty and financial inclusion in Brighton and Hove 2022-2023'.

⁵ Citizen's Advice Brighton and Hove report on 'The post-pandemic impact on poverty and financial inclusion in Brighton and Hove 2022-2023'

Local impacts (citywide)

Levels of food insecurity are high in Brighton

- At least 5,870 people are supported weekly through community emergency food providers (17% children) in July 2021. [Emergency Food Network Report 2021 \(bhfood.org.uk\)](#)
- Emergency Food Providers reported an increase over winter 2021/22

The cost of living is higher than average in Brighton & Hove which is exacerbating inequalities.

Local impacts (specific communities)

People most likely to need emergency food support are (although the Cost of living crisis is affecting most people):

- People with disabilities or long-term health conditions (including mental health issues) or where there is someone in household who is being cared for
- Families with children especially single parent families
- Older people (60 +)
- Vulnerably housed people
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities
- Homeless people
- Young people (16 – 25)

There are some geographical communities where there will be greater instances of food insecurity and this broadly follows the indexes of deprivation. For further information please see Citizen's Advice report [The-post-pandemic-impact-on-poverty-and-financial-inclusion-in-Brighton-and-Hove-2022-2023.pdf \(cabrightonhove.org\)](#) A summary of this reports findings and recommendations can be found in Appendix 7 of this report.

National mitigations:

The extension to the Household Support Fund will help mitigate some of these issues.

Local mitigations:

A previous [BHCC committee report Nov 4th](#) updated members on the work that is being done, in terms of emergency provision and consideration of a longer-term strategic approach to food.

A report was provided to Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee on 21st April which updated on the response and mitigations for food access. However, at the time of writing this report it was not known about the extension to the Household Support Fund.

The supported and planned actions from the report ([Item 34 Food Impacts from Cost of Living Increase.pdf \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)) were as follows:

- Supporting Brighton & Hove Food Partnership's strategic support to the Emergency Food Network;
- Working with Impact Initiatives food access work e.g., shopping for families who are isolating, digital access for older people, supporting people who are housebound to access food;
- Children's Centres city-wide food bank and affordable food project at Whitehawk;
- Food Policy Coordinator – Emergency Food (7.5 hours per week);
- Food Access commission for supporting Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and Refugee & Asylum seekers;
- Parking vouchers provided for emergency food organisations;
- Promotion of the Healthy Start voucher scheme, when suitable;
- Support to new and existing emergency food providers.

Future Actions - the work streams that the Food Strategy is now focusing on:

- Supporting cash-first (or vouchers where cash isn't possible) approaches through the Household Support Fund e.g. discretionary payments, free school meal holiday vouchers;
- Work strategically across Food/Fuel/Money Advice via officer meetings to share scheme experience to add value and/or reduce duplication;
- Communicate money support schemes through the Emergency Food Network via meetings and email;
- Creation/distribution of materials about where to seek help e.g., cash-first leaflets, which can be distributed via food parcels or in areas of the city;
- Continue to look for premises to use as a shared storage/processing space for emergency food;
- Advance ways of moving beyond crisis to local food system transformation, through long-term strategic city & region plans.
- The current global situation means that food insecurity and disruptions in the supply chain are likely. The city needs a robust mechanism to future-proof any shocks to supply or have plans in place which can be launched if certain conditions are met. We need to review food crisis/risk management to feed into city strategies & plans and ensure any risks with food access are identified quickly and actioned upon within council systems & management;
- Review risk management procedures for food emergencies and incorporate these into city plans and policies;
- Supporting the Brighton & Hove City Mission, who operate Brighton Food Bank, to apply for a 10 year lease on 5 Preston Circus (Council owned), subject to best consideration constraints, to bring much needed extra central capacity for the emergency food needs of residents, whilst also offering viable solutions to help people out of poverty rather than just providing food.

Gaps:

Due to budget constraints, the report identified a funding shortfall to be able to deliver all aspects outlined in the previous report. The report suggested that £45,000 could be earmarked from the potential £200,000 identified through a budget

amendment at Budget Council on 24 April 2022, subject to an increased outturn underspend in 2021/22. The report indicated that the money could be utilised as follows:

What	Amount
Emergency 'on the day' budget for buying in food. Where the person has had no food and is unable to get to a food bank that day. Administered through Community Hub/LDSF & Impact Initiatives.	£6,000
Support to housebound residents who cannot afford to pay for food. Referrals, with funding, to meal delivery services (10 people per month for 2 months referral @ £150 = £18,000) or deliveries from food banks (8 people per month = £2,000). Administered through Community Hub, LDSF & Impact Initiatives.	£20,000
Top-up food budget for discretionary use e.g. emergency food providers in crisis (those that might need to close due to funding shortfalls, putting pressure on other services) or lack of surplus	£17,000
Cash first leaflet	£2,000
TOTAL	£45,000

Conclusions:

The cost of living will increase for Brighton & Hove residents, and this will mean that people who were 'just about managing' will be pushed into food poverty, increasing the numbers seeking support for emergency food. There is current capacity within emergency food providers, but this could be exceeded depending on the numbers seeking the support.

The most effective way of stopping people from needing to seek support for food is to provide adequate household income. Where this is not possible, due to funding shortfalls we must try to provide support for the people who are most vulnerable to malnutrition through a combination of emergency food and wider welfare support. Progress has been made across agreed actions e.g., the Food Access commission for supporting Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and Refugee & Asylum seekers has begun, Promotion of the Healthy Start voucher scheme is underway and Children's Centres city-wide food bank and affordable food project has also started.

Emergency food and crisis responses, including those provided by CVS partners such as the Brighton Mission, need to be incorporated into long-term strategic planning within the council to feed into food system transformation.

