

THE BREAD AND BUTTER THING - WRITTEN EVIDENCE (FDO0049)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Bread and Butter Thing ("TBBT") welcomes this opportunity to submit evidence to the Food, Diet and Obesity Committee inquiry into the role of food in a healthy diet and tackling obesity.

1.2 TBBT is a North West based food distribution charity, working in 120 locations across 23 local authorities from the East Midlands to North Tyneside. TBBT delivers healthy low-cost food to our communities every week. TBBT's food is directly sourced from manufacturers and retailers including Aldi, Asda, Lidl, Cranswick, Brakes, Morrisons and Sainsbury's.

1.3. TBBT is not a foodbank. We focus on providing family shopping which improves diets. The service is non-stigmatising, and members pay £5 for a single bag, £8.50 for a three-bag family package or £17 for a large family package of six bags. This low cost, weekly shop provides essential produce for family eating – fresh fruit and veg, fridge favourites and cupboard staples that allow members to eat better and cook more.

1.4 TBBT's mission is to improve diets, save people money and build communities. Another key objective is to give members and communities a voice and identify the key issues they face.

1.5 TBBT has more than 75,000 registered members and redistributes to around 7,500 families a week. Activity is focused on the lowest 10/20% of communities on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

1.6 Members are not considered to be "in crisis" and the majority of those surveyed have never used a foodbank. However, our annual survey reveals that four in five were skipping meals before coming to TBBT.

1.7 TBBT's considerable database, driven by its annual surveys, allows the charity to truly understand the trends behind poor nutrition and poverty. This includes drawing out the link between poor physical health indicators and poor mental health and social isolation, and is enabled by a unique level of insight into a cohort of the population which is specifically affected by these issues.

1.8 The data also shows that TBBT is **providing access to fruits and vegetables to people who would not otherwise access them** and **increasing their consumption of these foods as a result.**

1.8 We do not believe you can sever the link between government policy to tackle obesity, the role of foods and access to fruit and vegetables.

2. Food Security and Diet Diversity

2.1 TBBT undertakes an annual survey of its 75,000 members, which seeks to identify patterns in diet diversity, food security, social isolation and debt and finance.

2.2 The most recent survey, in December 2023, was answered by 9,011 members. The findings illustrate a clear link between low income and poor nutrition.

2.3 47% of our members said they could not access affordable fruit and veg before joining TBBT. By bringing affordable, healthy food into low-income communities we are helping people to eat more healthily and diversify their diets. Since joining TBBT, 75% of members eat more fruit and veg.

2.4 A study by the University of Oxford in May 2022 found that a healthy diet costs £227.52 per person, per month. This is based on the government's "Eat Well Guide". Since May 2022, food inflation has been running at around 18%, so this number is likely to have risen further.

2.5 Over half of TBBT's members said they have less than £50 left over to spend on food once they have paid for all essentials for the month. This means the "Eat Well plate" is entirely out of reach for TBBT's members, and it continues to grow in price at an unmanageable rate.

2.6 As a result, our insight indicates that when faced with decisions on how to use the less than £50 per month left over after essential bills, members determine whether to resort to eating a less balanced diet, often made up of ultra-processed frozen foods, or skipping meals entirely.

2.7 This leads to **higher levels of obesity**, poor health and malnutrition within less advantaged communities.

2.8 Another common theme among those with little disposable income is poorer mental health. Of those who reported having less than £50 left at the end of the month, the survey found that half suffer from regular anxiety, compared to 42% of other members.

2.9 Similarly, only 54% of the members who reported eating fruit and vegetables less regularly said they meet up with friends or family once a week, compared to 60% of those who commonly eat fruit and vegetables.

3. Asks of Government

3.1 TBBT has three asks of government:

3.2 Work with surplus food distribution organisations to better understand the impact of policy decisions on those considered as just about managing (JAM). Healthy diets, obesity, access to food and production of ultra-processed foods are all intrinsically linked.

3.3 Introduce mandatory food waste reporting. Whilst our partners are fantastic and generous, mandatory food waste reporting will allow food surplus distribution services to be baked into the long term business plans of manufacturers and suppliers. This will help level up access to healthy foods, which will tackle obesity at the coal face of struggling communities.

3.4 Encourage retailers to give manufacturers authorisation to redistribute their surplus own-brand products without the need to remove branding or packaging.

For more information on The Bread and Butter Thing please contact CEO Mark Game at Mark@breadandbutterthing.org,

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Selected Annual Survey Data

4.1 The analysis below illustrates some of the patterns we identified in our most recent members' survey, conducted in December 2023.

4.2 The analysis is based on selected data points pertaining to food intake, particularly in terms of healthier foods, fruit and vegetables.

4.3 It was conducted by Dr Megan Blake, a recognised expert in food security and food justice at the University of Sheffield. Dr Blake's current research focuses on how everyday food insecurity can be addressed in developed economies where the dominant mode of food production is based on commercial exchange.

4.4 A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between previous diet and diet change as a result of joining TBBT. The results show a significant relationship between these two

variables (χ^2 (4, Number of respondents (N) = 9006) = 581.79), $p = <.001$).

4.5 This means that members of TBBT are generally eating fruit and vegetables, although few eat 5 or more a day. 8.3% eat less than one fruit or vegetable per day, 32.4% eat one a day 34% eat 2-4 FV per day. (n=9002).

4.6 A chi-square test of independence was also performed to evaluate the relationship between previous access to fruit and vegetables and the number eaten per day. There is a significant relationship between these two variables (χ^2 (3, N = 9000) = 249.50), $p = <.001$).

4.7 This was further supported by 76.2% of respondents indicating that they eat more fruit and vegetables as a result of joining TBBT.

Eat fruit and vegetables	Do not eat more	Eat more fruit and vegetables
Less than one a day	9.9	18.4
1 a day	6.3	26.1
2-4 a day	6.3	27.7
5 a day	1.3	4.1

4.8 A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between how many fruit and vegetables are eaten and if respondents feel they eat more fruit and vegetables as a result of TBBT. There is a significant relationship between these two variables (χ^2 (3, N = 8997) = 252.04), $p = <.001$).

Eat fruit and vegetables w/ no previous access (n=4370)	Do not eat more	Eat more fruit and vegetables
Less than one a day	11.4	23.3
1 a day	5.2	28.1
2-4 a day	3.7	24.6
5 a day	.5	3.2

χ^2 (3, N = 4370) = 202.03, $p = <.001$

Eat fruit and vegetables with previous access (n=4627)	Do not eat more	Eat more fruit and vegetables
Less than one a day	8.5	13.7
1 a day	7.4	24.2

2-4 a day	8.7	30.6
5 a day	1.9	4.9

$\chi^2 (3, N = 4627) = 98.33, p = <.001$

4.9 There is a significant positive correlation between eating more fruit and vegetables since joining TBBT and the number of fruit and vegetables consumed daily for both groups.

4.10 The chi square results indicate that this relationship is stronger for those who did not have previous access to fruit and vegetables. This shows that TBBT is **providing access to fruits and vegetables to people who would not otherwise access them** and they are **increasing their consumption of these foods**.

4.11 It is difficult to assess exactly how many units of fruit and vegetables per day this equates to. However, *there is some qualitative evidence that it takes a while for this change to happen in people's diets, so it may be that in the older hubs these relationships are stronger*.

4.12 This suggests that when communities are provided with alternatives to ultra-processed foods, they change the way that they feed themselves and their families over time. TBBT's data has proven this to be the case in the communities in which they have a presence.

4.12 However, the results also found that people who did not previously have access to fruits and vegetables tend to eat fewer compared to those with previous access, even when provided fruit and vegetables by TBBT

Eat fruit and vegetables	No access	Prior access
Less than one a day	16.8	11.4
1 a day	16.2	16.2
2-4 a day	13.7	20.2
5 a day	1.8	3.5

4.13 This demonstrates that there is also a cultural and habitual aspect which needs to be addressed. Even with the increased access to fruit, it is vital to ingrain the importance of a balanced diet from an early stage.

Note: A chi-square test is a statistical test used to compare observed results with expected results. The purpose of this test is to determine if a

difference between observed data and expected data is due to chance, or if it is due to a relationship between the variables you are studying.

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