DEFINITION OF FOOD POVERTY:

BEING UNABLE TO ACCESS GOOD, FRESH FOOD BY CHOICE
I was ashamed when I read it. I talked to Carl Wood, the Echo’s managing director, and he felt the same. And we knew our readers would be upset and share that sense of shame. So we decided the Liverpool ECHO would launch a major campaign in conjunction with Can Cook to try and do something about it. A few days later, on August 17, we did.

We knew about Can Cook's work in tackling food poverty - and felt their philosophy of not just providing food - but providing nutritious, freshly cooked food for hungry families - was the best way to help.

People in desperate need don’t just deserve to eat - they deserve to eat as well as the rest of us. But we needed the help of ECHO readers and our growing online audience, if we were going to make a difference. Their responses since have been humbling. And utterly overwhelming. But typical of a city and a region that is rightly renowned for its compassion and its generosity.

Donations immediately flooded in as we stepped up the publicity and told harrowing stories of how Merseyside mums and dads were unable to feed their children. And of those same children turning up at community centres with stomach cramps, having not eaten properly for days.

Stories of good, hard-working people - hit by benefit cuts, low pay & zero hours contracts - who simply could not cope. Of older folk too who are struggling to find the cash to feed themselves in their twilight years. Hard to believe in modern times. But true.

In the first weeks of the Share Your Lunch campaign, ECHO readers donated or pledged more than £30,000. Liverpool and Everton legends, like our own Anfield columnist John Aldridge, pitched in generously too.

And hundreds of hungry families saw healthy, tasty meals - prepared at Can Cook’s base in Speke - delivered free of charge to their front doors or special pick up points.

As Christmas soon approached, we knew we could not let up. Many of those same families faced Christmas Day without a Christmas dinner on their table. By now, Merseyside Police and Chief Constable Andy Cook had generously joined us in the frontline of the war against food poverty. And many more businesses, organisations and individuals too.

So we opened up a new front, with a Just Giving Christmas campaign to raise £10,000 and provide traditional turkey dinners to struggling Liverpool families on December 25. Again, people in the city with Britain’s biggest heart dug deep. And responded magnificently again. So much so that we did not just beat that £10,000 target - but in total raised around £25,000.

I know we can’t solve poverty. That’s for the government and the agencies involved. But thanks to the partnership with Can Cook - and especially Robbie Davison and Laura McCumiskey - we can all make a difference. And help look after our own, the most needy among us.

I’m immensely proud of Liverpool ECHO readers and the difference they have made through this campaign. I thank each and every one of them.

The fight goes on in 2017. And we remain firmly on board as summer soon approaches and more families struggle to feed their children during the holidays, when the school meals are no longer there for their kids.

Will ECHO readers rise to the challenge again?

I think we all know the answer to that one......

Alastair Machray
Editor, Liverpool Echo
Editor-in-Chief,
Trinity Mirror Merseyside, Cheshire and Wales

In August 2016 the Liverpool ECHO published a front page story revealing how 25,000 children across Merseyside had needed to be fed by food banks over the previous 12 months.
You see, all of this comes about because until recently (let’s say 3 years or so) hunger in the UK was only associated with the homeless or attached to those on benefits. Now all that has changed with around 60% of those needing to go to a food bank being in work - meaning that sometimes people holding down 2 jobs are still unable to put food on the table – meaning that they and their dependent children are having to go to work or school with no food at all. In a modern society like ours this is wrong, it does not have to be like this.

At Can Cook, we are working to make sure that everyone who is hungry gets good fresh food to eat. We argue that if people are fed well they are more likely to move on from their crisis quickly. To make this happen, we created the Share Your Lunch campaign. A campaign intent of feeding everyone good food at the point when they most need it - A campaign dedicated to treating people with respect - A campaign focused on bringing together new partnerships intent on solving food poverty in and around the city of Liverpool.

This report is in two parts.

Part 1: captures the highlights of the success of ‘Share’. A success that has developed important partnerships with the Liverpool Echo, Merseyside Police, local restaurants, local companies, TV Chef Simon Rimmer, and importantly the Liverpool public. Through these partnerships, enough money was raised to distribute thousands of fresh meals, delivered across the Liverpool Region into community centres and directly into people’s homes, making sure that good hot food was available to people, even on Christmas Day - it’s a major achievement for all involved.

Part 2: indicates how the Share Your Lunch campaign will develop further in 2017 as we set out to create Good Food Banks and also make sure that no child goes hungry during the summer holidays - these next steps are vital if we are to push back hunger in Merseyside.

If you read this report and have taken part in Part 1 of ‘Share’ either as donor or as a volunteer, thank you because you have made a significant difference to peoples lives. If you have yet to join in please contact us and remember that in Liverpool right now, thousands of good people with amazing children and pensioners who have worked all of their lives, are having to go for days without food. Imagine if those children were yours, or those pensioners your parents or grandparents - that’s what we do at Can Cook - we imagine everyday and we use it as our impetus to SOLVE FOOD POVERTY…

And, who would have thought that in just a few years the words food bank would become so commonplace that nearly everyone understands what those words mean.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT IN 2017 RIGHT ACROSS THE UK, MILLIONS OF HARDWORKING ADULTS WOULD BE UNABLE TO FEED THEMSELVES OR THEIR CHILDREN?

Food poverty

60,000

60,000 people in Merseyside accessed food banks between 2015-2016

Approx 60,000 people are reported to have accessed food banks in Merseyside between 2015 and 2016. The actual number of people falling into food poverty is estimated to be around double that number. However, there is no official measurement in place.
The response to food poverty in the Liverpool City Region has been similar to that of the rest of the country - food banks providing a parcel of ambient, non-perishable goods. Food banks have been a lifeline to millions of people across the UK. However, non-perishable, processed food parcels provide low nutritional value and high levels of salt, sugar, artificial additives, preservatives, colourings and flavourings, presenting health risks to those in crisis with nowhere else to turn.

While researching food poverty, we spoke to food bank users who expressed difficulty in being able to put a complete meal together using the contents of a food bank parcel due to the random selection of items in the parcel, adding further stress in times of crisis. Additionally, we know that up to 40% of the current parcel is unusable because the items in the parcel aren’t designed to make a meal. Some food banks provide users with recipe suggestions for items in their parcel. However, once multiple tins and packets of processed food are combined, the nutritional value of the suggested meal becomes high in saturated fats, salt and sugar; compromising the health of the person consuming the food. Whilst this approach ensures that the consumer doesn’t starve, people experiencing food poverty – particularly for long periods of time – are being forced to compromise their health when a fresh food approach is possible.

Amy is a single parent, to 4 children, two of whom are on the autistic spectrum and one who has a range of food intolerances and allergies, meaning that the majority of her diet is required to be fresh food.

Amy found herself in difficult financial circumstances when she was hit by bedroom tax, requiring her to ‘top up’ her rent to her social landlord by £11 per week, which mounted up until she was eventually threatened with eviction.

Amy’s situation was exacerbated when the father of her children left the home and refused to pay maintenance for the 4 children. With a mounting bedroom tax bill, and numerous other debts to utility providers, Amy was left with nowhere to turn for help.

During this time, Amy was unable to purchase enough food to produce a meal for her and the children, and went almost a full week without a meal to try and provide for the children. Eventually, Amy’s funds and food ran out completely, and she was advised to access a food bank by a family support worker where she was given a food parcel which consisted of non-perishable items. At this point, Amy’s children had been eating sporadically and hadn’t had a fresh meal in a week.

Although grateful for the effort of the volunteers at the food bank, she was unable to use a large proportion of the parcel to provide herself and her children with the food that they needed so she remained hungry.

AMY’S STORY

‘COTTAGE PIE’

A meal suggestion made by a food bank in the North West, high in saturated fats and salt, and lacking any fresh ingredient.

Food Bank Recipe: ‘COTTAGE PIE’

A meal suggestion made by a food bank in the North West, high in saturated fats and salt, and lacking any fresh ingredient.

CURRENT RESPONSE...

The response to food poverty in the Liverpool City Region has been similar to that of the rest of the country - food banks providing a parcel of ambient, non-perishable goods. Food banks have been a lifeline to millions of people across the UK. However, non-perishable, processed food parcels provide low nutritional value and high levels of salt, sugar, artificial additives, preservatives, colourings and flavourings, presenting health risks to those in crisis with nowhere else to turn.

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THE AIMS OF SHARE YOUR LUNCH CAMPAIGN WERE:

- To highlight the need for fresh food in the delivery of food aid
- To ensure that people in Merseyside experiencing food poverty were met with a response that placed their needs at its heart
- To ensure the provision of good, fresh food to people in food poverty in Merseyside
- To stop hunger through the delivery of good food

Can Cook, a Liverpool based social enterprise, specialise in producing high quality, fresh food for schools, nurseries and care homes, combined their skills, kitchens and equipment with the reach of a regional newspaper, the Liverpool Echo and the profile of a local TV Chef, Simon Rimmer to launch the Share Your Lunch campaign.

The partnership was designed to fundraise via the Liverpool Echo asking the public to donate £2 when they ate a meal – sharing their lunch - to enable the production of good quality, fresh meals in the Can Cook Kitchen.

Funds were donated by members of the public, local and national businesses, Merseyside Police and Knowsley Borough Council. We then partnered with community organisations able to distribute food and deliver additional guidance, advice and support when required. Our community partners were connected with other agencies who were able to refer families in crisis.

Thousands of fresh, nutritionally balanced meals were produced each week by chefs in the Can Cook Kitchen. Meals were then packaged and labelled before being delivered to distribution partners, who in turn supported members of their communities who were struggling to access food. In some cases, and when available, people accessing the service were provided with a ‘wraparound package’.

The wraparound parcel enabled community partners to continue to receive donations and ensured that families in crisis have access to a range of suitable breakfasts and lunch options that supplemented the main evening meal. Items that were high in chemical additives, sugar and salt such as instant mashed potato, tinned meat & jarred sauces were not required as part of the parcel.

HOW WE DID IT...

One of many fresh meals produced by Can Cook and distributed through the Share Your Lunch campaign. Recipients were provided with two complete meals daily dependent on circumstances.

SHARE YOUR LUNCH: ‘CREAMY CHICKEN’

ENERGY

<table>
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<th>per serving (400g)</th>
<th>FAT</th>
<th>SATURATED</th>
<th>SUGAR</th>
<th>SALT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>873kJ/208kcal</td>
<td>9.0g LOW</td>
<td>1.8g LOW</td>
<td>4.4g LOW</td>
<td>0.70g LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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Typical values per 100g: Energy 218kJ/52kcal

To highlight the need for fresh food in the delivery of food aid
To ensure that people in Merseyside experiencing food poverty were met with a response that placed their needs at its heart
To ensure the provision of good, fresh food to people in food poverty in Merseyside
To stop hunger through the delivery of good food
WHAT WE’VE DONE:

WE RAISED THE GRAND TOTAL OF:

£51,600

WE GENERATED A TOTAL OF:

25,800 MEALS

SO FAR, WE’VE COOKED WITH FRESH VEGETABLES WEIGHING A TOTAL OF:

19,350 KGS

SO FAR, WE’VE COOKED WITH FRESH MEAT WEIGHING A TOTAL OF:

18,060 KGS

CASE STUDY

Kate is 39 years old and lives in North Liverpool, she had worked since leaving school. Kate has 5 children and fell into financial difficulty in August 2016 when her husband left her. She needed to apply for tax credits when her husband left, to supplement her low income. However, the processing time left her unable to buy enough food for the family after paying the rent.

Kate was issued with a voucher to go to a local food bank, but found the majority of the food unsuitable and was unable to get more than a day’s worth of use from the food parcel. Frustrated at being unable to provide food for her family, she approached the children’s school for help and was directed to the L6 Centre, a Share Your Lunch Distribution Partner. Staff at the L6 Centre were able to provide her with fresh, chilled meals from the Share Your Lunch campaign for her and the children while her tax credits claim was processed.

Kate said ‘knowing that there would be good food on the table for the children allowed me to concentrate on getting my money sorted out, I’ve never had to rely on handouts from anybody but this really helped me and my kids get on our feet’. The L6 Centre provided additional support to Kate, liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions on her behalf, purchasing replacement school uniforms for the children and ensuring she had toiletries. Kate has now come through her crisis and feel that her life is moving on.

‘We have hundreds of Kates in this area, under huge strain through no fault of their own and with nowhere to turn. In partnership with the campaign, we’re able to support around 60 families a week.’

‘Welfare claims can take up to 12 weeks now, that impacts the whole family. Nobody can go 12 weeks with no money and not struggle’.

‘We have seen a massive difference since working with the campaign; we’ve supported families with food aid for a couple of years in the only way we knew how, the campaign has enabled us to improve our offer to families in food poverty’

Gerard Woodhouse
Liverpool City Councillor
OVER THE PAST 6 MONTHS, THE SHARE YOUR LUNCH CAMPAIGN HAS TAKEN US ON AN IMPORTANT JOURNEY, AND HAS FURTHER DEMONSTRATED THE NEED FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE FOOD AID SYSTEM.

While prevention of food poverty requires high level policy change, which could take years to implement, we are developing community based structures that enable resilience amongst communities living in the most deprived areas of Merseyside, and ensures that good, fresh food is consistently available to everybody, regardless of their circumstances.

Over the course of 2017, the Share Your Lunch campaign will focus on two areas, 1. Child hunger and 2. Good Food Banks. During the school holidays, we will provide thousands of meals to children across the region with the support of community centres, play schemes, youth clubs and other community based organisations. This effort will go some way to ensuring that children don’t go hungry through the summer holidays, and that their health isn’t compromised in the period that they are away from school. Action to ensure that good food is available to all children outside of term time is essential to preventing long term, negative health impacts.

2017 will also see the launch of ‘Good Food Banks’ and the first pilot of ‘Good Food Areas’, the first steps of a journey that will aim to enable and ensure access to good food for everybody in Merseyside.

Working in partnership is essential if we are to be successful in ensuring good food access and stopping hunger in Liverpool. If you would like to work in partnership with the Share Your Lunch campaign in any capacity, please get in touch with us using the contact details on the back page.

THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, AND BEHIND THE SCENES, THE TEAM AT CAN COOK, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN WORKING ON SOLUTIONS TO HUNGER IN OUR MOST DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES.
Fresh, chilled meals and... wraparound shopping list:
- Bread and / or bread products (pitta breads, tortillas etc)
- Low sugar breakfast cereals
- Fresh milk
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Pasta and/or rice
- Tinned tomatoes and vegetables, beans, pulses, tuna
- Teabags/Coffee
- Biscuits

Simon Rimmer
Working in the food industry for such a long time almost makes it incomprehensible to me that in a country as rich as ours, people can’t access fresh food and go hungry for periods of time. It’s clear that a change in policy is needed to address this, but we can also do something about it and feed people well.

I committed to becoming an ambassador for the Share Your Lunch campaign because of the focus on food quality; Can Cook really cared about the quality of food made available to people in food poverty, maintaining dignity and not compromising when it came to caring for those affected. That’s what really matters, providing food that is right for the person receiving it, not providing food that is easy to give out. Good food is a very basic human right.

Andy Cooke
Chief Constable, Merseyside Police

Merseyside Police are committed to putting the community first in everything we do. Our aim is to prevent and detect crime whilst building stronger communities and protecting vulnerable people. Many of us take food for granted, however there are unfortunately many who are less fortunate and have to go without.

Share Your Lunch is a truly innovative way of supporting those individuals and families less fortunate than ourselves with a healthy nourishing meal. Staff from Merseyside Police have held various charity events to raise money and awareness of the campaign. I am fully committed to support the fantastic work of Can Cook with their campaign and would like to thank them for everything they do for our communities and for the people of Merseyside.

James Bates
Director/Co-Founder, Maray Restaurant

We feel very strongly at Maray Restaurant that as a business that operates in the food industry we have a social responsibility to ensure we are giving something back to the local community. Our partnership with the Share Your Lunch campaign allows us to not only raise much needed funds for the campaign, but equally importantly convey the message regarding the food poverty issue on Merseyside to each and every guest that we serve in both of our restaurants each week.

The issue of food poverty is a modern day travesty in a country as rich as ours and in the absence of sufficient government policy to tackle it, backing the Share Your Lunch campaign is something that local business leaders can do to make a real difference to the day-to-day lives of people on Merseyside and we feel extremely proud to be part of the campaign.
Can Cook is a social enterprise based in Garston, South Liverpool and operating across Merseyside. Founded 10 years ago, Can Cook began training from a children's centre in Speke. Over the past 20 years, over 14,000 people – young and old – have benefitted from Can Cook training, with many going on to establish successful careers in food and hospitality.

In early 2015, Can Cook transitioned the mainstay of their operation to food production in response to poor food provision in schools, nurseries, care homes and to people living in their own homes. This transition also allowed Can Cook the opportunity to address the gap in fresh food aid across the Liverpool City Region, utilising profits from their catering contracts to provide free, fresh meals for people in food poverty. Can Cook self fund approximately 5,000 free meals every year.

Can Cook now operate from a 3,800 square foot production kitchen in Garston, where they produce thousands of fresh, additive free meals each day for distribution in schools, nurseries, care homes and chilled food for retail outlets.

The Liverpool Echo was founded in 1879 by Alexander Jeans, former manager of The Daily Post. Back then, ten editions a day were produced, and the paper cost 1 halfpenny.

138 years later, The Liverpool Echo is still going strong as part of Trinity Mirror, Merseyside who cover Liverpool, Sefton, Wirral and West Lancashire with a combined readership of one million. The editorial policy of the Liverpool Echo is focused on campaigning, and speaking up for the people of Liverpool. In recent years, the Liverpool Echo has staunchly supported the families of those lost at Hillsborough in their long fight for justice, and has supported inquiries into issues of public concern, including the successful Stop the Rot campaign to protect Liverpool's rich, architectural heritage.

Nowadays, The Liverpool Echo is as important online as it is in print, with an ever growing audience and reach.

WE BELIEVE FOOD POVERTY CAN BE STOPPED IN ANY TOWN OR CITY, TO GET INVOLVED OR FOR FURTHER DETAILS, CONTACT:

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