



Lancashire County Council

Our Food Plan

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi MBBS MD MPH FFPH,
Director of Public Health, Wellbeing and Communities,
Lancashire County Council

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FOREWORD

We want to create a thriving, sustainable, and fair food system for Lancashire. In recent years food systems have changed and this has made it more challenging to eat well. Our food plan will acknowledge the complex nature of food systems and their broad impact on society, from public health to environmental stewardship and economic growth.

We want everyone to have access to healthy and nutritious food, but this is not a simple task and we must work across multiple departments within the council to create momentum for change. We have an opportunity to address and improve our food systems through the development of this food plan, recognising the interconnectedness of food with our wider organisation. The food plan will identify within our internal systems areas for improvements, setting our organisational approach and our commitment to working with wider partners to support better food systems.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a resilient food system that supports healthy populations, sustains the environment, and fosters economic prosperity for now and for the future.

Cllr Michael Green
Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

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Executive Summary

Our Food Plan focuses on action Lancashire County Council has direct or strong control over including our estates, services, policy making and our role as community influencers and advocates. Organisationally we have codesigned a food plan that it will examine why we need a food plan, identify areas for improvement, and how we will achieve this.

Our food systems are outdated and are damaging the environment, climate, and our health. Reliance on food organisations has increased, whilst food banks are receiving less food donations to redistribute. Those that live in deprived areas eat less fruit and vegetables and access to food choice is limited. More healthy foods are over twice as expensive per calorie as less healthy foods (1), meaning those that have lower incomes must make a choice between quantity and quality. Malnutrition (a lack of nutrients) is a result of poor diet; a consequence of the environment where people live and their accessibility to nutritionally balanced foods. Diet (foods that we habitually eat) also has an impact on the climate, for example, cheap highly processed foods come in more packaging leading to more waste.

Following a government commissioned independent review into the food systems in 2018 a National Food Strategy was published. In 2022 the government then released the Government Food Strategy to respond to the findings, this included policy initiatives to boost good health, recommendations that encourage healthier more sustainable food choices, creating a transparent food system, and looking at public procurement to lead by example. Our Lancashire Food Plan sets our organisational position, responding to the governments recommendations and presents the detail of how we will improve our food systems to protect our health, economy, and environment.

We will follow up this food plan with an implementation plan to monitor adherence against our priorities and actions detailed within this document, the implementation plan will routinely update on actions and milestones to ensure progress.

1.0 Why a food plan - a case for change.

Food is a commonality we all share; it is something all of us need daily to survive and thrive. Food systems span the whole course of the food production system, from animal feed, farming, production, distribution, consumption through to disposal. Our food systems have a direct link to both our health and the environment. Poor diet is now the biggest risk factor for preventable ill health in England (2), with UNICEF warning that children are suffering the consequences of poor diets and a food system that is failing them (3). Diet-related health issues, including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and type 2 diabetes, present significant challenges compounded by the reality that many people in the UK still cannot afford enough food to survive on, regardless of its nutritional content, highlighting significant socio-economic disparities in access to high quality sustainable food supplies.

The Food Foundation, a charity who support a vision for a food system which delivers health and wellbeing for all, produce an annual Broken Plate report. The latest Broken Plate report stated that the quality of diets in the UK is reflective of whether the food

system is set up to support citizens to eat healthily and sustainably. With inadequate nutrition resulting from poor food environments having implications for the health of children and adults, wider society, and the planet (1). Our food systems unconsciously affect our food choices every day: with an increasing demand for emergency food provision, which often lacks nutritional balance and choice, emphasising the need for systemic changes to ensure access to healthy diet and prevent ill health.

The formation of dietary patterns is complex with multiple factors influencing what we eat on a day to day basis such as access, individual choice, availability of choice and our surrounding food environment. Our food environment can affect and influence the types, quantities, and frequencies of food intake, shaping the nutritional intake and status of individuals. An example of this is fast-food outlets are seen in higher densities in more deprived communities, meaning access to these foods is convenient, whereas access to affordable, good quality, nutritious foods, such as fruit and vegetables are often limited (food deserts). This is creating inequality and directly impacting the health of people in these areas. Obesity and malnutrition seen hand in hand. This disparity is acknowledged within this plan.

Food systems also directly affect the climate and are vulnerable to climate change, a change would mean our ability to grow food and our food supply will be affected. Whilst we have direct control over some ways to improve our food systems internally, others are dependent on external partners, and whilst we have no say in how they manage and influence their food systems our plan intends to inspire change across Lancashire. Our unfair food systems need to be addressed and we as an organisation need to lead by example, we need to create a blueprint for others to follow.

1.1 Relationship Between Health and Food Systems

The relationship between health and food is complex and interfaces a wide range of health-related domains:

1. **Chronic Disease Prevention:** A balanced diet can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Diets high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, and low in saturated fats, sugars, and salt are associated with lower risks of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity (4).
2. **Healthy Weight:** Proper nutrition plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy weight. The NICE guideline, Preventing Excess Weight Gain (NG7) emphasizes that maintaining energy balance through a healthy diet and regular physical activity is essential for preventing excess weight gain (5).
3. **Nutrient Intake:** Adequate intake of essential nutrients is necessary for overall health. Public Health England's Eatwell Guide provides recommendations for a balanced diet that meets the body's nutritional needs, emphasizing the consumption of a variety of foods to ensure adequate intake of essential vitamins and minerals (6).
4. **Mental Health:** Emerging evidence suggests that diet quality impacts mental health. Diets rich in fruits, vegetables, and fish are linked to better mental health.

outcomes, whereas diets high in processed foods are associated with increased risk of depression (7).

1.2 National Strategic Perspectives

Nationally there is a collective movement to improve food systems. The Government Food Strategy released in 2022 focused on longer term measures to support a resilient, healthier, and more sustainable food system that is affordable to all. This plan included objectives to deliver a sustainable, nature positive, affordable food system that provides choice and access to high-quality products that support healthier home-grown diets for all. This was preceded by the National Food Strategy, Independent Review which included specific recommendations such as improving food labelling, taxing sugar and salt to incentivize reformulation, and expanding free school meals (8).

Alongside this local authorities across the country are setting their priorities to support and improve food systems, with some focussing on internal system change, whilst others have created wider organisational strategies to galvanise change collectively across its community.

Change through food systems is also supported wider, through organisations such as The Food Foundation and professional bodies such as the Faculty for Public Health. The Food Foundations' 2023 'Broken Plate' report assesses food environments and demonstrates how the food system makes it harder to eat well when it points us in the opposite direction. One of the concluding assertions from the report is that "Our diets are weakening our physical health, our educational achievement, our labour force, our economy, our healthcare systems, our environment and our wellbeing."

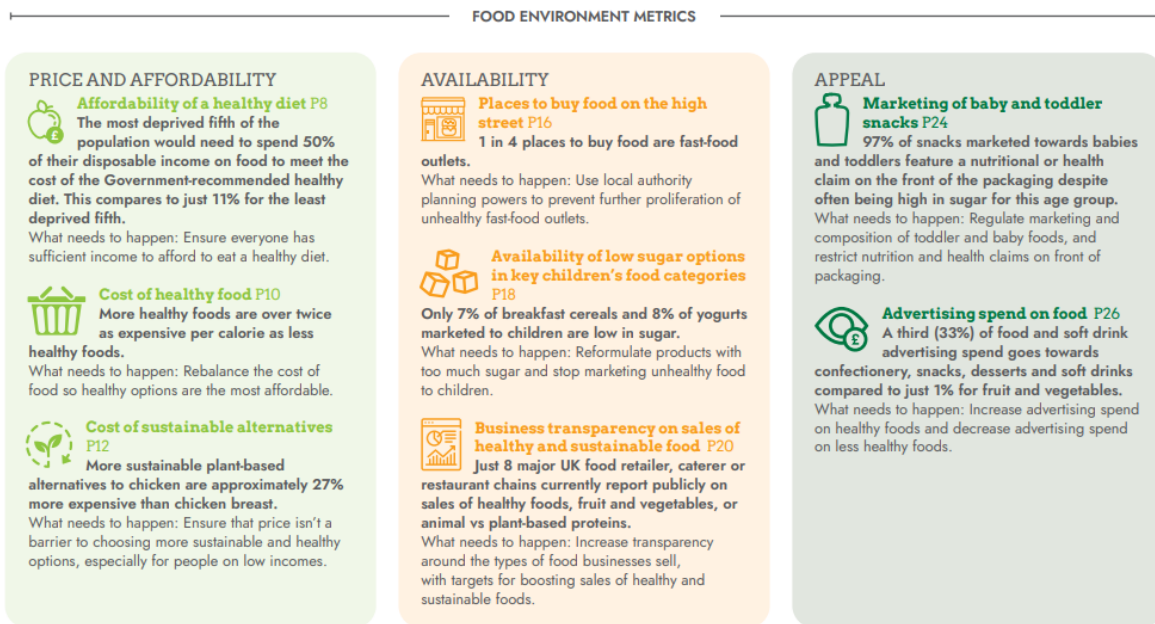
NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) has published guidance over many years relating to food diet and nutrition across the life course. These will be considered and reflected across appropriate actions. Guidance includes:

- Maternal and Child Nutrition (NICE Guideline PH11)
- Obesity in Adults: Prevention and Lifestyle Weight Management Programmes (NICE Quality Standard QS94)
- Preventing Excess Weight Gain (NICE Guideline NG7)
- Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease (NICE Guideline PH25)
- Community Engagement: Improving Health and Wellbeing and Reducing Health Inequalities (NICE Guideline NG44)

1.3 Food System Facts

The Food Foundation's, Broken Plate report cites three key components that provide us with a conclusion on the state of our food environment, these are availability, affordability, and appeal. Figure One below outlines that nationally the most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 50% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government recommended healthy diet (affordability). 1 in 4 places to buy food are fast-food outlets (availability). A third (33%) of food and soft drink advertising spend goes towards confectionary, snacks, desserts and soft drinks compared to just 1% for fruit and vegetables (appeal).

Figure One: Food Environment Metrics outlined in the Broken Plate report



In January 2024 a collective of organisations including the Faculty of Public Health, Royal Society of Medicine, Royal Society for Public Health and the association of Directors for Public Health, released a policy paper Health of the Next Generation: Good Food for Children (10). This policy paper looks at three interventions aimed at supporting children to eat healthily and achieve their potential in school, as well as to reduce the impact of food insecurity for vulnerable children. The three initiatives are Free School Meals, School Breakfast clubs and the Healthy Start Voucher scheme. The paper recognises that children and young people in the UK have sub-optimal diets and children from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to consume diets that meet fewer UK dietary recommendations.

1.4 Lancashire Position: where we are now:

The food system is believed to be the second biggest contributor to Greenhouse Gases (GHG), and in return a change to our environment is a threat to our food supply. Average annual temperatures in the Northwest of England are already around 1.5°C higher in the 21st century compared with the end of the 19th century (LCC environment strategy)

With approximately 1.2 million people across Lancashire, and 33,909 county council employees, including education and schools, our internal services and staff have a large reach across our communities. In Lancashire we have almost 6000 people who receive social care support, commissioned, or provided by LCC, that includes the provision of meals, if we assume the average person has 3 meals per day that is a total of 17,562 meals per day.

Our schools catering service provides meals for approximately 65,000 children each day. This is approximately 13 million meals served each year.

Our internal catering services including Reflections, serve approximately 113,500 hot meals, sandwiches and snacks each year.


Lancashire has over 13,000 food premises and 6000 agricultural holdings (farm and feed premises). In 2023/2024 Trading Standards completed 260 intelligence led food samples, Of those samples that tested safety- there was a 31% failure rate (e.g. allergens and aflatoxins). Of those that were food fraud/cost of living related testing had a 49% failure rate (e.g. substitution of cheaper ingredients)

In 2023 1,919 adults enrolled and attended courses to support healthy weight across Lancashire.

In 2023 842 families in targeted wards of Lancashire, learnt to cook new healthy recipes through our PASTA (play and skills at teatime activities) programme.



27.5% of adults are living with obesity across Lancashire.



1 in 4 children leave school overweight or obese in Lancashire.

2.0 Our 2024- 2028 Vision

2.1 Overarching Vision

To create an organisational whole systems food plan that leads by example, supporting the national approach where appropriate, building on what we already do well, celebrating our successes that ultimately supports our health, environment, and economy.

2.2 Key Aims

- To improve our food environments supporting access to safe, quality, healthy, nutritious foods.
- To improve access to resources and training to create resilience within our food systems and our workforce and communities.
- To improve our processes and procurement practices to ensure quality, nutritious food is available, encouraged and offered to our staff and within our services.
- To acknowledge the link between climate and our food systems and improve practices that will support sustainability.

- To align our plan with other key strategies and policies such as our environment strategy, our education strategy, and national policies as detailed above (section 1.2).

2.3 Scope

As detailed in 'a case for change' food systems are vast, and they overlap and interface our county council departments in many different ways, whether that be disposing of food waste within our waste services, procuring and catering services for schools and residential settings, commissioning services to support people to achieve a healthy weight, working with businesses to ensure legislation is adhered to within our trading standards or simply the food we offer within our various catering services such as Reflections. As such we need to be clear on the scope of this plan and its reach and where we are realistically likely to gain traction and make change.

Although within the plan we make some wider commitments to Lancashire, this plan ultimately focuses on our organisation and details a mandate for internal change. This plan will also detail examples of how we already support a food system within our vision, it will set our priorities with key actions to support a better food system- to promote bold but realistic ambitions.

2.4 How will we get there?

The breadth of food systems means they often intersect with other strategies and existing policies. By bringing together departments with responsibility for different aspects of the food system we can collectively create coherent plans. Our food plan will not duplicate or supersede strategies already in place but will support and compliment them, forming a part of the wider organisational ambition.

This plan requires a joined up organisational approach, particularly as some of the actions associated with this approach can be conflicting at times. For example, for people to become food secure and eat a nutritionally balanced diet we may need to access foods regardless of whether this food is sourced locally, however this plan will also recommend that a significant proportion of the food we procure is local produce to reduce environmental impact. We need to be clear that although this plan aims to improve our food systems, some areas will be at odds, due to competing priorities that can at times contradict each other, and although we want to be ambitious, we also need to be realistic with our actions.

3.0 Our Priorities

There are 4 priorities associated with our food plan. Each of our priorities will provide structure and credibility for several high-level actions and associated work. Although the food plan details work to improve our food systems, it is acknowledged that it is unlikely we have identified all possible actions to improve food systems, it is also likely over the course of the plan, further actions may be identified. We will therefore commit to work in a proactive, flexible way addressing emerging actions alongside those detailed below.

3.1 Priority One- Supporting Safer, Fairer and Healthier Places

The places we work, play, and live can shape our relationship with food and impact on our health. To create a positive change, we must acknowledge the influence of place on people, and actively support actions to build positive food systems.

Priority actions:

Review Food Security Support.

"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." World Food Summit, 1996. The cost-of-living crisis has seen food prices increase exponentially, with the office for national statistics stating that in March 2023, food inflation reached a peak of 19.2%. The highest seen in 45 years. The Food Foundation reported that the most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend half their disposable income on food to meet the cost of a healthy diet as recommended by the government.

In Lancashire we have 230 organisations (internal data as of July 2023), with a significant number acting as emergency food providers. This means that these food organisations provide emergency food packages for residents, which are made up from surplus food and food donations that are received from supermarkets, food producers, and the public. In recent times, public donations have unsurprisingly reduced in line with the cost-of-living crisis. Emergency food packages are unsustainable, they do not solve the issues that cause a lack of access to food and a longer term more holistic solution is required to support people accessing balanced and nutritious foods and preventing them needing to rely on emergency food provision. Therefore, one of the key actions associated with the place priority is to:

Review and complete the appreciative inquiry with district councils across Lancashire to coproduce recommendations as to how we can create and support resilience within our community food organisations.

Maximise national initiatives.

There are some initiatives in existence that currently support people experiencing food poverty such as healthy start and free school meals. The Health Foundation published a report in 2023 that addressed what councils can do (6). One of the recommendations

was to continue to maximise uptake of national initiatives including healthy start and free school meals, this is further supported by the Faculty for Public Health (FPH) who recommend free school meals to improve the next generations diet (3). Access to these initiatives can be improved, in Lancashire, as of August 2023, 3596 families were eligible for healthy start schemes but were not accessing the support. We need to understand the reasons for those not accessing initiatives and look at options to make accessing support easier e.g., auto enrolment, a recommendation from the FPH (3).

Support Lancashire Trading Standards and Scientific Services

Lancashire Trading Standards and Scientific Services provide an essential service in our food systems. Continued support including organisational support and recurrent funding, for these services is essential to provide the key part of our vision linked to safe food.

Lancashire Trading Standards also provide the Recipe 4 Health award scheme, this award promotes businesses that focus on healthy eating, environmental issues and social responsibility [Recipe 4 Health award - Lancashire County Council](#). Recipe 4 Health also supports the Healthy Weight Declaration commitment 6, looking at policy initiatives and recognition for businesses who are health conscious, this supports a positive food environment.

Progress work on the Healthy Weight Declaration 16 Commitments

In 2017 Lancashire County Council adopted the Healthy Weight Declaration. The declaration is a series of commitments to tackle issues that are detrimental to healthy weight environments within our communities and our organisation. Healthy weight environments support people with healthier food and drink options through the way it is designed and the variety of uses provided (9). For example, at the County Council fresh drinking water is accessible in all our office spaces. Healthy weight environments support good health and wellbeing. As this declaration directly relates to impact of environments on health, it sits within this priority.

As a two-tier Authority, some of the responsibility for the commitments lies with our District Council colleagues, therefore work will continue to engage our Districts in the healthy weight environment project, Lancashire Healthier Places, looking to fulfil a wider reach of the Healthy Weight Declaration.

The 16 Healthy Weight Declaration commitments:

The 16 commitments



Strategic/system leadership

1. Implement the Local Authority HWD as part of a long-term, 'systems-wide approach' to obesity;
2. Advocate plans that promote a preventative approach to encouraging a healthier weight with local partners, identified as part of a 'place-based system' (e.g. Integrated Care System);
3. Support action at national level to help local authorities promote healthy weight and reduce health inequalities in our communities (this includes preventing weight stigma and weight bias);
4. Invest in the health literacy of local citizens to make informed healthier choices; ensuring clear and comprehensive healthy eating and physical activity messages are consistent with government guidelines;
5. Local authorities who have completed adoption of the HWD are encouraged to review and strengthen the initial action plans they have developed by consulting Public Health England's, Whole Systems Approach to Obesity, including its tools, techniques and materials;

Commercial determinants

6. Engage with the local food and drink sector (retailers, manufacturers, caterers, out of home settings) where appropriate to consider responsible retailing such as, offering and promoting healthier food and drink options, and reformulating and reducing the portion sizes of high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) products;
7. Consider how commercial partnerships with the food and drink industry may impact on the messages communicated around healthy weight to our local communities. Such funding may be offered to support research, discretionary services (such as sport and recreation and tourism events) and town centre promotions;
8. Protect our children from inappropriate marketing by the food and drink industry such as advertising and marketing in close proximity to schools; 'giveaways' and promotions within schools; at events on local authority controlled sites;

The 16 commitments

Health Promoting Infrastructures/Environments

9. Consider supplementary guidance for hot food takeaways, specifically in areas around schools, parks and where access to healthier alternatives are limited;
10. Review how strategies, plans and infrastructures for regeneration and town planning positively impact on physical activity, active travel, the food environment and food security (consider an agreed process for local plan development between public health and planning authorities);
11. Where Climate Emergency Declarations are in place, consider how the HWD can support carbon reduction plans and strategies, address land use policy, transport policy, circular economy waste policies, food procurement, air quality etc;

Organisational Change/Cultural Shift

12. Review contracts and provision at public events, in all public buildings, facilities and 'via' providers to make healthier foods and drinks more available, convenient and affordable and limit access to high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and drinks (this should be applied to public institutions & scrutiny given to any new contracts for food & drink provision, where possible);
13. Increase public access to fresh drinking water on local authority controlled sites; (keeping single use plastics to a minimum) and encouraging re-useable bottle refills;
14. Develop an organisational approach to enable and promote active travel for staff, patients & visitors, whilst providing staff with opportunities to be physically active where possible (e.g. promoting stair use, standing desks, cycle to work/school schemes);
15. Promote the health and well-being of local authority staff by creating a culture and ethos that promotes understanding of healthy weight, supporting staff to eat well and move more;



Monitoring and Evaluation

16. Monitor the progress of our action plan against the commitments, report on and publish the results annually.

Summary of key actions identified:

- **Review** and complete the appreciative inquiry with district councils across Lancashire to coproduce recommendations as to how we can create and support resilience within our community food organisations.
- **Continue** to maximise uptake of national initiatives.
- **Support** for Lancashire Trading Standards and Scientific Services to develop their role in providing advice and guidance to Lancashire businesses and in the enforcement of food and feed law, maintaining their ability to influence national priorities impacting on Lancashire.



- **Progress** work on the Healthy Weight Declaration 16 commitments

What are we already doing?

Lancashire County Council and the Recipe 4 Health

During the development of the food plan two Lancashire County Council teams came together to start pursue work to proactively support the place priority. On the 8 March 2024 Trading Standards and our internal catering teams, from Reflections, the café based at County Hall Preston, The Gallery in Lancaster, and Beacon Fell Café were all presented with the Recipe 4 Health award, achieving Bronze, Silver and Gold.



3.2 Priority Two- Resources and Training

To maintain, and where appropriate enhance existing resources, whilst creating new resources and ensuring appropriate training is available for our staff and our residents to create a positive food culture within our organisation and communities.

Priority actions:

Opportunities to create a skilled and resilient workforce.

Services commissioned through our organisation, including our education and care workforce, have direct influence over children in school and those who receive social care support. If we think indirect, our influence and reach could be huge, this could be through daily contact with people, partnership working with wider organisations, and our social media platforms. We want to create a workforce, including our elected members and councillors, and a community who are food system savvy, providing opportunities to learn about food and be able to feed this information on to others. We have multiple opportunities to upskill people by exploring potential training opportunities, such as links with funded adult learning providers.

Resources to support our workforce and communities.

To be able to support our workforce and communities and to ensure consistent messaging we will need to provide resource and information. Lancashire County Council, receive annual support from Food Active, a programme of work delivered by public health charity Healthy Equalities Group. who provide regular resources regarding the food agenda. These resources can support wider departmental work, and we must maximise the use of these resources and develop processes to share and communicate efficiently internally and with our communities. We must also review what resources are available and look at need and what we require to support our workforce and communities.

Communications and Marketing

During the development of this plan, communication was a consistent theme. A communications and marketing plan must be developed with multiple approaches:

- Workforce communications, clearly stating the reasons for the development of the plan and benefits this could bring to us as individuals, our services, and those we support or work with. Alongside an internal communications plan to support positive food system news and- updates on information and work associated with the food plan.
- Public communications need to be addressed widely, food is an important agenda that has consequences and impacts for all. We need different methods of communicating, ensuring we cater for all and make public messages clear and consistent.

Summary of key actions identified:

- Seek further opportunities to create a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, building on what is already provided:
 - Education for consumers, staff and schools
 - Training and education for care staff
 - eLearning and resources for elected members
- Utilise and where necessary develop resources to support our workforce and communities.
- Communications and marketing plan.

What are we already doing:

Food For Life. The Soil Association, funded by Lancashire County Council, provides support for targeted education settings and free enrolment to primary schools across Lancashire. The Food for Life programme works with schools, early years settings and caterers to ensure good food is the easy choice for everyone. It aims to reconnect children with where their food comes from, gets children involved in cooking and growing food, helps children eat one sustainable meal every day and champions well-sourced ingredients. The SOIL association also provides training for education staff in schools who are working towards the Food for Life award.



For further details see - [Lancashire makes commitment to healthy food with two-year Food for Life contract - Food for Life](#)

3.3 Priority Three- Commissioning and Procurement

This priority will look at how, with input from procurement teams, we can strategically improve and update practices and processes to consider food systems and food supplies. The government food strategy recommended that public procurement should lead by example, with healthier and more sustainable foods provided by diverse and local suppliers. Our food plan will aim to meet this recommendation.

Priority actions:

Standardised specifications

Lancashire County Council commission social care providers across Lancashire, with some of this support including food provision such as shopping or cooking meals. Upskilling our workforce is key to provision of balanced meals and the adoption and healthier lifestyles. As detailed in the plan, poor diet is associated long lasting health conditions and in ageing society we need to ensure that we support people to live well and age well, to help reduce the need for social care and support.

Accountability for good food

It is not enough to write about how we will improve food systems, we need to hold ourselves accountable and make sure we follow through on our actions. All actions associated with the food plan will have ways to measure its success and further details on the actions needed to successfully implement changes. We will also follow up on the actions, with regular check-ins frequency on the work to ensure progress and compliance.

Local food procurement

Local food procurement for our organisation has the potential to support Small Medium Enterprises across Lancashire, local procurement is better for the environment and our economy, it also gives us the opportunity to procure quality food. Within our schools and residential catering services, 60% of produce is procured locally, with ongoing work to further support this. There is potential to role this out further within the organisation. We cannot commit to total local procurement, due to our climate and what we are able to produce, certain foods (like bananas) are not and are unlikely to be produced locally, therefore, to optimise a balanced diet some procurement must be from outside of Lancashire.

Healthy Weight Collaborations

Our food systems create environments that make living a healthy lifestyle difficult. Our statistics show that there is a need in Lancashire to support people who are already living with the effects of our failing food systems. To be able to support people to live healthier lives we have collaborated with each of the twelve districts in a systems way, this means acknowledging that providing education and weight management services in silo is not enough, people's health is determined by a combination of factors such as employment, housing and education. By working with our district colleagues, we can join up this approach and support people holistically.

Summary of key actions identified:

- **Standardise** the narrative in specifications for supporting healthy nutritionally balanced diets.
- **Accountability** for good food systems and healthy diets.
- Commit to, where possible and practical, **procure** from **local** good quality food suppliers.
- **Review** potential to include food systems within social value questions in procurement exercises.
- **Collaborate** with our District councils to provide healthy weight services.

What are we already doing:

Lancashire County Council's Catering Service has a tradition of working with Lancashire food producers and suppliers, the benefit of which can be demonstrated through longstanding trading with Ralph Livesey, Preston.

Ralph Livesey has been supplying fruit and vegetables to LCC since the 1940's and remain an intrinsic supplier partner to the modern catering service. From supplying vegetables and fruits from Lancashire growers, Ralph Livesey has extended contracted food supplies to include milk, cheese, yogurts, raw and cooked meats, eggs and sandwich fillings – all from Lancashire producers. Having local suppliers is only beneficial if they also purchase supplies locally, something which is easier to understand with local supplies. The milk that makes our cheese is from dairy farmers within a 10-mile radius of the producer, the milk for producing yogurts is from the same farm where the yogurt is made, fresh meats from Lancashire farms, eggs laid by hens in Lancashire and so the examples go on...

In recent times, Ralph Livesey has evolved to become both a contracted supplier and a central distribution hub for frozen and grocery supplies. Over 90% of all foods used in the production of Lancashire school meals are now distributed via Ralph Livesey, reducing duplicated deliveries to schools, reducing wear and tear on Lancashire roads and reducing congestion and associated vehicle emissions around schools. More than 3,500 weekly vehicle deliveries have been removed from Lancashire roads, employment opportunities have increased for Lancashire residents and improvements have been achieved across recycling, green energy consumption, reductions in downline supply chain transportation and keeping every £1 spent on school meals recycling through the local economy for the maximum time.

3.4 Priority Four- Environment, Waste and Sustainability

Protecting our environment is one of our corporate priorities and with the strong link between food systems and environment, this forms one of our food plan key priorities. A change to our climate could have a significant impact on the ability to grow food and the supply of food. As a result of this, environment, waste, and sustainability will be a priority within the food plan to highlight the impact of our food systems on climate, to inspire improvements and hold ourselves accountable for improved environmentally positive practices.

Sustainability can refer to our ability to maintain our food plan work, but it can also refer to reducing our reliance on foods and processes that create an imbalance in our environments. Although both are important to this plan, the latter is more applicable throughout this priority.

Joined-up working.

To successfully improve our food systems, it is essential to take a holistic approach, creating an understanding that our food systems have interdependent relationships across a number of departments and workstreams. We must align these workstreams. By illustrative example there is an ongoing project within our organisation and the treescapes team, to replant trees in Lancashire, this includes a grant scheme for community orchards. Food growing spaces provide not just an opportunity to provide fresh produce for communities on a health basis, it is also very good for the environment. Work will continue to join up work between food organisations and the community orchards. The Faculty for Public Health states that "with careful planning there could be a significant impact for people most at risk of a poor diet". Planting and harvesting food producing trees can support policies and strategies relating to food, public health, inequality, environment, climate, biodiversity, farming, and the economy (7).

Communicate and Explore

To make changes to the food system, we need to take responsibility for improved food practices and environments, as such communicating key messages to our communities and workforce are key, so they can make informed choices. Providing visual information making clear the source of our produce, what we are eating, where it has come from and why it is important. Providing and exposing our workforce to this information, will create a more food system savvy workforce.

Summary of key actions identified:

- Explore opportunities to **join-up** ongoing projects across the organisation to maximise potential for positive food system practices e.g. Such as community orchards and land to grow fruits and vegetables with food security.
- **Promote** our food plan work, such as where and our local food is sourced from and why.
- **Explore** potential to print the carbon footprint and calorific values for menus?
- **Dovetail** with the environment strategy, improving our environment and limiting our impact on the climate to support food security.

What we are already doing:

Joined up work has already commenced to look at potential to improve food systems by linking our county council Treescapes team and our commissioned Food for Life service, who are linking schools with the community orchard scheme, supplying fruit trees for schools to support their food growing initiatives.



4.0 Wider Commitments

This plan defines our internal plans and priorities, however for true systems change and to support food systems outside of our organisation, wider commitment and change is needed. To support this, Lancashire County Council commit to:

- Liaising with food producers and farming communities
- Continue to link with wider organisation food agendas such as the NHS/ICB.
- Collaborating with organisations who commit to improving food systems.
- Updating the food plan at appropriate intervals to support and further system improvements.
- To advocate for and input into national policy initiatives that support positive food systems.

5.0 What next?

To make the food plan actions successful, we need a transparent and coordinated approach with a clear implementation plan. An implementation plan will proceed from this plan detailing how we will measure impact and how we will measure our success. As with the development of the plan this will be an organisational approach that will require ongoing commitment from wider departments, teams, and individuals across Lancashire County Council. The implementation plan will be developed over the next 6 months and will include details on timescales associated with actions and how we will measure progress.

Food systems intersect with everyone across the organisation, and we need to take a collective proactive responsibility to be more food system conscious.

6.0 Governance

To effectively implement the food plan and its associated actions, there will be identified leads for each of the actions who will biannually update an implementation plan to ensure compliance. Whilst this Food Plan will be one of several key plans that collectively sit under the Public Health Strategy presented to the County Council Cabinet in July, day to day responsibility for the Food Plan will sit within the Public Health Healthy Hearts team. A Healthy Hearts representative will continue to provide updates to the Healthy Hearts steering group based on the implementation plan and in turn to the Lancashire Health and Well Being Board.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

The development of the food plan and the ongoing work to support this is testament to the collaborative approach from across the organisation with input and information provided by wider departmental teams, without whom we would have not been able to complete this.

'The food system has changed before, and it can change again. A better system is within our reach if everyone chooses to make it happen. We all have a role to play in creating the country in which we want to live, and in creating the food system we want to feed us – from policymakers to food businesses, local authorities to investors and citizens. We need strong leadership to move us towards a shared vision of a better food future.'

[The Broken Plate 2023 | Food Foundation](#)

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