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UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN - WRITTEN EVIDENCE
(FDO0123)**

Dear Baroness Walmsley,

Further to your correspondence with Sainsbury's, I wanted to get in touch with you as the project lead for FIO Food, a UKRI funded research project looking at the lived experience of people living with obesity and food insecurity. Whilst the project will not be completed until next year, I would very much welcome the opportunity to share some of our current findings with you.

Via FIO Food and its associated partner DIO Food – which addresses Diet and Health Inequalities – we are focused on providing insight into how customers and people living with obesity and food insecurity feel about making healthier and more environmentally sustainable food choices. Our team are focused on putting co-production at the heart of our research, and the voice of those with lived experience has been incredibly insightful, particularly on the barriers and opportunities to transform our current food system. We use different approaches to share our evidence based research. In summary:

- We use co-production methods to capture the lived experience of people living with obesity/low income and their barriers and asks of retailers to help them make better choices for healthier and environmentally sustainable eating.
- We have evaluated retailer views in relation to these suggestions - highlighting their realities but also the current disconnect between customers and retailers.
- Applying big data/digitising solutions to support food systems transformation. For example, we are currently working with Tesco, Morrisons, Asda and Sainsbury's, as well as the Institute of Grocery Division (IGD), to assess the impact of the recent HFSS legislation on retail sales. We work with Sainsburys to look at supermarket transactions to understand the health and sustainability of population diet at scale.

I have shared a digital copy our White Paper: A framework for action, on tackling dietary inequalities in the UK food system. In brief, we recommend, (i) Policymakers need to adopt collaborative and inclusive approaches in designing, implementing, and evaluating regional and/or UK-wide policies, (ii) Food systems are complex and dynamic entities.

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Transdisciplinary approaches are critical in addressing complex issues and often unpredictable dynamics of changing trajectories due to local, national or external geopolitical and environmental factors, (iii) Sustainable, long-term funding for research, (iv) Nutrition training needs to be embedded in medical training along with raising awareness among health care professionals (HCP) around the stigma of living with obesity and food insecurity, (v) Positive messaging to be promoted in all food-related policies with health and well-being (rather than emphasis on illness and body weight), (vi) Identifying and sharing good practices can boost food system transformation

Through this work, we are able to share insights from people living with obesity and how the cost-of-living crisis has impacted on their retail shopping habits. We are also able to discuss some of the dichotomy of what customers want versus what the retail environment can offer/do to support customers.

We have nine academic centres involved in this project grant which allows us a trans-disciplinary approach. I can ask my colleagues to join me in discussion, if appropriate.

I hope this information is helpful and please do let me know if a meeting would be of interest. In the meantime, please see a selection of our evidence listed overleaf.

White Papers & Policy Briefs

- **What retail interventions facilitate healthier and more sustainable food purchases?** Policy brief (November 2023) - https://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett/documents/Policy%20Brief%20on%20supermarket%20interventions_FIO%20Food.pdf
- **Tackling dietary inequalities in the UK food system.** An exploration of stakeholders' experiences to deliver national recommendations for policy and health care practitioners. A Framework for Action (April 2024) : document shared.

FIO Food academic publications:

- Johnstone, A., Lonnie, M., & FIO-Food project team (2023). The cost-of-living crisis is feeding the paradox of obesity and food insecurities in the UK. *Obesity (Silver Spring, Md.)*, 31(6), 1461–1462. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.23740>
- Lonnie, M., Hunter, E., Stone, R. A., Dineva, M., Aggreh, M., Greatwood, H., Johnstone, A. M., & FIO Food team (2023). Food insecurity in people living with obesity: Improving sustainable and healthier food choices in the retail food environment-the FIO Food project. *Nutrition bulletin*, 48(3), 390–399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbu.12626>
- Johnstone, A. M., Lonnie, M., & FIO Food project team (2023). Tackling diet inequalities in the UK food system: is food insecurity driving the obesity epidemic? (The FIO Food project). *The Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0029665123004871>
- Stone, R. A., Brown, A., Douglas, F., Green, M. A., Hunter, E., Lonnie, M., Johnstone, A. M., Hardman, C. A., & FIO-Food Team (2024). The impact of the cost of living crisis and food insecurity on food purchasing behaviours and food preparation practices in people living with obesity. *Appetite*, 196, 107255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2024.107255>

Open Science Framework – pre-prints and study protocols

- Stone, R. A., & Hardman, C. (2023, February 2). In people living with obesity, how is food insecurity associated with healthier, more sustainable food purchases? <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/BYZKP>
- Hunter, E. (2023, July 19). Characteristics of supermarket-based interventions aimed at improving the dietary quality of people living with obesity and food insecurity and the role of environmental sustainability on purchasing behaviours: A Scoping Review. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/3K8DN>

- Hunter, E., Douglas, F., & Johnstone, A. (2023, October 3). Diet and Health Inequalities (DIO) Food Project: Feeding intentions and practices of parents and carers of infants (0-6 months) living on a low income in the UK. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/834HU> - **DIO Food**
- Jenneson, V., Morris, M., Fildes, A., & Kininmonth, A. R. (2024, April 16). DIO Food (HFSS). <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/KTSZA> - **DIO Food**

Videos

- **Retailers interviews** (6min) – Qualitative Study. FIO Food Work Package 1. Prof. Charlotte Hardman and Dr Rebecca A. Stone (University of Liverpool): <https://abdn.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=3fc51c26-9eac-47c6-a687-b15c00fe788b&start=0>
- **People living with Obesity and Food Insecurity** (5 min) – insights from the lived experience of the FIO Food public involvement advocates. FIO Food Work Package 4. Prof. Alex Johnstone & Dr Marta Lonnie (University of Aberdeen): <https://abdn.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=757bf124-4315-4a7a-998b-b034009c061c&start=0>

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