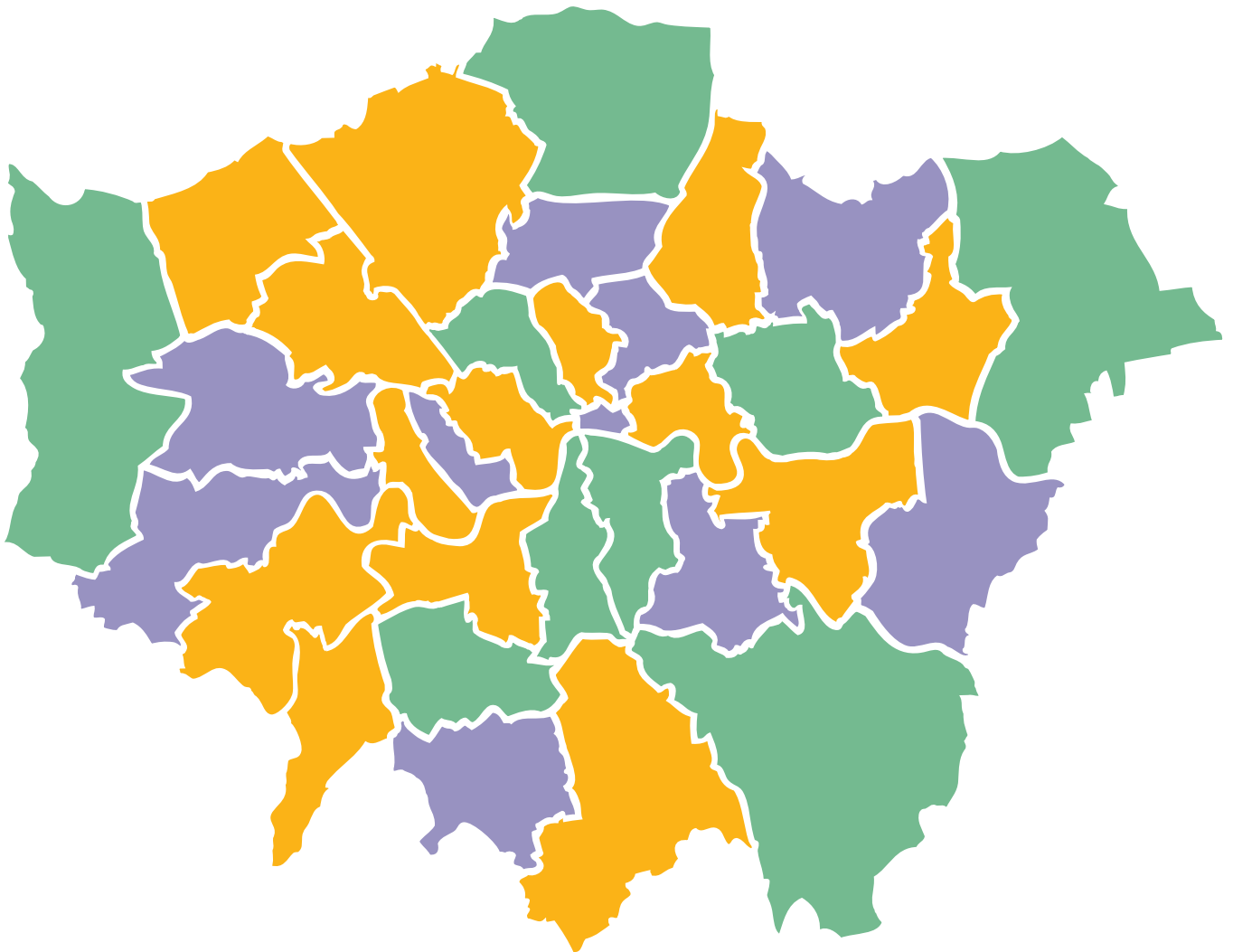


# Good Food for All Londoners

## Tracking council action on food

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March 2022



# Foreword

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our city has faced and responded to unimaginable challenges. Colleagues across local authorities – especially public health – the NHS, charities, the community sector and beyond have been spread thin but continue to work hard on behalf of Londoners, drawing on our collective knowledge, expertise and resilience to respond to the pandemic.

COVID-19 compounded the challenges many Londoners already face in accessing healthy, sustainable and culturally appropriate diets. Levels of poverty, food insecurity and diet-related health inequalities have been exacerbated. Since the first lockdown began, more Londoners have been pushed into food insecurity with rising poverty rates and financial hardship caused by the pandemic and wider pressures, resulting in an increased dependency on emergency food aid.

Research indicates that these impacts disproportionately affected specific groups including no- and low- income households, Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners, disabled and older people, households with children and workers in the food sector.<sup>i</sup> The lack of access to healthy affordable food also continues to have an impact upon children's health. The latest data from the National Child Measurement Programme shows that London has more children above a healthy weight than the national average, with children from deprived areas being disproportionately affected.<sup>ii</sup>

Councils have taken decisive action to tackle health inequalities and to ensure all Londoners can access good food. Many now have food poverty action plans in place, drawing upon existing knowledge and cross-sector working within local food alliances and partnerships. Food partnerships are being supported to grow, diversify and become more sustainable through the Mayor's new Food Roots Incubator programme.

This report highlights the importance of addressing poverty by increasing uptake of interventions that support Londoners to maximise income and access existing financial entitlements, such as Healthy Start vouchers and London Living Wage accreditation. Councils will be supported to utilise markets, small stores and other ventures to create jobs, develop skills and provide communities with food through the Good Food Economy programme. Work to rebalance the environment in which our children grow up continues, with local authorities following the Mayor of London's leadership by restricting adverts

of unhealthy food and drink. The Capital Growth community food growing network, supported by the Mayor, is also helping to increase growing spaces in the city.

We welcome the introduction of the climate and nature emergency as a theme for this report following the Mayor's declaration of a climate emergency in 2018 and his signing of the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration last year.<sup>iii</sup> The Declaration commits to swift action on food to address the climate emergency, contributing to London's net zero carbon goal.

Throughout this report there are many examples of the great work being undertaken across the city, recognizing the power of what we can achieve when we work together at a community, sub regional and regional levels. London's local authorities and VCS organisations have and continue to work collectively to help those most in need.

Our work together goes beyond our response to the pandemic to focus upon long-term strategies, harnessing the potential of good food and embedding cross-cutting approaches to many of the greatest challenges in our food system. Good food improves Londoners' environment, health and life chances. The London Food Strategy will continue to support council action alongside the London Recovery programme, as we work towards the grand challenge of restoring confidence in the city, minimising the impact on communities and building back better the city's economy and society.



*Kevin A. Fenton* *T. Coffey*

## **Professor Kevin Fenton CBE FFPH**

*Regional Director London, Office of Health Improvement & Disparities*

*Regional Director Public Health, NHS London*

*Statutory Health Advisor to the Mayor of London, GLA and London Assembly*

## **Dr. Tom Coffey, OBE**

*Mayoral Health Advisor*

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The report is coordinated by the London Food Link and Food Poverty teams at Sustain, to celebrate and encourage action by councils on good food issues, spanning several themes and departments. This edition marks the 10th year of tracking council progress on food issues.

We believe that now, more than ever, the action taken by councils on food issues needs to be coordinated, valued and prioritised. This will enable councils to address key challenges they face in building healthy,

wealthy communities while contributing to critical agendas such as tackling systemic inequalities, racial injustice and the climate and nature emergency.

The full report, with additional maps are available: [www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/).

To find out more about our work visit [www.londonfoodlink.org](http://www.londonfoodlink.org) or email [londonfoodlink@sustainweb.org](mailto:londonfoodlink@sustainweb.org)

# Executive summary

Food cuts across all our lives. Councils can play a key role in helping our food system work for everyone, ensuring residents all have access to good food as well as the wider benefits that a good food economy brings. Compiled by the London Food Link team at Sustain, this year's Good Food for All Londoners report combines our previous annual Beyond the Food Bank and Good Food for London reports and covers a range of topics incorporating food partnerships, household food insecurity and the wider food economy. This year 28 responses were received out of a total of the 33 London councils. Given the challenges faced during the pandemic this is incredibly encouraging. We give a special commendation to councils who achieved leadership across both chapters: Greenwich, Islington, Lambeth and Tower Hamlets. Those who could not respond this year are encouraged to get involved in the programmes highlighted in this report.

The number of councils engaged in food poverty alliances with a dedicated food poverty action plan, is higher than ever. Many councils are dedicating resource, staff time and funding to these alliances and plans, ensuring that communities benefit. However, there are gaps in support for food access for some specific groups. For example, there has been a reduction in the number of councils providing meals on wheels service for older and disabled people, with only six reporting any investment in this area. Tailored work to support Black, Asian and minority ethnic people to access appropriate food is highly variable, as is supporting food access for those with no recourse to public funds. Given the exacerbated impact of COVID-19 on these groups, we call on councils to support more dedicated action for people who need it the most.

Despite the increase in action on food poverty, there is still much more opportunity for councils to commit to joined-up action and support a local food partnership to strengthen London's food resilience.<sup>iv</sup> For Healthier Food Environments, councils continue to uphold established public health schemes, such as the Healthier Catering Commitment, with a handful of leaders taking this further through limiting advertising. One area where councils are achieving more leadership is in food growing, with local authorities demonstrating commitment to enhance and increase opportunities for access to fresh produce. The findings also show councils are beginning to take action on Good Food Economy, an area with huge opportunity, and looking to how they build community wealth through food procurement, but there is much progress to be made.

## London in numbers:

- **Almost two million Londoners** - of which an estimated **400,000** are children under 16 - struggle to afford or access enough food<sup>v</sup>
- **42% of eligible families in London** are missing out on their Healthy Start fruit, veg and milk vouchers<sup>vi</sup>
- **32% of London's families** are registered for Free School Meals, higher than the UK average of 29%<sup>vii</sup>
- An estimated **200,000 older Londoners** are at risk of household food insecurity<sup>viii</sup>
- For every £1 spent with local enterprises, a further **£3-4 is invested** in the local economy<sup>ix</sup>
- **99% of London's food and drink** is brought in from outside the city<sup>x</sup>
- **6,347,000 tonnes of food** is produced to supply London's food system each year<sup>xi</sup>
- A massive **27% of London households' consumption-based emissions** comes from meat, yet this only represents 5% of the food consumed<sup>xii</sup>
- Vegetables and fruit represent **21% of the food consumed by London households** (by mass), yet they are responsible for only 4% of those households' consumption-based emissions<sup>xiii</sup>

# Recommendations for action

## Taking action on food poverty beyond the food bank:

- Actively support a food poverty alliance, with resources and a clear, refreshed food poverty action plan that focuses on building more resilient local food systems
- Have a cash first approach to tackling food poverty, drawing on mechanisms that maximise household incomes for lower income residents, as well as become a London Living Wage Employer and Funder
- Provide tailored support to specific groups including older and disabled people, Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and those with no recourse to public funds
- Ensure a good start in life and support for children and families through:
  - i. supporting breastfeeding through the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Gold Award
  - ii. setting a target to increase Healthy Start uptake
  - iii. supporting free school meals and holiday provision with food for all potentially eligible families; working to ensure that these are healthy and sustainably sourced

## Supporting good food for London:

- Support a joined-up approach to food by investing in a local food partnership, guided by a joint food plan or strategy so all residents benefit from healthy sustainable food
- Continue to make progress on healthy food environments, led by public health teams, extending the impact through opportunities such as a Healthier Advertising Policy
- Ensure approach is joined-up with business and economy departments, recognising the opportunity to create a local food economy that builds community health and wealth; and reach out to food Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) run by or serving underrepresented groups
- Improve opportunities for food growing by increasing access to land for food growing, mapping land available, and making publicly owned land or assets available for larger scale food production
- Review climate action plans so they explicitly include reducing food-related greenhouse emissions, using the Food for the Planet Every Mouthful Counts toolkit as a guide

### Beyond the Food Bank

Which councils are leading the way in tackling food poverty?

	Food poverty alliances	Food poverty action plans	Cash first responses to food insecurity	London Living Wage	Food access for older and disabled people	Food access for BAME people	No recourse to public funds	UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative	Healthy Start	Free school meals	Holiday activities and food	Overall Score
Lambeth	Orange	Blue	Orange	Purple	Red	Teal	Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Teal	91%
Camden	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Red	Teal	Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Teal	85%
Newham	Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Light Purple	Red	Teal	Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Bright Pink	Teal	85%
Islington	Orange	Blue	Orange	Purple	Light Pink	Light Teal	Green	Light Green	Grey	Bright Pink	Teal	82%
Greenwich	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Light Pink	Light Teal	Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Light Pink	Teal	79%
Tower Hamlets	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Light Pink	Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Bright Pink	Teal	79%
Hackney	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Red	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Teal	79%
Hammersmith and Fulham	Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Light Purple	Red	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Grey	Pink	Teal	79%
Lewisham	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Red	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Light Teal	79%
Southwark	Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Purple	Light Pink	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Grey	Bright Pink	Teal	76%
Enfield	Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Light Purple	Light Pink	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Light Teal	70%
Brent	Light Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Red	Light Teal	Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Grey	Teal	67%
Redbridge	Light Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Light Purple	Light Pink	Teal	Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Teal	67%
Barking and Dagenham	Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Light Grey	Red	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Grey	Light Pink	Teal	64%
Haringey	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Light Grey	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Grey	Pink	Teal	64%
Merton	Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Grey	Red	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Teal	64%
Waltham Forest	Light Orange	Blue	Light Orange	Light Purple	Red	Light Teal	Light Grey	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Teal	61%
Bromley	Orange	Light Grey	Light Orange	Light Grey	Red	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Grey	Pink	Light Teal	55%
Kensington and Chelsea	Orange	Light Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Dark Grey	Pink	Light Teal	55%
Barnet	Light Grey	Blue	Light Orange	Light Grey	Light Pink	Light Teal	Light Green	Light Green	Dark Grey	Light Pink	Teal	52%
Richmond	Orange	Light Grey	Light Orange	Light Purple	Red	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Grey	Pink	Teal	52%
Kingston	Orange	Light Blue	Light Orange	Light Purple	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Green	Grey	Pink	Light Teal	45%
Sutton	Light Orange	Light Grey	Light Orange	Light Grey	Red	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Grey	Light Pink	Light Teal	42%
City of London	Light Grey	Light Grey	Orange	Light Purple	Light Pink	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Grey	Light Pink	Teal	39%
Harrow	Orange	Light Blue	Orange	Light Grey	Red	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	39%
Ealing	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Orange	Light Purple	Light Pink	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Grey	Pink	Teal	36%
Havering	Orange	Light Grey	Light Orange	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Dark Grey	Pink	Light Teal	36%
Hounslow	Light Orange	Blue	Orange	Light Purple	Light Grey	Light Teal	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Pink	Light Teal	36%
Bexley	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	0%
Croydon	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Purple	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	0%
Hillingdon	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	0%
Wandsworth	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	0%
Westminster	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Purple	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Grey	Light Grey	0%

Note: Councils with the same overall score are in alphabetical order, except for Tower Hamlets, as they meet our criteria for overall leadership. Leadership councils have been highlighted in orange and non-responders in grey.

**Good Food for London**

Which councils are showing leadership on joined-up action?

	Joined-up action on food	Healthier food environments	Good food economy	Food growing	Climate and nature emergency and food	UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative	Overall Score
Greenwich	Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Red	Light Blue	94%
Tower Hamlets	Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Red	Light Blue	83%
Islington	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	78%
Lewisham	Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	78%
Southwark	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	72%
Lambeth	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	67%
Newham*	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Red	Light Blue	67%
Brent	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	56%
Merton	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	50%
Barking and Dagenham*	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	44%
Kensington and Chelsea	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	44%
Waltham Forest*	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	44%
Camden	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	39%
Enfield	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	39%
Hammersmith and Fulham	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	39%
Haringey	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	39%
Sutton	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	39%
Bromley	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	33%
Ealing	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	33%
Harrow	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	33%
Kingston	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	33%
Hackney	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	28%
Hounslow	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	28%
Barnet	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	22%
Havering	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	22%
Redbridge	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	22%
Richmond	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	17%
City of London	Light Green	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	11%
Bexley	Grey	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	0%
Croydon	Grey	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	0%
Hillingdon	Grey	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	0%
Wandsworth*	Grey	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	0%
Westminster	Grey	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Light Red	Light Blue	0%

Note: Councils with the same overall score are in alphabetical order. Leadership councils have been highlighted in orange and non-responders in grey. See *Survey approach* on page 28 for more details. \*See page 19 for further details.

# CHAPTER 1 Beyond the Food Bank

“I like to be a voice for the voiceless where possible, and I use my past lived experiences of food insecurity to empower others that have faced or are currently faced with wondering where their next meal is coming from or how they will sufficiently feed their families.

I feel the role of councils to be important in tackling food insecurity and I am grateful to have met many wonderful and supportive people on this journey who do so much to bring awareness to this cause.”



**Tiffanie Cummings**

*Sustain lived experience advisor*

This chapter assesses council action to address food poverty and its root causes. The initial pages showcase examples of good practice from across the capital, including food partnerships involved in the London Food Roots incubator, followed by individual measures. Maps have not been included for every measure in this report; all maps are available online: [www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/)



Credit: Anna Pou / Pexels

## Case studies:

### Camden: Allocating funding through the food poverty alliance

Camden Council asked the Camden Food Poverty Alliance to allocate a funding pot for local organisations to test new ideas or take the next step on from what they currently do, with a broad focus on providing residents with wraparound support. The alliance steering group, made up of council officers and community organisations, decided that a resident-led committee, supported by the local charity Camden Giving, would both define the funding criteria and choose successful bids. The committee decided on seven principles for the applicants to prioritise, in part based on the alliance’s action plan guiding principles. The resident committee will also be involved in participatory evaluation of the projects.

### Barking and Dagenham: The benefits of cash first

In April 2020, as the scale of Covid-related hardship emerged, Barking and Dagenham Council designed and implemented its new hardship fund from scratch. The council decided that a cash first approach would offer greater benefits for recipients. It utilised an innovative payment solution called Cash Perks to disburse payments via SMS texts enabling the recipient to instantly collect their cash at local ATMs without the need for a bank account.



The council has used Cash Perks to disburse £250,000 of the Covid Winter Support Grant in winter 2020/21 and as of December 2021 the Household Support Fund had already made over 3,300 payments totalling over £341,500. This has saved hundreds of valuable social worker hours, reduced staff time to process payments and decreased the time taken for residents to receive funds, from days to minutes. The impact on residents has been well received. For example, Mr A explained that the scheme “has literally saved my life”.

## **Kingston: Stronger Together Community Response Hub**

For those eligible, the service supports access to food, fuel or other essentials, medication and emotional support. The emotional support is provided in the form of a befriending service and is offered to those who are lonely, isolated, struggling with low-level mental health challenges or affected by the pandemic for both physical and mental health reasons. The emotional support service is managed by a mental health support manager and provided by over 30 volunteers by means of telephone support, information, access to local support services and activities enabling people to network with their community.

## **Enfield: Lunch clubs and falls prevention**

In Enfield, lunch clubs have been included as part of their Falls Prevention Project. This recognises both the importance of falls prevention alongside reducing social isolation and loneliness in Enfield for older people. This also prevents avoidable demand on Adult Social Care Services.

Lunch clubs were identified in Enfield for certain wards where residents were known to be at high risk of falls and isolation. Enfield is currently funding eight organisations to provide lunch clubs in these areas; four are already running, and four are preparing to launch. Residents are encouraged to access the community and gain confidence post-Covid. Working with different stakeholders to provide this, lunch clubs were identified as a way to support this cohort of people to gain confidence in accessing the community, reconnect, find new friendship groups and do simple exercise classes.

## **Lambeth: Tackling the disproportionate impacts of food insecurity**

The Lambeth Food Poverty and Insecurity Action Plan recognises that food insecurity disproportionately occurs amongst lower socio-economic and low-income families including Black, Asian, and multi-ethnic groups.

Evidence is emerging on the impact of COVID-19 on food poverty and insecurity, and despite vital emergency measures in place, more people are food insecure now than before the pandemic. The Lambeth Plan is taking actions to address this. For example, the council's Fridge and Freezer Fund prioritises applications from organisations supporting residents at risk of food insecurity with culturally appropriate food, offered in a dignified way. Beneficiaries include: a community kitchen run by Rastafari Movement, a food bank serving Congolese and Angolan residents, a Sierra Leonean food hub, an Eritrean Mosque and organisations serving the West Indian, Portuguese, and Latin American communities.

## **Haringey: Expansion of free school meals**

In January 2021, the Haringey Council Cabinet agreed to expand the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals set out by the government. As part of Haringey's ambition to create a fairer and more equal borough, the most-in-need groups of children in Years 3 to 6 (Key Stage 2) who were not eligible for support under the government scheme, were made eligible for Free School Meals from the beginning of the Autumn Term 2021. As many as 1,200 extra children received Free School Meals as a result.

This was bolstered further by a discretionary fund allocated to schools to assist families temporarily in financial need. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on household finances for a number of people across the borough. The discretionary fund has given schools more freedom to support families who found themselves in unexpected financial hardship.

# The London Food Roots Incubator

The Greater London Authority (GLA) launched the London Food Roots Incubator programme in 2021, awarded to a cohort of food partnerships in Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Lambeth, Somers Town (Camden), Waltham Forest, Walworth (Southwark) and Wandsworth. These groups received £15,000 grants to help with partnership development, responses to food insecurity alongside some actions to address root causes. The GLA commissioned Sustain and Food Matters to support to partnerships, including workshops, exchange visits and peer-to-peer meetings, helping partnerships to learn from each other and deliver their plans.

## Haringey Food Network

Haringey Council funded a Haringey Food Network coordination role, based at the Bridge Renewal Trust, initially to support the food response during the pandemic, and now helping the network develop. In July 2021 a food summit energised members and provided space and time to plan. A task and finish group presented findings to the wider partnership, including the network becoming a constituted group with its own mission and values, aims and objectives.

*“ The Incubator has provided us with one-to-one support, assisting us with the structure for our first Food Summit, in addition to networking opportunities. Thanks to this funding from the GLA, we’re improving people’s access to advice and support. In addition, we’re more linked to other boroughs and we have a greater sense of collective action.*

**Sam Foster, Haringey Food Network Coordinator**

## Havering Food Partnership

The partnership between Havering Council and Peabody built on work established during the pandemic, creating closer relationships with other community organisations. Work has focused on offering an alternative to food banks and enabling access to quality healthy food, as well as wraparound preventative support.

The partnership has developed a sustainable and accessible community food shop and is part of the council Community Hub model. This provides access to employability support, training, cooking and budgeting skills. The community food shop has been visited over 2,000 times since opening, providing over £17,000 worth of food, sourcing fresh produce from local businesses and redistributing food to school breakfast clubs and, where necessary, animal sanctuaries, avoiding over five tons of food going into landfill.

*“ The Incubator programme has enabled us to share our experiences with other partnerships, helping us to learn from peers and develop solutions that are tried and tested. It has provided invaluable support to make our community food shop the success it is.*

**James Cliff, Havering Council**



Food Roots Incubator exchange visit to the London Food Bus in Wandsworth; credit: Ollie Cem

# Food poverty action plans

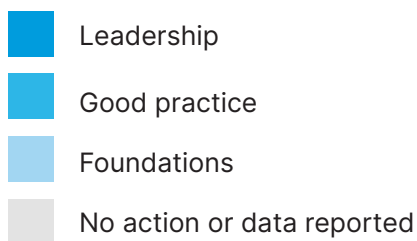
Food poverty alliances work strategically and collaboratively across sectors to reduce the burden of household food insecurity. These groups can work together towards shared goals, often formalised most effectively through a food poverty action plan, or comparable set of actions.

Food poverty action plans are coordinated strategies that map the current situation, identify gaps in provision and create a shared set of actions to respond to food poverty and reduce underlying structural inequalities, developed collaboratively with key stakeholders.

This year, 20 out of the 28 councils responding are demonstrating leadership by being active members of their local food poverty alliances and proactively supporting them. 19 out of the 28 councils have food poverty action plans, or a similar set of actions in place, with dedicated funding attached. Only 3 councils do not have a local alliance in place, and 6 do not have a food poverty action plan.

There have been concerted efforts through food poverty alliances to respond to COVID-19. As we emerge from the pandemic, Sustain urges councils to support alliances as they transition beyond food provision and refresh their food poverty action plans.

## Food poverty action plans



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Develop a food poverty action plan (or similar set of actions) for tackling the root causes of food poverty and reducing the need for food aid	<p>Ensure a named officer (or officers) is responsible for oversight of the food poverty plan</p> <p>Create a designated multi-sectoral group responsible for implementing the recommendations of the food poverty plan</p>	Provide funding to implement the food poverty action plan

[www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/action\\_plan](http://www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/action_plan)

Councils were surveyed on their support for **food poverty alliances**. Find out more here: [www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/)

# UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative works with maternity, neonatal, health visiting and children's centre services to implement evidence-based standards so that babies, their mothers and families are provided with effective support with infant feeding and early relationship building. Social and cultural factors are often cited as barriers to breastfeeding, and the UK has some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world with eight out of ten women stopping breastfeeding before they want to.<sup>xiv</sup>

Services which implement Baby Friendly standards receive the prestigious Baby Friendly award, which

is a nationally recognised mark of quality care. The Baby Friendly Gold Award recognises how local authorities are achieving sustainability through leadership, culture, monitoring and progression. Baby Friendly Gold is currently maintained by three London boroughs: Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Kensington and Chelsea. Twelve boroughs have also demonstrated very good practice by achieving full Baby Friendly accreditation, with an additional 17 boroughs successfully achieving Stage 1 or Stage 2 accreditation.

## UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Gain Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 accreditation	Gain Full accreditation	Gain Gold accreditation

[www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/)



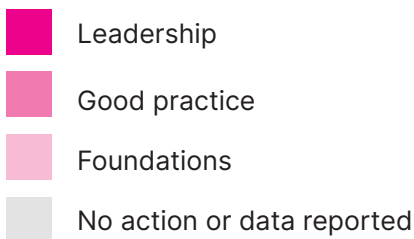
Councils also reported on their support for **Healthy Start**. Find out more here: [www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/)

# Free school meals

London has one of the highest levels of child poverty in the UK, with 37% of London's children living in relative poverty<sup>xv</sup>. Free school meals provide vital support for low-income families; for many children, school lunch is their main meal of the day. Ensuring that all children can access enough good food to grow and learn is vital to securing equal opportunities for all children. Similarly, holiday provision of food plays a vital part in ensuring that families are not left struggling financially, out of term time.

This year four councils in London are able to demonstrate leadership by funding universal free school meals for all primary school children - Islington, Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. Another 16 responding councils are showing good practice in this area.

## Free school meals



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Ensure there is a mechanism to measure free school meal uptake e.g. cashless catering or a requirement on schools to measure and report take-up of free school meals	Fund free school meals for children with no recourse to public funds  Fund breakfast clubs  Fund fruit and veg in schools (beyond the government-funded School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme for 4-6 year olds)	Fund universal free school meals beyond KS1 (all primary school children and/or secondary school children)

[www.sustainweb.org/childrens-food-campaign/](http://www.sustainweb.org/childrens-food-campaign/)

[www.schoolfoodmatters.org](http://www.schoolfoodmatters.org)

Councils also reported on their support for **holiday activities and food**. Find out more here: [www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/)

# Cash first responses to food insecurity

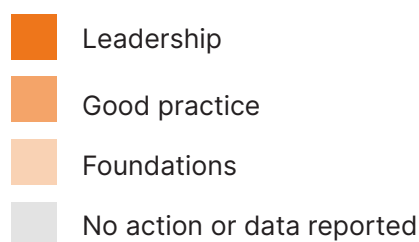
Inadequate levels of welfare, a lack of recognition of financial burdens, low pay or insecure hours, often combined, can all cause food poverty. People who might be struggling often find themselves cutting down on the quality or amount of food that they buy and consume.

Therefore, a cash first approach is a vital component of any strategy that seeks to tackle food poverty. This means focusing on maximising household incomes and entitlements, debt or financial hardship alleviation, coordinated navigation of the welfare system and the integration of wraparound services

that support people with wider issues such as employment and mental health.

This year, 27 out of 28 councils report having a local welfare assistance scheme in place, with nearly as many having streamlined referral pathways in place or providing funding for welfare benefits and debt advice services. 14 councils are demonstrating leadership in this area by being able to report action in all five areas.

## Cash first responses to food insecurity



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Taking 1-2 of the recommended actions	Taking 3-4 of the recommended actions	Taking all 5 of the recommended actions

- Have a local welfare assistance scheme that provides financial assistance directly to residents in crisis, preferably in cash
- Have a council tax minimum payment of less than 8.5% for low-income residents
- Ensure streamlined referral pathways that help residents access as many forms of support as possible in an integrated way
- Fund welfare benefits and debt advice services (either in-house or contracted)
- Have a discretionary housing payment scheme for residents in economic hardship with at least 90% of the budget for this spent

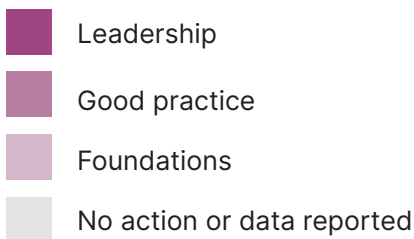
# London Living Wage

Raising incomes is vital to help people move out of poverty so they can access and choose their own food. The London Living Wage is currently set at £11.05 per hour and applies to all workers over 18. Commitment to pay staff and contractors the London Living Wage signals an important contribution to ensuring that people are paid what they need to live on in the capital and paves the way to all Londoners being able to afford enough and good quality food. Councils can demonstrate leadership not only by becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer and Funder, but by also by being recognised for Making a Living Wage Place. Local action groups of Living Wage

employers work together to create an action plan for expanding the real Living Wage in their place.

Two councils - Islington and Southwark – have been formally recognised for Making Living Wage Places, while Lambeth and the Royal Docks area in Newham are on the journey to recognition. A further ten councils are showing good practice by being accredited both as a Living Wage Employer and either being a Living Wage Funder and/or actively engaging with local employers. Council leadership on the London Living Wage will play an important role as London embarks on a journey to become a Living Wage City-region.

## London Living Wage



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Be an accredited Living Wage Employer	Be recognised as a Living Wage Funder  Show leadership in engaging local employers to become accredited Living Wage Employers	Be recognised as a Living Wage Place

[www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk)



# Food access for Black, Asian and minority ethnic people

Black, Asian and minority ethnic people are disproportionately disadvantaged in our food system. People identifying as Black or Black British are significantly overrepresented in those that need to use Trussell Trust food banks (9% vs. 3% of the UK population).<sup>xvi</sup>

This year the survey included questions to measure council action to support these groups. It is encouraging that several councils reported tailored work, with recognition that more focus should be placed on addressing the inequalities within our food systems.

This year 18 councils reported that they are supporting food aid providers or community food projects to include a variety of culturally appropriate foods. Half of the councils that responded are implementing policies or procedures that help ensure food procured by the council includes a variety of culturally appropriate food or are supporting Black, Asian or minority ethnic-led community food projects, for example through targeted grants. Five councils are able to show leadership, but nine councils reported no action.

## Food access for Black, Asian and minority ethnic people

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Taking 1-2 of the recommended actions	Taking 3-4 of the recommended actions	Taking all 5-6 of the recommended actions

- Map retailers selling culturally appropriate, affordable and healthy food
- Incentivise food retailers to sell culturally appropriate, healthy and affordable food
- Support food aid providers or community food projects to include a variety of culturally appropriate foods
- Map food aid provision across the borough and indicate the culturally specific types of food available
- Implement policies or procedures that help ensure council food procured includes a variety of culturally appropriate food
- Support Black, Asian or minority ethnic-led community food projects e.g. through targeted grants

[www.sustainweb.org/blogs/aug20-sustains-commitment-to-tackle-racial-injustice/](http://www.sustainweb.org/blogs/aug20-sustains-commitment-to-tackle-racial-injustice/)

Councils were also asked about their support for people with **no recourse to public funds**. Find out more here: [www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-for-all-londoners/)



# Food access for older and disabled people

Older and disabled Londoners are at particularly high risk of malnutrition. This is caused by multiple factors including difficulty accessing food, loss of mobility or dexterity, social isolation and decreased motivation to cook when living alone. Low income may also be a factor. Where services are not available, many older adults resort to coping mechanisms like cutting out cooked meals. Preventative, holistic services, such as meals on wheels, lunch clubs and shopping support significantly reduce these risks and bring a range of benefits including social contact, regular welfare checks and links to other services and support. This is particularly important when people are discharged from hospital.

This year, only five councils reported that they fund or commission a meals on wheels service, despite the pandemic highlighting the importance of such services. This has declined markedly over recent years. Although a few more councils are supporting lunch clubs, there is still a lack of dedicated funding or prioritisation of this group's basic need to access healthy, cooked food. However, a further eight councils are signposting or supporting referral pathways into meals on wheels services.

## Food access for older and disabled people

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Signpost people to meals on wheels services, for example via social services and information	Support strong referral pathways into meals on wheels services	Fund an in-house meals on wheels service or services  Commission an external meals on wheels service or services

[www.sustainweb.org/older-peoples-food/](http://www.sustainweb.org/older-peoples-food/)

# Healthy Place, Healthy Weight mission

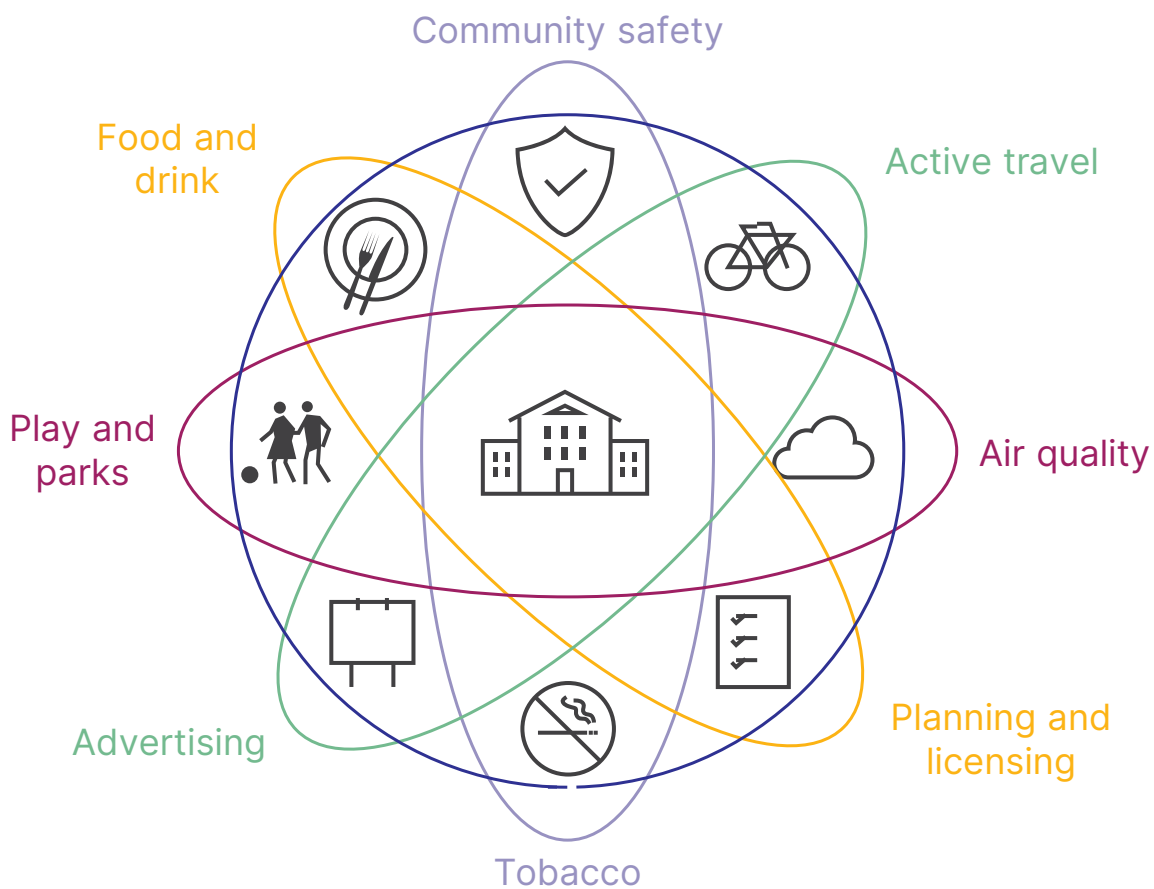
The **London Recovery Programme** was launched by the Mayor of London in partnership with London Councils to restore and rebuild our city as a place with a better long-term future for Londoners, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on different communities, not just highlighting but further exacerbating deep-seated inequalities. In addition, it has impacted local economies and high streets, while placing significant pressure on public services.

Led by the **London Recovery Board**, the programme sets out a missions-based approach that brings together the public, private and voluntary sectors, and will require massive effort on the part of all Londoners to make a success. The Board is chaired jointly by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the Chair of London Councils, Councillor Georgia Gould.

## Why Healthy Place, Healthy Weight?

Tackling child obesity is one of the most urgent health challenges we face. There is a strong relationship between obesity and deprivation and recent data shows large increases in children who are overweight and living with obesity compared to previous years, with the largest increase in London<sup>2</sup>. The **Healthy Place, Healthy Weight** mission aims to help children and families achieve and maintain a healthy weight with focused support for those communities with the highest rates of child obesity.

One of the best ways to do this is by supporting local environments to become healthier. That's why a commitment has been made that 'by 2025 families across London will find it easier to eat healthy food and be active where they live, learn, shop, work and play'.



## The approach

The work of the recovery mission includes:

- Supporting schools to adopt water-only policies, by ensuring free access to water in schools. This will encourage pupils to remain hydrated and reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Encouraging the roll-out across London of the Transport for London advertising restrictions for high fat and sugar foods. Research has shown that every additional advert a child sees for less healthy food can lead to them eating hundreds of extra unnecessary calories each week. Controlling the exposure of advertising, particularly around schools and nurseries, will tackle the normalising of unhealthy food and drinks.
- Increasing the number of School Superzones in London; the concept was previously piloted in 13 boroughs and is now set to be expanded across the capital. With a focus on the most disadvantaged communities in London, School Superzones identify areas around schools where multiple actions can be taken to improve the urban environment and create healthier places for children and young people to live, learn and play. This type of place-based intervention can include restricting the advertising of unhealthy food and drink, increasing access to food growing, reducing air pollution from cars, promoting active travel, and addressing fear of crime and other community safety concerns.



As we learn more about the pandemic's impact, the ambition is to continue engaging Londoners and key partner stakeholders on our missions to ensure Londoners live longer, healthier lives, using every insight to build on existing work or develop better ways of working.

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Mayor of London's Health Team: What We Do  
 Healthy Place Healthy Weight  
[www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/health](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/health)

## CHAPTER 2 Good Food for London

This chapter covers five core themes that collectively cover the range of issues where councils can make a difference for residents through healthy and sustainable food. Specifically it looks at how councils are: taking joined-up action on food; progressing support for healthier food environments; creating a good food economy; enabling residents to access land and support for food growing; and responding to the climate and nature emergency in relation to food.

This initial section showcases examples of good practice from across the capital, before going on to look at how councils performed on individual measures.

### Case studies:

#### Tower Hamlets: A thriving Food Partnership

The Tower Hamlets Food Partnership (THFP) was established in 2018/19 following consultation with the community around the challenge of food poverty in the borough. It is now a key forum for coordinating action on food, has received a bronze award from Sustainable Food Places and is working towards silver. The partnership is coordinated by local VCS organisation, Wen, who devised a multi-layered community engagement programme to create the vision and action plan for food in the borough. The steering group meets quarterly and includes various council departments, registered social landlords, community groups, food distribution organisations and an academic institute.

#### Good news from other councils

In Sutton, the council and partner organisations come together to form the Sutton Food Forum. Membership includes EcoLocal, Sutton Community Farm, Fairtrade in Sutton, Surrey Organic Farming Group, local food banks and officers from various council departments.

#### Barnet: Trailblazing SUGAR SMART

In 2020, Barnet Council launched their SUGAR SMART campaign highlighting schools and high streets in a bid to improve health outcomes for young people. They delivered a trailblazing SUGAR SMART ad campaign on bus shelters and busy thoroughfares. Barnet Council has also signed the Local Government Declaration reporting to their Health and Wellbeing Board. Their Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy references their commitments to continue to tackle obesity by shifting towards healthier food cultures.



SUGAR SMART campaign poster in Barnet; credit: London Borough of Barnet

#### Good news from other councils

Southwark Council has implemented a Healthy Advertising Policy that includes Transport for London's ban on products that are high in fat, salt and sugar and goes further by also banning the promotion of alcoholic products and brands. Enfield Council ran Fizz Free February activities during 2021, whilst Waltham Forest held similar activities as part of SUGAR SMART September.

## Southwark: Edible estates

As well as including food growing in several strategies, plans and policies, Southwark Council has launched a scheme to support residents living on Southwark housing estates to create new food growing gardens. In-house Community Gardening Coordinators help residents develop their ideas, coordinate a plan for the new garden and consult on proposals. Where consultation is successful, the council helps fund the installation of a new food garden and provides ongoing support to residents' groups coordinating new sites.

### Good news from other councils

The Stop and Grow project is a Harrow Council public health project involving the diverse community of Harrow in learning how to grow their own produce, joining forces with The Friends of Wiseworks, a volunteer-based arm of a local mental health service. Horticulture activities take place on disused land provided by the council.

## Newham: Tackling the climate emergency through food

Newham Council has published its Climate Emergency declaration, supported by a strong Climate Emergency Action plan, which looks at the borough's wider food culture and procurement. They have also signed Sustain's 'Food for the Planet Pledge' to make food served by the council more climate-friendly and are undertaking several actions including signing the Sustainable Fish Cities pledge for council-controlled settings and helping businesses to reduce food waste.

In terms of school food, all schools that are catered through the council's own Juniper Ventures service, have unlimited salad and vegetables each day to encourage higher levels of consumption in recognition of the major contribution of meat consumption to climate change and to promote healthier eating. In other settings, Newham Council's Dockside Diner was launched in 2020 with a two-thirds non-meat main menu part of the council's SMART food approach across its estate. There are plans to take this and other sites fully vegetarian in the coming years.

### Good news from other councils

In November 2021, The Mayor of London signed the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration joining Tower Hamlets and the Royal Borough of Greenwich as the first councils to sign the declaration in the year of the COP26 climate negotiations held in Glasgow. Other good practice in schools include in Ealing where Ealing Schools Catering Consortium (ESCC) require their caterer to observe two meat free days a week; and in Waltham Forest, where primary and secondary schools have the Soil Association *Silver Food For Life Served Here* award and offer a daily plant-based main course option.



Oasis Farm Waterloo; credit: Sustain

# Joined-up action on food

A collaborative, joined-up approach to food issues within a locality can help to transform health, create community cohesion, grow the local economy, and achieve ambitions on the climate and nature emergency.

Creating a food partnership brings together stakeholders including residents, community groups, businesses, and academics to join-up thinking, and create a strategy and/or action plan on how best to transition to a sustainable food system. Councils are well placed to influence and, in some cases, coordinate work on a partnership. This can include

funding a community partner or internal officer time to progress a partnership, strategy and/or locally led initiatives.

Twelve of the councils surveyed are part of an active food partnership and nine are members of the Sustainable Food Places network, a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain. Members of Sustainable Food Places are supported to make progress within the framework for action and apply for awards to celebrate achievements: as of 2021 four councils in London hold bronze awards.

## Joined-up action on food

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported

The councils marked with an \* are recognised for their efforts in taking a joined-up approach on food, despite not meeting the criteria outlined in this survey. Wandsworth is recognised as a member of Sustainable Food Places but has been allocated no points as they did not respond to the survey this year.



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Join or initiate a food partnership, which is a member of the Sustainable Food Places Network	Jointly develop a food strategy or food plan, including but wider than just the theme of food poverty	Invest in the food partnership with officer time or funding  Apply for an award as part of Sustainable Food Places network membership

### Chris Walker

Sustainable Food Places, Soil Association

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[www.sustainablefoodplaces.org](http://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org)

# Healthier food environments

Diet-related conditions are some of the greatest health challenges facing the UK today, with these problems particularly acute in London. Around 22% of London’s 4–5 year-olds have an unhealthy weight and by age 10–11, the figure rises to 38%.<sup>xvii</sup>

Sustain advocates a whole-systems and cross-sector approach to improving public health and achieving healthier diets. The four measures included in the survey encompass action in key areas that affect the lives and health of all Londoners.

21 councils are signed up to the well-established Healthier Catering Commitment, a scheme that helps

food businesses offer healthier choices to their customers, and the 13 councils highlighted for good practice continue to act on commitments made as part of The Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food or through SUGAR SMART (or equivalent) campaigns delivered online and in person.

However, there are still opportunities to make significant progress in this area, with only two councils showing leadership. These councils demonstrated action across the measures and have a Healthier Food Advertising policy, which limits promotion of unhealthy food and drinks.

## Healthier food environments

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
Run a SUGAR SMART Campaign or equivalent  Sign up to the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food  Implement a Healthier Catering Commitment	Make progress on these commitments, reviewing them annually	Demonstrate a joined-up approach on these initiatives, and implement a Healthier Advertising Policy across the borough

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[www.sugarsmartuk.org](http://www.sugarsmartuk.org)

# Food for the Planet

The way we grow, transport, process and sell food causes over a third of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions<sup>xviii</sup>. Councils have the power to influence the diets of citizens, and the food grown locally, so that these are better for the planet, for our health, and for nature, and so that they create good jobs.

The Food for the Planet campaign is helping councils throughout the UK understand where they can make big, meaningful emissions reductions through food, with a dedicated Every Mouthful Counts toolkit. Run by Sustain and Sustainable Food Places, it helps those working in climate change understand the importance of food, recognise councils that are leading the field, and support places to integrate food and farming into climate change strategies and action.

This includes:

- **Buying and serving climate-friendly, healthy food** for catering that the council controls including schools, meetings and events, care catering and staff restaurants
- **Growing more sustainable food locally**, in allotments, community spaces, urban fringes, county farms, and integrating fruit and nut trees in tree-planting strategies
- **Tackling the root causes of food waste** by influencing the behaviour of the most wasteful businesses, and supporting composting
- **Creating a fairer, less wasteful and more localised food economy with community wealth building at its heart**, including supporting alternative retail and independent restaurants, cooperatives, locally-owned food enterprises, infrastructure for markets, storage and low-carbon deliveries
- **Developing a food, plastics and waste policy** for festivals and events on council land
- **Encouraging a climate-friendly diet** through council promotion, advertising and dietary advice

The Every Mouthful Counts toolkit, available as part of the Food for the Planet campaign, helps councils to take action by helping identify where they can have impact. The campaign also encourages you to pledge to serve more sustainable food, start tracking actions and be recognised for progress on this vital issue.

[www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk](http://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk)



Credit: Karolina Grabowska / Pexels





# Good food economy

Councils' public health teams have long recognised the role of food in health, but increasingly there is a need to address public health in other departments, particularly those relating to the food economy. Diverse SME food businesses can provide affordable, healthy, and sustainable food and support a resilient food system, contributing to healthier neighbourhoods. The survey indicated many councils recognise the local food economy in strategies and plans, but there is not currently a specific focus on healthy and/or sustainable food including Good Food Retail initiatives. There is also the opportunity for councils to increase access to healthy and sustainable food through their support to food SMEs.

Eighteen councils reported supporting markets to improve their fresh food offer, but there was less work engaging settings such as convenience stores. To date, six councils have Good Food Retail plans, helping make healthy, affordable food available at a neighborhood level. Fifteen councils reported providing training or business advice to food SMEs; this is a great foundation, but more emphasis could be placed on working with SMEs run by and/or serving underrepresented groups to ensure they can access this support or participate in and benefit from initiatives.

## Good food economy

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
<p>Collaborate across departments including involvement from the Economic Development Team</p> <p>Run projects to improve the food economy or support food SMEs</p>	<p>Partner or commission an external organisation to work with SMEs to improve access to affordable, healthy and/or sustainable food</p> <p>Improve the physical and support infrastructure available to food SMEs, e.g. access to land, assets and equipment</p>	<p>Build community wealth through purchasing food from SMEs</p> <p>Support SMEs, coops or social enterprises onto council supplier lists</p> <p>Promote Good Food Retail in regeneration schemes, high street improvements or new developments</p>

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[www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink](http://www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink)

# Food Flagship Initiative: Creating a circular food system in London

*The Mayor of London, ReLondon and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation are working with boroughs, businesses and civil society to help London become a city where food is deeply valued, sustainably produced and never wasted. This is supporting the Mayor's target to make London net zero carbon by 2030.*

Our current food system is ripe for change: it doesn't work for everyone, and it certainly doesn't work for the environment. Today the global food system is responsible for a third of all greenhouse gas emissions, and industrial farming practices are driving biodiversity loss and damaging our soils and water sources.

Changing London's food system to one based on circular economy principles, whereby we eliminate waste, circulate resources and regenerate nature, is a powerful way to address climate change and support biodiversity, while providing healthy and nutritious food for all. To get there fast, we need our city's businesses, charities, residents and local authorities to all work together.



Credit: Francesco Gallarotti / Unsplash

London's Food Flagship Initiative is working in partnership with actors across the city's food value chain - from peri-urban farmers and innovators, to food brands, retailers, hospitality and public sector institutions - with the goal of kickstarting innovative and ambitious circular food projects that:

1. Source more food grown using agroecological practices, and locally where possible
2. Increase the prevalence of healthy and sustainable food items in shops and on menus
3. Eliminate food waste wherever possible, and recycle any unavoidable food waste back into productive uses

## London's food footprint

London's consumption-based emissions arising from Londoners' food consumption is 15,483 kt CO<sub>2</sub>eq each year. That is the equivalent to 57 million car miles or the energy use of 1.8 million houses for a year.

A major new report by ReLondon and Circle Economy<sup>xix</sup> highlights the scale of consumption-based emissions stemming from London's food. It shows that 99% of London's food and beverages are brought in from outside of the city, while local production and farming accounts for just 1% of the capital's food supply. The report also found that:

- **78% of consumption emissions from food come from imports, occurring outside the city**
- **Over 1/3 of food produced to supply London is lost or wasted**
- **67% of 'food waste' in London is edible but just 0.5% is redistributed**

By reducing food loss and making better use of surplus food and food waste in London, as well as shifting towards healthier and more sustainable diets, London can reduce the city's annual food-related consumption-based emissions by almost a third.

“ The pandemic has shown how fragile our food system can be even in a city like London. The Food Flagship Initiative is working with businesses across the food value chain to help increase the resilience of our food system, reduce waste and climate impacts and contribute to London's green recovery from COVID-19.

**Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor of London for Environment and Energy**

## Meet some of London's circular food pioneers

Far from being a distant concept, there are already pioneering foodies all around London supporting a more circular urban food system. The Food Flagship Initiative recognises good practice and ambitious changemakers who are accelerating the transition by awarding them 'Circular Food Pioneer' status.



Kitche  
ReLondon



### ReLondon, Kitche, OLIO and London Borough of Bexley: minimising household food waste

Kitche and OLIO are free mobile apps helping citizens end food waste. A new ReLondon funded project will measure the impact of targeted local promotion of these apps in the London Borough of Bexley to determine whether they can reduce waste at a local level, in turn reducing emissions and saving councils money.



The Food Flagship Initiative is convening working groups for London's local authorities on four topics:

- Circular food procurement
- Training of environmental health practitioners
- Food redistribution
- Pan-London awareness-raising campaign on sustainable food choices

Felix | THE FELIX PROJECT

### The Felix Project: turning surplus food into meals in a professional kitchen

The Felix Project, a food redistribution charity supported by the Mayor and ReLondon, has opened its own professional kitchen in Tower Hamlets to provide ready meals for Londoners needing support, prepared using rescued surplus food. The kitchen will prepare 1.5 million meals in the first year, with plans to reach 100 million meals a year by the end of 2024, preventing hundreds of tonnes of food waste.



### Toast Ale: scaling the use of surplus bread in the brewing industry

Toast Ale, the waste-busting beer company, is scaling the use of surplus bread in the brewing industry by creating a pre-prepared brewers' ingredient (called a crumb) that other brewers can buy ready to use.

Get in touch with [Jean.Billant@relondon.gov.uk](mailto:Jean.Billant@relondon.gov.uk) if you are interested in being part of any of these groups.

Do you have a new, collaborative and potentially transformative circular food project underway or in planning? If so, we want to hear from you! [Apply today and tell us about your project](#) to be recognised as one of London's official Circular Food Pioneers.

Visit [relondon.gov.uk/food-flagship-initiative](https://relondon.gov.uk/food-flagship-initiative) to learn more.

# Food growing

Not only is growing food beneficial for personal and public health and well-being, it creates wider social and environmental benefits. Sustain runs the Capital Growth network in London, and has supported councils to take an active role to ensure all Londoners have the chance to grow food. 16 councils demonstrated their commitment to food growing by including it within strategies or plans. Thirteen councils reported having a designated officer to champion food growing across departments and be a contact point for residents. There was a high level of partnership work, with over two-thirds of councils working with schools or voluntary sector

organisations to develop growing initiatives and provide grants or other resources.

One of the biggest challenges (and opportunities) is accessing secure land for community or productive growing. Many councils enable the use of publicly owned land for food growing and reported growing initiatives in public parks. Seven councils are going further by mapping and tracking land available for food growing with targets to increase availability. Four councils demonstrate leadership by making publicly owned land available for larger scale food production, with 12 looking to enhance or protect growing sites.

## Food growing

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
<p>Include food growing in relevant strategies or action plans</p> <p>Have designated officer time to support food growing</p>	<p>Develop food growing initiatives within public parks or work with friends of parks groups to support food growing</p> <p>Create planning policies and work with developers to ensure community gardens in new developments</p>	<p>Look at ways to enhance or protect growing sites and access more land</p> <p>Connect people growing food with local food providers</p>

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[www.capitalgrowth.org](http://www.capitalgrowth.org)

# Capital Growth, councils and food growing

Demand for spaces to grow food has surged over the last few years as people look for opportunities to access healthy food for themselves and their communities, connect with nature and green spaces and improve their wellbeing.

Councils have a unique opportunity to further the community food growing agenda by supporting residents, community groups and organisations to access land and other assets for food growing.

In Capital Growth's briefing for councils, several key benefits are outlined, which cut across departments including: access for residents to healthy, local food; healthy and active residents; resilient and mentally healthy communities; safer, cohesive communities; greener and environmentally sustainable communities.

Our briefing provides detail on the five areas where councils can take action, and provides a great overview of how local authorities can make progress.

## How Capital Growth can help

Capital Growth is committed to promoting the important role of councils in increasing opportunities to grow food and accessing land for food production. The team can help councils through sharing good practice include publications, case studies, webinars as well as tailored advice for councils and a new focused peer network for council officers working to share ideas and overcome common challenges.

## Next steps for councils

- Promote Capital Growth to local gardens so they can receive advice, training and other benefits
- Get involved in our annual Good to Grow weekend, taking place each April, to kickstart the season and attract and inspire volunteer engagement, as well as our Urban Harvest celebrations across London every September
- Get gardens involved in tackling the climate and nature emergency by following our work and receiving our newsletter
- Joining our peer network for council officers

[www.capitalgrowth.org](http://www.capitalgrowth.org)

## Five ways to take action on food growing:

1. **Take a crosscutting approach:** Include food growing in public health strategies, food strategies, local plans, and climate change strategies. This is especially important for councils as community food growing is universally popular and meets many council objectives and crosses the work of many departments.
2. **Build capacity:** Appoint a designated officer to champion food growing and create clearer pathways for accessing land, as well as links with local networks or key VCS organisations.
3. **Increase access to land and assets:** Proactively identify land for food growing, make access to land easier including mapping land, as well as assets to increase local food production e.g. glasshouses.
4. **Plan for it:** Support for community food growing should be included in planning policies and frameworks (as it is in the overarching London Plan) and councils can secure and protect land for food growing.
5. **Connect with others:** Sustain's Capital Growth and Good to Grow networks can help councils to encourage and support food growing and signpost you to other relevant organisations.

The full briefing is available at [www.capitalgrowth.org/councils-and-food-growing](http://www.capitalgrowth.org/councils-and-food-growing)



# Climate and nature emergency and food

Climate change and ecosystem depletion are one of the biggest challenges of our lifetimes and the greatest threat to our health and food security. Of 28 councils surveyed, 24 have declared a climate emergency to demonstrate commitment to act on the causes and impacts of climate change.

Sustain and Sustainable Food Places have launched the Food for the Planet campaign (see page 21), to help councils take simple actions that can tackle the climate and nature emergency through food. Nine councils in London have taken the first step and registered for the Every Mouthful Counts toolkit, to

record and celebrate actions that cut food emissions locally. However, food does not feature strongly in councils' climate strategies and only two London councils signed the Glasgow Declaration on Food and Climate, along with the Mayor of London.

Councils showing leadership in this theme have taken several actions around food, for example through procurement in school settings. Action on food waste is also commendable, with many councils offering food waste collection to schools and businesses, supporting the redistribution of surplus food and helping unavoidable waste being sent to landfill.

## Climate and nature emergency and food

- Leadership
- Good practice
- Foundations
- No action or data reported



## What can councils do?

Foundations	Good practice	Leadership
<p>Register for the Food for the Planet campaign</p> <p>Have a designated council officer with food and climate change in their remit</p>	<p>Sign the Glasgow Declaration on Food and Climate</p> <p>Have a climate action plan with specific, measurable policies to cut food-related emissions (the toolkit provides details)</p>	<p>Take a number of actions around food, such as:</p> <p>Run public awareness campaigns to encourage residents to eat more climate-friendly diets</p> <p>Sign the Sustainable Fish Cities pledge for council-controlled settings</p>

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[www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk](http://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk)

## Survey approach

As in previous years, Sustain designed a survey to collect the information used and scored in this report, based on our decades of close work with councils on food issues. External partners and feedback from councils were used to shape criteria. All councils in London were invited to complete a survey and self-report on action taken and future plans. Where available, data from external sources has been included for councils that did not respond to our survey.

The scoring and maps show three levels of action based on survey responses: foundations, good practice and leadership. For some measures, we identified actions to indicate a council's progress level; for some measures, it was the total number of actions taken that was used to determine the level.

The tables on pages 3 and 4 provide an overview of council performance in each theme (indicated by colours), how they ranked comparatively (indicated by order and percentage score), with an indication of councils who achieved overall leadership.

For the Beyond the Food Bank chapter, we assessed councils as being leaders by achieving good practice in at least nine measures and achieving leadership in at least 6 of these. For the Good Food for London chapter, those highlighted as showing leadership, were councils taking significant actions across all measures, this included scoring good practice in all themes and leadership in at least one area.

*Since publication of this year's report, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets have clarified additional information which means they have scored Foundations in Food access for older and disabled people.*

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## Our publications



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**Tools for tackling food poverty**



**Sustain Briefing: Good Food Retail**



**Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food Support pack**

# Good Food for All Londoners

## Tracking council action on food

A Sustain publication

March 2022

### About Sustain

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, tackle climate change and restore nature, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote greater equality. It represents around 100 national public interest organisations, and cultivates the movement for change, working with many others at local, regional, national and international level.

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### About London Food Link

Part of the food and farming charity Sustain, London Food Link is the voice of good food in London. Our network is made up of individuals, enterprises and organisations who are working for better food in the capital and represented on the London Food Board.

We lead and partner on policy initiatives, campaigns and practical projects to improve the food system. As well as this report, this includes the London Food Poverty Campaign, Capital Growth, Food Roots and The Jellied Eel magazine.

[www.londonfoodlink.org](http://www.londonfoodlink.org)



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