

Cross-party group of MPs and Peers launches inquiry on how many older people are hungry and malnourished

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The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger today launches an inquiry into the extent and causes of hunger amongst older people in Britain.

Over the past four years, the Group has heard in evidence from hundreds of food banks across the country that it is almost exclusively families and individuals below retirement age who seek their help.

However, the Group is concerned that, despite the significant reduction in pensioner poverty that has taken place under successive governments, there are some older people who, for one reason or another, struggle to keep themselves both fed and well-nourished.

The Group will therefore gather written and oral evidence over the next four months, to gain a deeper understanding of the problem. It aims to publish its findings, alongside a series of recommendations to counter the problem, by Christmas.

The Group's Chair, Frank Field MP, says: 'Tackling pensioner poverty has proven to be one of the biggest successes of public policy in recent generations. But poverty does still afflict a sizeable group of pensioners and there are some hospitals that report older patients arriving malnourished, having not eaten properly for several days, or even weeks in succession.

'A challenge we have set ourselves is to seek evidence of any wider trends that are beginning to emerge on this front, as well as how a whole range of factors – including loneliness, isolation, and community meal provision, as well as income – might interrelate either to reduce or increase older people's vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition.'

The officers of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger who will conduct the inquiry are Frank Field MP (Chair), Heidi Allen MP, Steve Double MP, Baroness Jenkin, Emma Lewell-Buck MP, and Philippa Whitford MP.

The deadline for written submissions is Friday 20th October. Submissions can be sent to andrew.forsey@parliament.uk

The inquiry's terms of reference are as follows:

To understand the extent and geographical spread of hunger and malnutrition amongst older people in the United Kingdom.

To investigate the underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition amongst older people.

To identify the circumstances behind hunger and malnutrition amongst older people.

To consider historical and recent trends, as well as future projections, in respect of hunger and malnutrition amongst older people.

To understand the cost to the National Health Service, as well as social care services, of

hunger and malnutrition amongst older people.

To understand the extent, cost, nature and organisation of schemes that seek to protect older people from hunger and malnutrition.

To discover the food choices and other forms of support available to older people helped by those schemes.

To investigate the source of those schemes' food.

To consider the effectiveness of those schemes in meeting older people's needs, and the future prospects for those schemes.

To consider which schemes, as well as other areas of public policy, are most effective in protecting older people from hunger and malnutrition.

To consider new approaches to protecting older people from hunger and malnutrition.

To make recommendations.