



NJPN Comment

No child should ever go hungry

Liam Purcell



“I just got so used to being hungry that I thought, that’s life.”

No child should go hungry. But when Church Action on Poverty began working with teenagers Corey, Tia and their friends in Lancashire, they talked of going all day at school without food. They told how hunger pangs made it harder to concentrate in class: ‘If you’re in maths, you’re not thinking about plusses and minuses, you’re thinking about where your next meal is coming from, when you don’t have any money.’

They told of other effects: Low mood. Stigma. Embarrassment. “I used to be terrified to go up and get my free school meal,” recalls Corey.

In their town, food poverty was so widespread that some thought it was an inevitable part of life. But the teenagers had a vision for a better society, and they’ve taken a stand.

Church Action on Poverty met the youngsters, heard their stories and helped them plan how they could make a difference. Soon they were part of ‘Darwen Gets Hangry’, a campaign which mobilised more people in the local community to stand up against food poverty. Then Corey and Tia took centre stage at the End Hunger UK conference in London, wowing everyone with their passion, insight and determination.

They travelled to Westminster to meet MPs as part of the Children’s Future Food Inquiry. Tia said MPs were shocked by what they heard. “Every young person there said the same thing. I think it made it more of a reality that it’s actually happening.” Their story and call for action has featured on *Channel 4 News* and *ITV Granada News*.

By having the courage to speak truth to power, they are making change more likely. Corey says: “We thought we were the only ones who knew about food poverty. And then next thing you know, people from Glasgow, Wales, Leicester... It was good to know that other people wanted to make a change.”

At the end of April, the Children’s Future Food Inquiry’s report will call for action to ensure young people no longer go hungry. Church Action on Poverty will help people across the UK to support its call for action. If you – or your church or food bank – would like to be part of the campaign, sign up for email updates at www.church-poverty.org.uk or www.endhungeruk.org.

Liam Purcell works for Salford-based Church Action on Poverty.

NJPN Annual Conference

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