



# BIRMINGHAM FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY



A BOLDER, HEALTHIER AND MORE  
SUSTAINABLE BIRMINGHAM  
2022-2030



# Vision

Create a fair, sustainable and prosperous food system and economy, where food options are nutritious, affordable and desirable so everyone can thrive.

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# Introduction

## Birmingham Food Revolution

Our city feeds over 1.1 million residents every day (ONS, 2021). With such a dense population, our urban food system has a huge impact on the people and world around us. The Birmingham Food Revolution has been building for many years as people across our city have recognised that action is needed to ensure this impact is positive, and they have stepped up to the challenge. Our Local Food Legends have been trailblazing inspirational actions such as community dining projects, composting initiatives, surplus food redistribution, cooking classes, behavioural science research into eating habits, growing projects, getting more local food into the supply chain and so much more.

These actions are often happening in ways that are unconnected to other areas of the food system. Uniting our city through the Birmingham Food Revolution has revealed how our coordinated collective action can produce more than the sum of its parts.

This city-owned and co-produced strategy captures how, together, we have the power to create a food system that will regenerate our environment, our communities and our economy.



# The Ambition of the Birmingham Food Revolution

## A city where...

- We consume a nutritious diet that helps us thrive
- Our diet doesn't cause us harm
- Our food system is ethical, fair and eliminates injustice from farm to fork
- We reduce harm to the world around us
- We empower people and overcome barriers to providing healthy and sustainable food options
- We respect and support diversity and choice
- We are resilient, and adapt, learn and evolve
- We celebrate what food brings to our city



# Key features of the Birmingham Food Revolution

A city where...

## **We consume a nutritious diet that helps us thrive**

We consume a varied diet, balanced across food groups, which contains enough energy and nutrients for growth and development and for an active and healthy life across the life course. This diet will be made up of lots of whole foods and minimally processed foods including wholegrains, beans, pulses, nuts, seeds and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables including plenty of dark green leafy vegetables. Depending on our preferences, we might also eat moderate amounts of eggs, dairy, poultry and fish, and small amounts of red meat. Water is the drink of choice.

## **Our diet doesn't cause us harm**

We eat the right portion size for our bodies' needs, with minimal amounts of highly processed foods, and limit the amount of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar we consume. This will reduce the risk of diet related disease and ensure we all have good health and well-being. Food and drink is safe and clean, and doesn't contain pathogens or toxins that can cause food borne disease or make us ill.

## **Our food system is ethical, fair and eliminates injustice from farm to fork**

Everyone across our food system will thrive. Employment opportunities in the food system are plentiful, and workers are treated well, are paid a Real Living Wage, are upskilled and have opportunities for development. Farmers and producers receive a fair price for their produce, and local, small and independent businesses are celebrated, connected and supported as they thrive and grow. Business models that generate social, ecological and local economic value for the communities of the city are prioritised. We tackle food justice together and ensure everyone, no matter their circumstances, can eat an affordable, healthy and sustainable diet, and communities support those who need it most. We avoid, and proactively counteract, negative impacts from inequalities resulting from poverty, gender, ethnicity, disability and life circumstances, including time allocation, finances, and access to food, education, employment and opportunities.

## **We reduce harm to the world around us**

A future where our response to the climate emergency is visible through our collective urgent action to mitigate the impact our urban food system has on the environment. Seasonal and local produce is in high demand, and the carbon

footprint and negative environmental impact from food miles, processing, plastics and unsustainable packaging is minimised. The food and drink we source do not damage the environment, including air, water and land and we use methods that preserve biodiversity and soil quality. We work to minimise the use of antibiotics and hormones in food production. We work across the system to reduce food loss and waste, and to repurpose and redistribute surplus food efficiently. There is a strong culture of reduce, reuse, repurpose, recycle, and regenerative farming and food production practices are supported.

## **We empower people and overcome barriers to providing healthy and sustainable food options**

We develop knowledge and skills related to food and the food system across the life course. We also ensure people have the opportunity to explore new foods, tastes and textures to increase demand for alternative options. A nutritious, ethical, and sustainable food offer is an economically sustainable choice for individuals and businesses because these food options are accessible, available, and affordable. It is easy for locally sourced nutritious food and drink to enter the food system and our supply chains are transparent and traceable. This empowers



decisions and means we are accountable for our choices. Environments and the food offer are arranged so these foods are the easiest and most convenient choice, as well as being tasty and desirable. Ongoing innovation and investment bring solutions to overcome barriers in our food system, including through technology.

### **We respect and support diversity and choice**

We give people the opportunity to learn about food, nutrition and sustainability in a way that is culturally appropriate and tailored to the diverse needs of our city. We strive to ensure nutritious, ethical and sustainable options are the most desirable and easiest option, but not the only option. We respect local cultures, heritage, culinary practices, knowledge and consumption patterns, and values regarding the way food is sourced, produced and consumed. We respect that food forms a key part of our identity and people are free to choose the diet that is right for them, for a variety of reasons, without judgement. We also recognise that a one-size-fits-all solution to any challenge will not be effective as people have different learning styles, interests and needs, so we consider the perspective of different people across our diverse population when innovating solutions.

### **We are resilient, and adapt, learn and evolve**

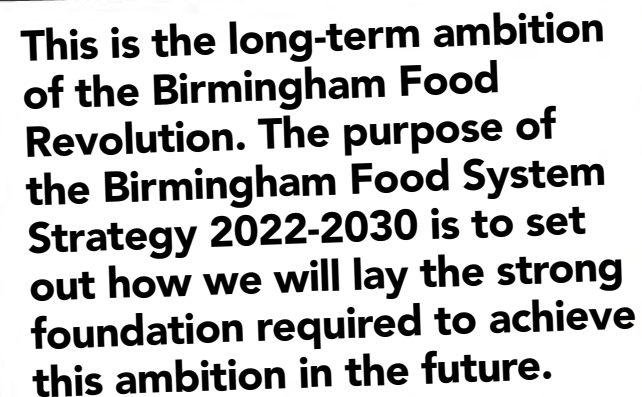
We have a food system that adapts quickly and efficiently to supply chain shocks to ensure we can feed our city and have measures in place to ensure those most vulnerable are not negatively impacted in times of crisis. We build resilience into our supply chain relationships and plan ahead to reduce risks and embed solutions for a variety of potential scenarios, including pandemics, conflict and natural disasters. We recognise the strengths and challenges that come with producers and suppliers of different sizes and have a diverse, responsive and adaptable supply chain as a result. We continuously reflect and evaluate our progress and review evidence and best practice across the whole food system to ensure we learn, adapt and improve our approach.

### **We celebrate what food brings to our city**

We recognise that food is central to our lives. People of all ages, cultures and backgrounds develop meaningful connections when they come together to share or grow food. Food is desirable and delicious as well as core to our mental and physical health and wellbeing. Through food, we develop skills, create and express ourselves. We explore, learn and embrace our local food producers and food businesses, the cultural

diversity of our city, our citizens, and the amazing flavours and ingredients they bring. People are inspired by the exciting jobs and opportunities on offer in our city's food system, and everyone has access to good quality education and skills development opportunities and fulfilling careers. Our city is known as a food destination because of our amazing food offer, and we have a thriving food economy.

Developed by a city-wide partnership and inspired by WHO, 2018 and FAO and WHO, 2019.



**This is the long-term ambition of the Birmingham Food Revolution. The purpose of the Birmingham Food System Strategy 2022-2030 is to set out how we will lay the strong foundation required to achieve this ambition in the future.**

# Vision and key principles

A bolder, healthier and more sustainable Birmingham

## Vision

**Create a fair, sustainable and prosperous food system and economy, where food options are nutritious, affordable and desirable so everyone can thrive.**

The strategy will inform the development of the Food System Strategic Action plan which will set out the actions needed to achieve this vision.

## Key principles

Three principles are key to developing and delivering the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

### Collaborate

Strengthen partnerships and build on existing good practice.

### Empower

Remove barriers and facilitate solutions.

### Equalise

Focus actions where they are needed most to reduce inequalities.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy establishes a clear vision for the health and wellbeing of Birmingham:  
**Creating a bolder, healthier city.**

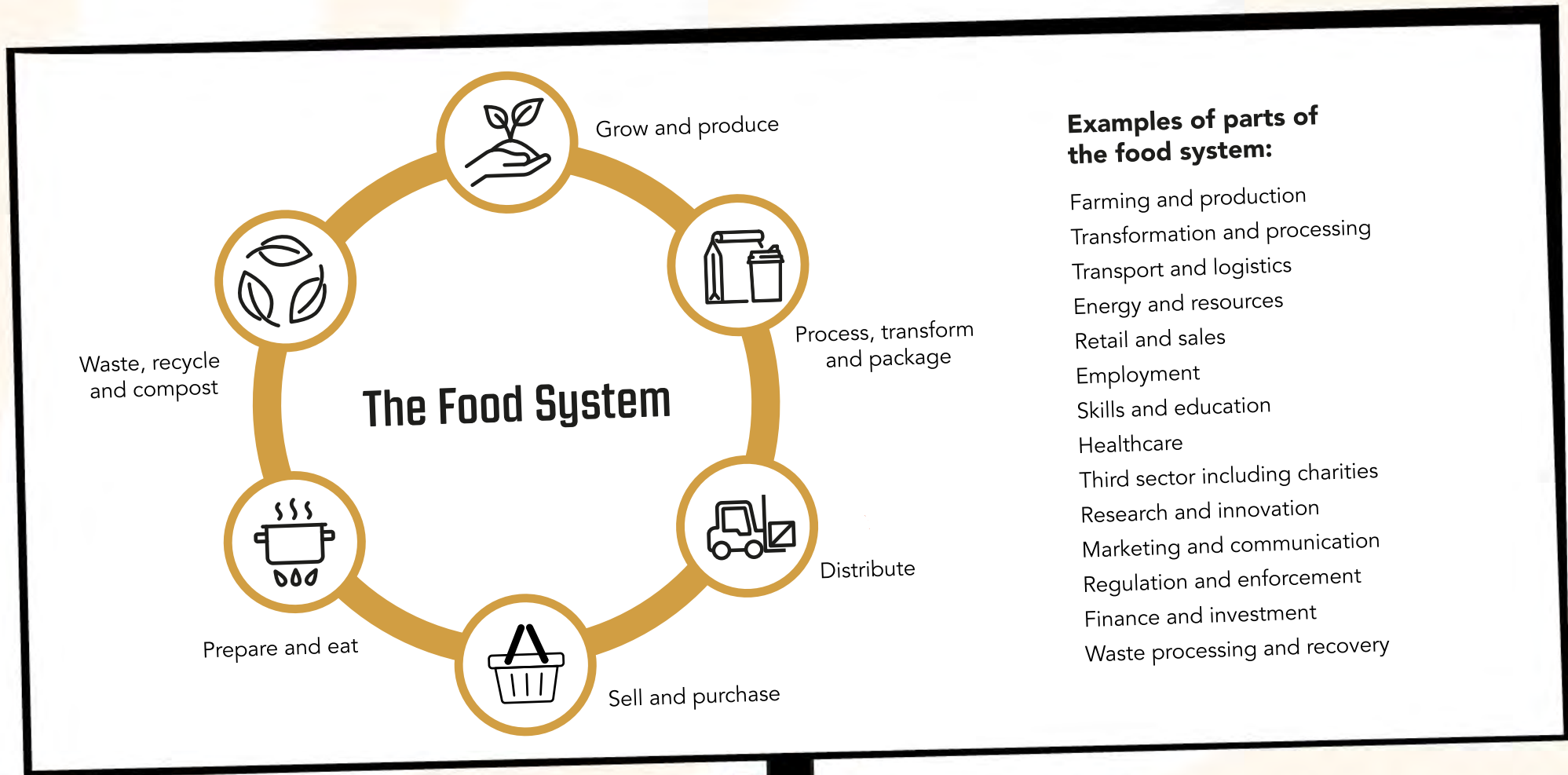
A city-wide partnership of stakeholders from across the food system are building upon this foundation to establish the Birmingham Food System Strategy:  
**A bolder, healthier and more sustainable Birmingham.**





# What is a Food System?

The food system includes the food cycle and the activities, people, resources and industries that are involved with feeding our city. All these parts are interconnected, meaning that making a change in one area can have an impact on another.



## Examples of parts of the food system:

- Farming and production
- Transformation and processing
- Transport and logistics
- Energy and resources
- Retail and sales
- Employment
- Skills and education
- Healthcare
- Third sector including charities
- Research and innovation
- Marketing and communication
- Regulation and enforcement
- Finance and investment
- Waste processing and recovery



**REGENERATIVE  
FOOD SYSTEM**



A thriving food system is built on a strong foundation where we regenerate and improve our environment, communities and economy.

It is no longer enough to reduce negative outcomes by being sustainable or neutral. If we do this nothing will improve so we must aim higher.

**UNSUSTAINABLE PRACTICES DAMAGE THE FOUNDATION  
OF OUR ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMY.**



# Aim: A regenerative food system where our environment, our communities and our economy thrive

Our city-wide partnership's aim is to develop a regenerative food system, which continuously evolves and improves our environment, our communities, and our economy.

It is no longer enough to reduce negative outcomes from unsustainable practices, so our eight-year strategy goes beyond aiming for a sustainable food system. We are aiming higher and striving to stimulate regenerative practices in every part of our city's food system. We will tackle the biggest barriers together, and partners across the city will collaborate to overcome them, and also to develop a thriving regenerative city.

To achieve this, it is important to recognise that the pillars that make up the foundation of our food system, which are the environment, communities, and economy, are interconnected and key to our entire city thriving together. Doing an activity to positively impact one pillar could lead to unintended negative consequences on another.

For example, introducing an initiative to ban single-use plastic in food businesses would benefit the environment, but could have a negative impact on the economy if it isn't economically viable due to a lack of affordable alternative products. This could put a strain on food businesses where profit margins are already small and cause them to go out of business. The solution could be to invest in innovation of plastic alternatives, support bulk purchasing to bring prices down, or conduct a campaign to change customer behaviours so they bring a reusable container.

By considering how actions can help regenerate our environment, our communities, and our economy, whilst anticipating the potential impact on the other pillars, we will create solutions that will lead to a regenerative food system for all of Birmingham.

**“Food is what gets sacrificed when it comes to paying the bills. Bills are a priority for people.”**

(UN Food System Summit Dialogues)

# A Co-Produced Strategy

This strategy is the outcome of three years of collaboration with partners and citizens; with the aim of creating a whole-system strategy that demonstrates what we need to enable radical change locally and shape a food system for all.

The Birmingham Food System Strategy captures the key drivers behind the Birmingham Food Revolution. This strategy is owned by the city and is driven by every citizen, organisation and business in Birmingham collectively leveraging change, innovation and development to create a future food system that every citizen is proud to be part of.

Partners who have contributed include:

- Citizens and community groups
- Creating a Healthy City Food Forum with stakeholders from across the city
- Third sector organisations
- Public sector services
- Training providers
- Schools and nurseries
- Universities and colleges
- Food system innovation projects
- Food producers and distributors
- The Food Justice Network
- Caterers
- Food businesses
- Business Improvement Districts
- Dietitians
- Frontline healthcare workers
- Technology and innovation experts
- Food system experts

**Birmingham Food Conversations were undertaken to reflect upon and understand the lived experience of over 400 citizens from Birmingham's diverse communities captured through 33 facilitated focus groups hosted by 24 commissioned providers.**



### Citizens have told us they want:

- Food that is affordable.
- Culturally diverse food (and messaging around food and initiatives that accounts for, and celebrates, the diversity of Birmingham).
- Improvements to the health of diets and the food offer available.

### Community organisations have told us that:

- Too many people struggle with getting enough food to feed themselves and their families, and this is getting worse as food and fuel prices continue to rise.
- Too many people lack the knowledge and skills to cook a healthy meal.

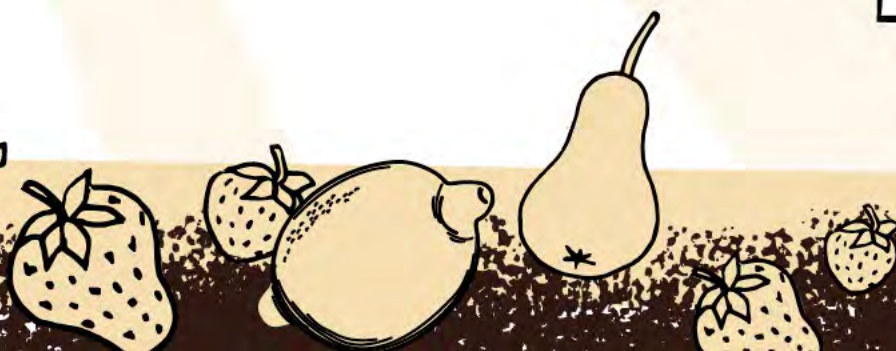
### Businesses have told us that:


- It is challenging to make environmentally sustainable and healthy food an economically sustainable business choice.
- There is too much food waste.
- Existing challenges across the food system, including labour, fuel and material shortages, have been exacerbated by Covid-19, Brexit and the war in Ukraine, are leading food shortages and increasing food prices

**Additionally,** the pandemic and the cost of living crisis have revealed how fragile food security is, and have exacerbated existing inequalities in many communities. Therefore, we are striving to create a fair, sustainable and prosperous food system and economy, where food options are nutritious, affordable and desirable so everyone can thrive.

**“How land is used, access to healthy food, advertising, local transportation, income, employment opportunities - all of this is interconnected and impacts on what food people access and eat.”**

Birmingham Food Dialogues  
(Public sector, third sector, citizenship and private sector)





**“We used to call it Naulakha which was, all the bits of food over a period of say 2 weeks, they’d get a big pot and chuck it all in. Like a stew, a pot of leftovers. A Pakistani/South Asian tradition.”**

South Asian Adult (Seldom Heard Food Conversations)

# What this strategy is, and isn't

The purpose of this document is to lay out the strategic approach required to regenerate our food system.

What this strategy is...

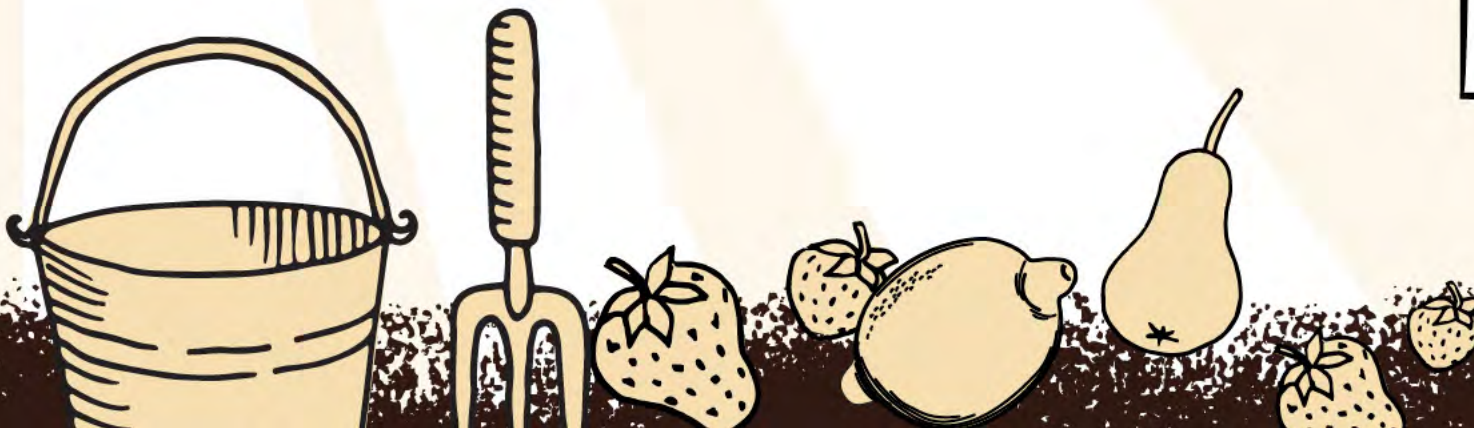
- A document that provides strategic direction that will guide the development of the Food System Strategic Action Plan which will be a living document.
- Developed by city-wide partners from a variety of backgrounds across the food system.

What this strategy isn't...

- An action plan. This document does not define what actions will be taken over the next eight years, but guides them. This is the role of the Food System Strategic Action Plan, which will expand each of the themes and work streams.
- Something that can be delivered by one organisation alone. It is essential that this strategy is delivered in partnership with stakeholders across the food system, as meaningful change can't be achieved by any one organisation alone.

**“I think we’ve got an amazing food culture in Birmingham. We’re blessed with great cultures and blessed with great chefs in the city...”**

South Asian Adult  
(Birmingham Food Conversations)



# Cross-cutting theme objectives

Our Food System Strategic Action Plan will focus on delivery through four cross-cutting themes, and six strategic work streams. These were developed based on the international evidence-based, learning from networks such as Sustainable Food Places, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, and through discussions with people involved in Birmingham's food system. Each of the ten areas will have an action group to ensure progress is made for each of the strategic themes and work streams over the next eight years.

The purpose of the cross-cutting themes is to see where joined up action across the strategic work streams can lead to coordinated approaches and benefits.

The four cross-cutting themes are:

<b>Food Skills &amp; Knowledge</b>	<b>Empowering citizens with knowledge and skills in relation to the food system.</b>
<b>Food Behaviour Change</b>	<b>Developing the capability, opportunity and motivation for key behaviours that will enable long term change.</b>
<b>Food Security &amp; Resilience</b>	<b>Increasing access to sufficient affordable, nutritious and safe food for all citizens, all the time, in every community, and at every age.</b>
<b>Food Innovation, Data &amp; Research</b>	<b>Gathering insights and data and facilitating innovation, collaboration, learning and research across the food system.</b>

**Framework for Action  
to create a bolder,  
healthier and more  
sustainable Birmingham**





# Strategic work stream objectives

The purpose of the strategic work streams is to identify actions that can improve our city's food system..

The six strategic work streams are:

<b>Food Production</b>	<b>Empowering and enabling citizens and local producers to grow food throughout the year and connect to the city's food system.</b>
<b>Food Sourcing</b>	<b>Increasing both supply and demand for local, environmentally sustainable, ethical and nutritious foods in the food system.</b>
<b>Food Transformation</b>	<b>Transforming the food offer and diets to contain more diverse, nutritious and sustainable ingredients, and less fat, salt and sugar.</b>
<b>Food Waste &amp; Recycling</b>	<b>Minimising food waste and unsustainable packaging throughout the food system and maximising the repurposing and redistribution of surplus.</b>
<b>Food Economy &amp; Employment</b>	<b>Facilitating a thriving local food economy for all and maximising training and employment opportunities.</b>
<b>Food Safety &amp; Standards</b>	<b>Improving food safety and standards for Birmingham's citizens and businesses.</b>



# The Big Bold City Tool

## Prioritising areas for action across our food system



The Food System Strategic Action Plan will be developed using a city-wide approach, with an understanding of how different elements of the food system interact.

Action groups will lead on the delivery of each of the strategy themes and work streams. The purpose of the Big Bold City Tool is to ensure we achieve a whole-system approach, address gaps, and focus actions where they are needed most. The action groups view potential actions and their overall plan through the Big Bold City Tool.

The tool is used to:

- Identify the people and places that have an impact on the strategy theme or work stream to ensure the action group has representative membership and so actions that focus on these areas can be prioritised.
- Consider who faces inequalities within the strategy theme or work stream to ensure the action group has representative membership and so actions that address these inequalities can be prioritised.

- Review what impact the Food System Strategic Action Plan is having on people and places across the food system and identify gaps and areas for future action.

It is important to use the Big Bold City tool from many angles, including mapping out journeys and experiences to identify opportunities and barriers, and capturing the processes and factors that drive decision-making.

This includes viewing the strategy themes, work streams and actions from the perspective of...

**The food cycle** including considering farm to fork, such as production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption and waste.

**Stages across the life course** including pregnancy and maternity, early years, children, young people, adults, and older adults.

**Across the city** including areas of deprivation, access to public transport, and access to supermarkets.



### Different people and communities including:

- **Protected characteristics** e.g., ethnicities and race, religions or beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity, age.
- **Life circumstances** e.g., a person with no recourse to public funds, homeless, no fixed address, new to the area, lost job, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, social isolation.
- **Health conditions and illnesses** e.g., diabetes, coronary heart disease, allergies, eating disorders, anxiety, depression.
- **Abilities** e.g., visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, neurodiversity.
- **Financial situation** e.g., income, out of work, not receiving living wage, maternity leave, sick leave, receiving benefits, in debt.
- **Those facing inequalities** e.g., where evidence shows a particular group face inequalities within that cross-cutting theme or strategy work stream.

### Different settings including:

1. **Food production** e.g., agriculture, farms, food producers and growers.
2. **Food processing** e.g., packaging, factories and abattoirs.
3. **Food logistics** e.g., transport, logistics and delivery services.
4. **Food trade and suppliers** e.g., wholesalers, procurement services and food service.

5. **Food outlets** e.g., catering, restaurants, cafés, canteens, hotels, takeaways and mobile food trucks.
6. **Food retail** e.g., farm shops, markets, supermarkets, convenience stores and other food retailers.
7. **Night time economy** e.g., pubs, bars, clubs, social venues.
8. **Industry networks** e.g., industry organisations and networks.
9. **Education and childcare settings** e.g., early years, nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, SEND schools, holiday and after school provision.
10. **Further education settings** e.g., colleges and universities.
11. **Research and innovation** e.g., knowledge hubs and innovation companies.
12. **Workplace and employers** e.g., onsite food offer and workplace policies and initiatives.
13. **Third sector and not-for-profits** e.g., charities, not-for-profit and voluntary organisations.
14. **Community settings** e.g., community centres, allotments, parks and shared spaces.
15. **Faith settings** e.g., churches, mosques, and temples.
16. **Home** e.g., the wide variety of living situations that reflect Birmingham citizens, including shared and temporary accommodation, multi-generational

households, single person households, student accommodation, families, single parent households, travellers, flats and apartments.

17. **Health and Social Care settings** e.g., medical settings, care homes, homeless shelters, and refuge shelters.
18. **Public services** e.g., libraries, and commissioned services.
19. **Recreation and entertainment** e.g., cinemas, theatres, museums, live events, visitor attractions, other entertainment and cultural venues.
20. **Sports and leisure** e.g., gyms, swimming pools, leisure centres, sport clubs and sport stadiums and venues.
21. **Prisons and rehabilitation** e.g., prison and youth offender establishments, rehabilitation, criminal justice and justice health.
22. **Private sector** e.g., organisations, finance, Corporate Social Responsibility, and philanthropy.
23. **Public sector** e.g., government funded organisations involved with health, economy, education, food and the environment.
24. **Birmingham City Council** e.g., council services and teams such as lifestyle services, public health, education, regulation and enforcement and others.
25. **National Government** e.g., Members of Parliament, national policy, and budgets.





**Incredible Surplus collects and accepts surplus to repurpose! We aim to fill bellies not bins. We would love to see much more land brought into use. We work with community cafe's - TAWS, FoodCycle, Sol Café, ChangeKitchen**

**Photo: Anne Gallagher - Incredible Surplus**



# FADMaP prioritisation tool

Prioritising actions by using the Food Action Decision-Making and Prioritisation (FADMaP) tool.

As we develop the Food System Strategic Action Plan, it is important that we consider whether proposed actions are people focused, working towards our ambition and addressing key priorities, and if they are effective and realistic. We will use this tool to compare potential actions, aid decision-making and prioritisation and to strengthen proposed plans. More information about this tool is available in the annex.



# Context

About our city's food system

## Birmingham is an amazing city

- We have a population that is culturally diverse and young (ONS, 2021).
- We have a food sector that is a key part of our city's economy (Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, 2019).
- We have an award-winning and varied food offer which reflects the diversity of Birmingham's population (Visit Birmingham, 2023a).
- We have a strong third sector doing fantastic things in, and for, our communities (BVSC, 2023).
- We have a thriving cultural and music scene (Visit Birmingham, 2023b).
- We have people, organisations and businesses that are innovative and adaptive.
- We have many people in our city passionate about food and making a difference.
- We have the largest integrated wholesale market in the UK in our city (Birmingham Wholesale Market, 2023).

## Birmingham has challenges

- We have much higher levels of poverty and deprivation than the national average (BCC, 2019).
- We have high levels of food insecurity which is associated with eating less fruits and vegetables (Ebadi et al, 2019; Yau et al, 2020).
- We have deprived areas which have fewer supermarkets. In areas where there are less supermarkets, the food offer available in convenience stores is less healthy and more expensive (Burgoine et al., 2017).
- We have deprived areas where the people who live in them are exposed to more takeaways and being exposed is associated with eating more takeaway food (Adams et al, 2015).
- We have a population that does not eat enough fruits and vegetables and eating healthily is beyond some citizen's budgets (Williamson et al, 2017).
- We have not enough people accessing the support they are eligible for, including Free School Meals and Healthy Start Vouchers (Local Government Association, 2022).
- We have a high proportion of citizens who are not a healthy weight (OHID, 2023a).
- We have high levels of tooth decay in children and poor diets contribute to this (OHID, 2023c).
- We have high levels of adults with Type 2 Diabetes and poor diets contribute to this (OHID, 2023b).
- We have businesses which are still feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and are struggling with increased food and fuel costs during the cost of living crisis.
- We have complex food supply chains.

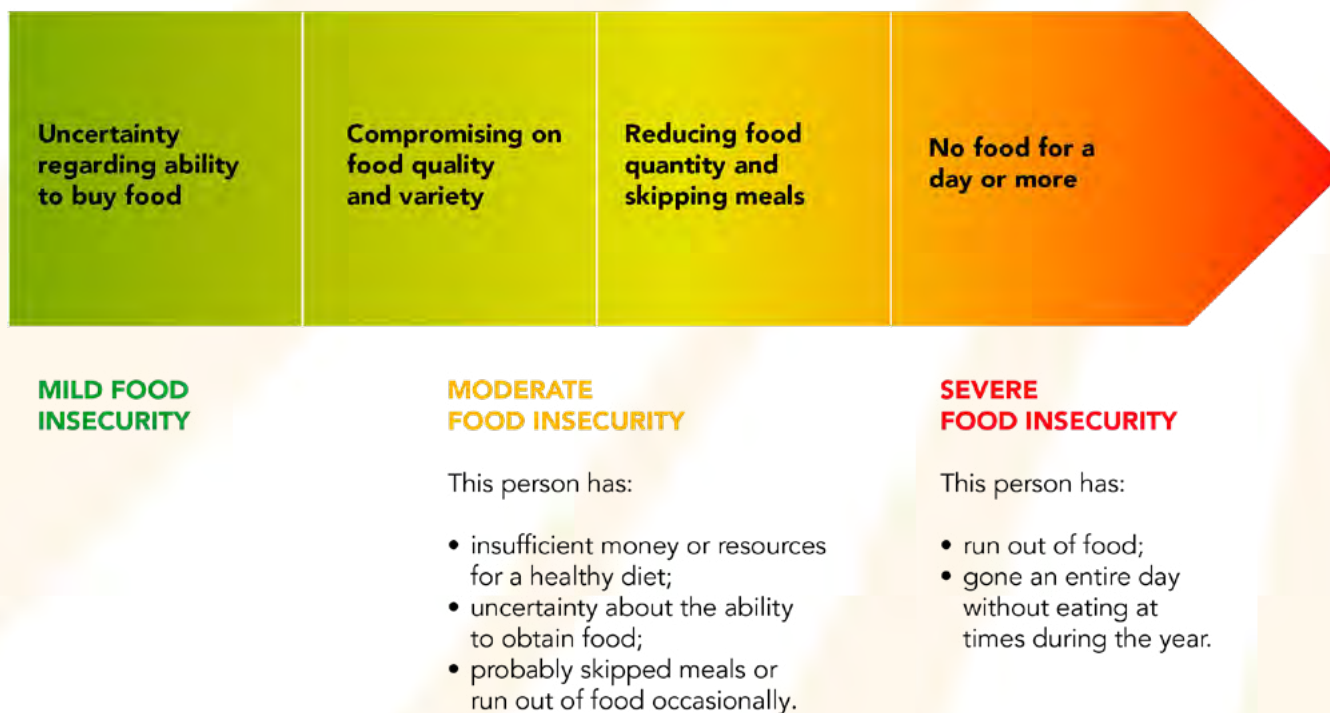


# Impact of food insecurity

In 2022, 88% of Birmingham's wards are more deprived than the England average and over 300,000 people live in poverty in Birmingham (BCC, 2019). Nationally, 23% of children live in poverty (DWP, 2022), whereas in Birmingham this rate is much higher at 43% which is equivalent to over 100,000 children (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022).

If someone doesn't have regular access to enough safe and nutritious food, they are food insecure. Nutrients are essential to grow, develop and have an active healthy lifestyle. In Birmingham many people don't have enough money to obtain a sufficient quantity of nutritious food. Food insecurity can be experienced at different levels of severity. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation measures food insecurity using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale shown to the right (FAO et al, 2018):

## Food insecurity based on the FIES: What does this mean?



Although severe food insecurity is one extreme of the scale, even moderate food insecurity, where access to food is uncertain, leads to negative impacts. This can include choosing between basic needs, for example whether to heat their house or eat.





When a person who is moderately food insecure does eat, food choices may be based on what's available or cheap, so aren't always nutritious and often include a lower variety of food products. For example, a person may eat pasta and sauce, and not add vegetables or protein because they can't afford it. In addition, highly processed foods that are energy-dense and high in fat, salt and sugar are often cheap and easily available. A person can eat their recommended daily requirement for calories by consuming these foods, but they miss out on the essential nutrients they need to be healthy. They are uncertain if the food will last and may be forced to reduce the quality and amount of food they eat (Shinwell et al, 2021).

Having uncertain access to food, and going without food for periods of time, leads to stress and physiological responses in the body that can also contribute to overweight and obesity. There is also an impact in the long term, and children who go hungry, face food insecurity and are undernourished have a higher risk of overweight, obesity, and diseases such as diabetes when they are older (Hassink & Fairbrother, 2021).

Levels of underweight, overweight and obesity are all higher in Birmingham than the national average, and food insecurity contributes to this. This is referred to as the "double burden of malnutrition" – the co-existence of undernutrition along with overweight, obesity or diet related non-communicable disease. People affected by obesity can also be affected by micronutrient deficiencies if their diet primarily consists of ultra-processed foods (WHO, 2023).

**“I can't afford five a day for my son; a multi bag of crisps costs £1”**

Adult with a Mental Health Condition  
(Seldom Heard Food Conversations)



# What's happening locally?

## Creating a Bolder, Healthier City Strategy

Healthy and affordable food is a key work stream in the city's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Food System Strategy builds upon this.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Creating a Bolder, Healthier City, addresses some of the critical challenges Birmingham faces. It focuses on the needs of service users and communities and tackles the factors that impact upon health and wellbeing across service boundaries. (BCC, 2022a). Delivering this strategy requires input from many organisations across the city across multiple areas. A core theme of the strategy is creating a healthier food environment across the city.

- Too many citizens face challenges accessing affordable, healthy and sustainable food.
- Eating healthily underpins much of our physical and mental health.
- The food economy should be vibrant; reflect the diversity of our communities; and be financially successful and sustainable.
- The food system should contribute to a circular economy for food which reduces waste, increases valuable employment opportunities for local people, minimises environmental harm and maximises the local assets.

### Key Actions

**We will achieve our ambition through a matrix of activity across the Health & Wellbeing Board partnership.**

**This will include:**

1. Implementing the Healthy City Planning Toolkit.
2. Consulting on and implementing the Birmingham Food System Strategy.
3. Embedding seldom heard voices and other citizen voices into the activities of the Creating a Healthy Food City Forum.
4. Strengthening and building upon local, national and international partnerships i.e. BINDI, MUFPP, Delice Network and Sustainable Food Places.
5. Maximising the healthy food benefits of the East Birmingham Corridor development.
6. Maximising the benefits of the Food Poverty Core Group and Food Justice Network.
7. Continuing to develop working relationships with university partners and explore how we can better work in partnership to explore the needs of Birmingham citizens.
8. Understanding what a healthy food system looks like and how this can be measured within Birmingham's diverse communities.

### Strategy Theme Ambitions

**By 2030 we will have worked together to:**

- Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers in eligible families to at least 80% by 2027.
- Reduce the percentage of 5-year-olds with visually obvious dental decay to below 20% by 2030.
- Reduce the prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in children in Reception and Year 6 by 10% by 2030.
- Increase the percentage of adults regularly eating '5-a-day' to more than 55% by 2030.
- Ensure that the Healthy City Planning Toolkit is utilised in 90% of developments in the city.



## Birmingham has many organisations and networks who are leading the way with work across the city.

A key role of the Food System Strategic Action Plan is to capture and share these organisations' incredible achievements, and to build on the approaches they have found to be successful.

The Third Sector is active and impactful in Birmingham. The Food Justice Network, Birmingham Voluntary Service Network (BVSC), faith networks, and many community and voluntary organisations are involved with food aid, affordable food and food surplus distribution, community cafes, growing and other food projects.

There is also lots of research and innovation taking place in our city, for example...

The Mandala Consortium is a large research project funded by UKRI focusing on transforming urban food systems for planetary and population health. Centred on the city of Birmingham and the regional economy of the West Midlands, Mandala brings together internationally renowned teams from the Universities of Cambridge, Birmingham, Warwick, Exeter, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

University College Birmingham has launched a partnership, UCB Institute of Urban Food Systems, to create an academic nexus to bring together academics across disciplines and higher education institutions to support work to improve food systems in Birmingham and the West Midlands. This has included the Creative Dinners; a series of debate style dining experiences that aim to bring together diverse, inspiring, and innovative trailblazers from across Birmingham, the UK, and around the world to have conversations on key subjects affecting our food system and spark the collective power of change through collaboration.

Quest Meat are based at the Birmingham Research Park and are a Research and Development company making cultivated meat to address food security, climate change, human health and ethics of current intensive livestock farming that expects to have a product available on plates by 2026/27.

The National Institute of Health Research School for Public Health Research is a partnership between nine leading academic centres of excellence in applied public health research in England, including the University of Birmingham.

The Centre for Economics of Obesity at the University of Birmingham conducts research to measure the economic value of interventions that target the spectrum of factors that affect population obesity. Their vision is to generate economic evidence that justifies investment and puts the reduction and prevention of obesity at the heart of all local and national government policy.

The Psychology of Eating in Adults and Children (PEACH) is a research theme that sits within the Applied Health Research Group and the Aston Institute of Health and Neurodevelopment (IHN) at Aston University. Their work includes conducting research and developing interventions.



# Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council has been involved with projects that impact our city's food system.

In 2012, Birmingham City Council introduced a 10% restriction on hot food takeaways and since then there has been a significant reduction in planning permissions for hot food takeaways (BCC, 2021).

Birmingham City Council has incorporated healthy food criteria into their advertising policy which includes meeting national Advertising Standards Agency restrictions on advertising food for children near schools and colleges.

In 2019, Birmingham City Council declared a climate emergency and made a commitment to reduce the city's carbon emissions. The target was created for Birmingham to become a Net Zero city by 2030.

In 2021, Birmingham City Council signed up to the Right to Food campaign, and this has shaped various actions across the city including the Cost of Living Emergency response package of support in 2022 to 2023 (BCC, 2022b).

The Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme (COTP) was a nationally funded programme between 2019 and 2022 that sought out innovative action to tackle childhood obesity at local level. This led to innovative projects in Birmingham, including young people developing food system assessment tools and the East Birmingham Food System Exploration.

Cook the Commonwealth was a project that formed part of Birmingham City Council's Commonwealth Games legacy work in Birmingham, to celebrate the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The aim was to unite our city, celebrate our cultural diversity and bring people together to celebrate and connect with their local community through food during the Commonwealth Games and beyond. 800 recipes were captured across the 72 Commonwealth countries and are available to view on a free recipe app called Whisk. To explore the recipes, search "CWG" on the app or website and click on the "communities" tab.

**"You can't go for a 15 minute walk anywhere without seeing a fast food shop or advert."**

Care Leaver (Seldom Heard Food Conversations)

# What's happening nationally?

Birmingham is working towards national standards and best practice to ensure our food system thrives.

## National Food Strategy

Henry Dimbleby's independent review commissioned by government set out a vision and a plan for a better food system with a series of recommendations (Dimbleby et al, 2020).

The National Food Strategy, published in July 2021, contains recommendations and Birmingham City Council is committed to implementing those that are applicable on a local level.

Henry Dimbleby's independent review recommendations include having clear targets and bringing in legislation for long-term change. It also highlights the importance and need for cities to have established food strategies that reference national targets as well as addressing the needs of local communities (Dimbleby et al, 2021).

The Birmingham Food System Strategy, with its scope of eight years, is in a prime position to take on these recommendations and enable real change at a time where the power, energy, and drive for food system change is at its highest.

The National Food Strategy also recommends actions to escape the junk food cycle and protect the NHS, reduce diet-related inequality, and make the best use of our land: recommendations which have encompassed in the Birmingham Food System Strategy (Dimbleby et al, 2021).

## Sustainable Food Places

The Sustainable Food Places Award is designed to recognise and celebrate the success of those places taking a joined-up, holistic approach to food and achieving significant positive change across key food issues.

Birmingham is working to achieve this award by meeting the following criteria:

- Establish a broad, representative and dynamic local food partnership.
- Develop, deliver and monitor a food strategy/action plan.
- Inspire and engage the public about good food.
- Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement.
- Tackle food poverty.
- Promote healthy eating.
- Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development.
- Promote healthy, sustainable and independent food businesses to consumers.
- Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates.
- Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain.
- Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency.

- Reduce, redirect and recycle food, packaging and related waste.

The Sustainable Food Places Award is designed to recognise and celebrate the success of those places taking a joined-up, holistic approach to food and achieving significant positive change across key food issues (Sustainable Food Places, 2021).

**“You can be enticed - it's enticing – pasties, pies and sausage rolls and things like that. It's the salt, processed food and like sweet things with the sugar in them.”**

Adult with a Mental Health Condition  
(Seldom Heard Food Conversations)

# What's happening internationally?

## Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly (UN-GA) and are intended to be achieved by 2030. They are a set of goals designed to be applied across the globe with the aim of reducing health problems, tackling poverty, protecting the environment, and creating more equal societies. There are 17 goals in total, and they cover all aspects of our societies, including fair education, gender equality, our climate, our use of water and more (United Nations, 2023b).

The goals have great importance not only at the global and national level, but also at the local level. This is because councils are on the front line of many of the objectives defined in the goals. Although governments make the decisions that affect our lives, it is councils that implement many of them, and the way that is done has a huge impact on the overall aim of the goals: a fairer and better life for all.

SDG 2 focuses on ending hunger. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, global hunger and food insecurity were rising. Like many areas of the UK, there has been an increase in food insecurity in Birmingham. Although many organisations in our city are tackling this challenge, now more

than ever, a joined up and unified approach is needed. This is where the SDGs can benefit us, by unifying our approach to the difficulties that affect our residents.

## Global Food Justice Pledge

The experience of the pandemic has shone a harsh light on the fragility of food security within cities, exacerbating existing inequalities in many communities. Food justice is an important issue for Birmingham and for cities across the world and it is one where we want to make a united stand.

Birmingham City Council supports the right to food for all. In addition, in 2021 a pledge was launched by Birmingham City Council at the 7th Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Global Forum as a response to the lessons of food insecurity learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the pledge is to collaborate and put political weight into the voices of cities in national and international arenas. It emphasises the need for local, national, and international policies which create and support an affordable, nutritious and sustainable food system for all citizens, irrespective of social or economic grouping.

Birmingham is encouraging cities of all sizes across the world to pledge and work together collectively to consider how cities can politically commit to the right to food and work to improve the whole food system, opposed to individual issues, so that it is fairer, healthier and more sustainable.

**The pledge: "As city leaders, we are committed to addressing food justice by acknowledging that all our citizens irrespective of status are entitled to safe, nutritious and sustainable food at all times. We recognise the benefits of a collaborative partnership to address the global challenge of food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, and disaster displacement."**

We need to work together to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 to "end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" and ensure that the right to food is enshrined in city food policy.



## **The Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration**

Birmingham has signed the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration; a commitment by subnational governments to tackle the climate emergency through integrated food policies and a call on national governments to act. The declaration recognises how fragile our food systems are, and integrated food strategies are needed at a local level to reduce environmental footprint, drive positive food system change, to ensure greater resilience to shocks and to reduce inequalities. Food partnerships and involving everyone across the food system in decision-making is key. It is necessary to develop sustainable food systems that are able to rebuild ecosystems and deliver safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, and sustainable diets for all (Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, 2021).

## **Milan Urban Food Policy Pact**

The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) is an international partnership for action on creating healthy food environments in cities and towns. The partnership enables connection with a network of 250 cities across the world to share learning on approaches to food in urban environments. Birmingham has continued to be a key member of the Milan Urban Food Policy

Pact, holding one of two European secretariat seats for MUFPP and leading on food justice and food cultural diversity for the MUFPP network (Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, 2015).

## **Food Trails Living Labs**

The Food Trails initiative funded through the EU Horizon 2020 Programme and is addressing the call “Food 2030 – Empowering Cities as agents of food system transformation” (Food Trails, 2020). Birmingham is a Food Trails city and has a living lab consisting of key food system stakeholders.

## **Délice Network – The City Network on Food and Gastronomy**

Délice is an international professional network that recognises the powerful role food and gastronomy has to play in the development of cities. The Délice network aims to build competence and share inspiration and experience.

## **BINDI**

The BINDI project is a partnership between Birmingham and Pune, India which aims to maximise sharing knowledge on food systems and supports working together on creating food smart cities. Both Pune and Birmingham are second cities in their respective countries, have significant educational footprints of universities and schools,

strong links to manufacturing and industry and growing and evolving economies (The Food Foundation, 2018).

## **Food Cities 2022**

Food Cities 2022 Learning Partnership is an initiative that supports cities to develop and implement city led food policies and action plans. The aim is to build a network of cities who are developing their food agendas, with a particular focus on low to middle income countries in the Commonwealth. Through the partnership, responsive support and advice is offered through a combination of events, resources, peer-to-peer learning and access to experts. Birmingham has been an active member of the Food Cities network and hosted the Commonwealth Food Futures conference in July 2022 (The Food Foundation, 2022).

**“Scalability, loads of great initiatives, need to be joined up to have real impact.”**

(UN Food System Summit Dialogues)

# Cross-Cutting Themes and Work Streams





# Cross-cutting themes

The four cross-cutting themes are:

<b>Food Skills &amp; Knowledge</b>	<b>Empowering citizens with knowledge and skills in relation to the food system.</b>
<b>Food Behaviour Change</b>	<b>Developing the capability, opportunity and motivation for key behaviours that will enable long term change.</b>
<b>Food Security &amp; Resilience</b>	<b>Increasing access to sufficient affordable, nutritious and safe food for all citizens, all the time, in every community, and at every age.</b>
<b>Food Innovation, Data &amp; Research</b>	<b>Gathering insights and data and facilitating innovation, collaboration, learning and research across the food system.</b>



Cumin seeds

Dried galangal roots

Green



Cinnamon

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM  
ACCREDITED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK  
Lewis Walker  
The College of Food

**The College of Food,  
University College Birmingham**  
Photo: Lewis Walker – Lecturer



# Food Skills and Knowledge

Empowering citizens with knowledge and skills in relation to the food system.

Although it is often seen as simple, many people don't feel confident in making healthy choices when it comes to food, and too few of us understand the food system and the impact it has on our lives and our communities.

Knowledge alone isn't enough, it has to be supported by skills on how to use this knowledge, empowering individuals to ask for what they want, and ensuring they have the equipment and opportunities to put the knowledge and skills into action.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Identifying skills and knowledge needs across the strategy work streams

Identifying key skills and knowledge needed to achieve objectives in the strategy work streams.

This may include:

- Supporting citizens to understand where food comes from, how it is farmed and transformed so they can make informed choices. Also, supporting citizens and communities to develop the skills and knowledge needed to grow locally, individually and collaboratively.

- Increasing understanding of supply chains, how to shop seasonally and where people can source more sustainable food. Increasing skills and knowledge in relation to procurement processes and supply chains.
- Increasing the understanding of how to prepare and cook fruits and vegetables, whole foods, wholegrains, beans, pulses, nuts and seeds. Also increasing understanding of how diets and recipes can be changed to reduce the amount of highly processed ingredients, and limit fat, salt and sugar. This includes in the context of limited time and finances, culture and heritage.
- Supporting citizens and businesses to increase their understanding of food labelling and how food transformation impacts on nutrition and health, and the impact and benefits of nutritious food.
- Diversifying how knowledge and skills are shared by creating opportunities for inter-cultural and inter-generational cooking to share learning and experiences as part of the work on social cohesion.
- Exploring how to expand access to cooking equipment in communities.
- Utilising online platforms such as Whisk to develop communities where recipes and ideas are shared.

- Supporting parents, families and those who work with children to develop skills for a lifetime within children and young people and help them build healthy relationships with food as they grow into adults.
- Increasing understanding of how to prevent food waste, such as which foods can be frozen and how to preserve them.
- Strengthening the connection between training providers and the food sector to ensure people develop skills and knowledge needed for jobs across the food system.
- Increasing skills and knowledge of good practice in relation to allergens, hygiene, safe storage of food.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Food skills and knowledge feed into SDG 2.1 and 2.2. SDG 2.1 focuses on ending hunger and guaranteeing access to safe, nutritious food all year round. SDG 2.2 focuses on ending malnutrition for all people (United Nations, 2023b).





PEOPLE  
BEFORE  
FAST FOOD COMPANY  
PROFITS

END JUNK  
FOOD ADS  
on buses, trams  
and trains

OUR FOOD  
ENVIROMENT IS  
CHANGING  
Why aren't we?

PROTECT  
OUR HEALTH

TAKE CHARGE  
USE YOUR VOICE  
MAKE CHANGE

**"It should be easy for us to eat healthily - it isn't ... As the Birmingham Youth Board of Bite Back 2030, we believe that every single young person has the right to live a healthy life. That's why we are campaigning to improve access to healthy food in the city we love and are proud to call home."**

Photo: Birmingham Youth Board of Bite Back 2030



# Food Behaviour Change

Developing the capability, opportunity and motivation for key behaviours that will enable long term change.

The choices we make about food aren't just about knowledge and skills, as they are influenced by lots of factors around us every day. These factors include culture and social influences, such as the social determinants of health, and also barriers such as lacking equipment or access to affordable food. Helping people to make better choices about the food they buy, eat and throw away needs to consider these factors (Chen & Antonelli, 2020). We also need to use evidence-based behaviour change approaches to understand and enable both immediate and long-term change that is effective in the context of real lives in our city.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Identifying priority behaviours across the strategy work streams

Working across the strategy work streams to identify behaviours and developing behaviour change interventions to achieve objectives. This includes creating and sustaining environments which enable positive choices.

## Supporting individual change

- Co-producing behaviour change interventions and solutions with local people and partners using scientific and evidence-based approaches.

- Developing targeted and tailored approaches and utilise scientific methods to identify what type of interventions and techniques could be utilised, such as social marketing campaigns and 1 to 1 interventions delivered through social prescribing and other programmes.
- Motivating people to engage in behaviours by marketing them as desirable, enjoyable, exciting or social, rather than "healthy". This could include making positive statements about nutritious food to ensure a balanced approach.
- Considering approaches which help people maintain behaviour change long-term.
- Ensuring that stigma is addressed, and not perpetuated, within the approaches used.

## Supporting communities of change

- Enabling community-led behaviour change programmes that use peer support and culturally competent approaches, and are embedded into communities, including those of identity and experience.
- Identifying key levers for behaviour change in communities, including building on the strengths of existing assets, initiatives and relationships, and harnessing the potential of respected and trusted people and leaders in the community.

- Supporting and empowering the community and voluntary sector to use evidence-based behaviour change methods, and to exchange knowledge and best practice.
- Working with the universities of the city to expand the understanding of applied behaviour change science in the context of our global city, to support healthier and more sustainable food choices at an individual, community and food system level, and to ensure solutions are sustainable and maintain momentum.
- Supporting businesses to shape their environments to nudge customers towards nutritious and sustainable choices, make changes to the food offer available, and share tips on how to introduce people to new menu items in a way that increases uptake.
- Continuing to develop and deepen our understanding of the barriers to a healthy and sustainable food system in Birmingham through insight, research and co-production with citizens, communities, industry and our wider partnerships.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Food behaviour and change is linked to SDG 4.3, which includes non-formal education (United Nations, 2023b).



**Working with communities to create permanent food landscapes, where people can access fresh food in their open spaces.**  
**Food Forest Brum/Mothergardens**

# Food Security and Resilience

Increasing access to sufficient affordable, nutritious and safe food for all citizens, all the time, in every community, and at every age.

Too many citizens in our city make difficult choices every week between buying healthy food or paying bills. These choices are the result of wider policies on welfare and living wage employment, and global challenges such as climate change and conflict. This impacts on the food people eat and their health and wellbeing. We need to apply evidence-based approaches to address food poverty and insecurity to mitigate the impact of deprivation and support citizens to feed themselves and their families. We will also increase the resilience of our food system.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Identifying how strategy work streams can address food security and resilience

Working across the strategy work streams to identify actions that will reduce poverty, increase resilience and prevent food shortages, and proactively strengthening existing plans.

### Supporting people who are in crisis

- Increasing signposting to local, dignified and integrated services so people know what emergency support they can access whether in short term crisis or facing chronic long term food insecurity due to living in poverty.

- Building a city-wide conversation to shine a light on the reality of food poverty, and reducing the stigma and isolation created by being unable to feed yourself or your family.

### Supporting people to transition out of crisis

- Creating a clear pathway to enable people to transition from crisis support towards sustainable affordable food models such as food pantries and social supermarkets.
- Using evidence-based approaches to increase awareness and uptake of initiatives across the city, including Healthy Start vouchers, Free School Meals, community initiatives and the Food Justice Network.

### Creating long term solutions to reduce food insecurity

- Identifying actions to increase food security and resilience in the short, medium, and long term.
- Raising awareness of affordable food projects in our city e.g., food pantries and social supermarkets, and facilitating new projects being set up.
- Continuing to work towards being a Real Living Wage City and influence, on a national level, the welfare and employment practices that lead to food poverty.

- Supporting knowledge, skills and access to initiatives that enable individuals to eat healthy and delicious diets on a low income.
- Piloting using grow your own approaches with nutrient dense fruit and vegetables to supplement micronutrient intake in diets.
- Developing evidence-based solutions to increase healthy affordable options on offer to citizens.

### Increasing the resilience of our food system

- Influencing regional, national and international policy to increase the food security of cities, which are uniquely vulnerable to disruption to the global food supply chain.
- Exploring existing supply chain and procurement processes and building in adaptability and resilience to enable them to respond to shocks.
- Exploring approaches to be prepared for food shortages, such as early warning systems, contingency plans and connecting with local and regional resilience strategies and groups.

### Sustainable Development Goals

Food security and resilience feeds into SDG 1.b, which is about creating policy frameworks that are pro-poor and gender sensitive to eradicate poverty, including a real living wage, and SDG 2.c focuses on avoiding food price anomalies.





**Psychology of Eating in Adults and Children (PEACH) is a research theme that sits within the Applied Health Research Group at Aston University**

**Photo: Professor Jacqueline Blissett - Chair in Childhood Eating Behaviour**



# Food Innovation, Data and Research

Gathering insights and data and facilitating innovation, collaboration, learning and research across the food system.

Birmingham is a thriving hub of innovation, technology and best practice and is a centre for urban food system innovation. By bringing together city-wide, national and international partners to solve food system challenges we increase partnerships, communication, maximise opportunities and reduce duplication. Collectively we are on a mission to better understand food systems, and develop innovative solutions supported by research, data and technology. We want to create a bolder city, maximise the future trends and opportunities in food for all our citizens, and ensure our food system is healthy, fair and sustainable.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## **Identifying how food innovation, research and data can support the strategy work streams**

Working across the strategy work streams to identify opportunities for innovation, research and data to bring solutions and achieve objectives. This will be a two-way relationship, as the work streams will support the direction of this cross-cutting theme, and this cross-cutting theme will contribute insights and innovations that will support the work streams.

## **Collaborating with partners**

- Strengthening and expanding the engagement across the city through the Creating a Healthy City Food Forum and our city-wide partnerships to inform and collaborate towards our shared ambition of a creating a healthier and more sustainable food system for Birmingham.
- Building networks and collaboration for change and impact in communities of place, identity and experience across the city.
- Learning and collaborating to create a better city food system through our international partnerships, such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, Delice Network, Food Cities 2022 and BINDI partnership.

## **Supporting innovation**

- Working through economic growth and innovation partnerships to maximise the potential of the food system of our city to be at the cutting edge of affordable, ethical, healthy and sustainable food.
- Continuing to develop and innovate sustainable, healthy, delicious and ethical food that celebrates our diverse and evolving culture and heritage. This will enable our food sector and hospitality industry to be world leaders.

- Growing Birmingham as a beacon of food entrepreneurialism including through the support of start-ups and independent businesses.

## **Learning and improving**

- Collaborating with learning and innovation partners to develop a centre for urban food systems and cultivating a cross-institutional approach to research and insight that drives change.
- Gathering data to inform our understanding of the food system and developing a Food System Dashboard to monitor progress.
- Ensuring learning and monitoring is built into the implementation of the strategy.
- Building the evidence base in this area through collaboration and the support of universities and other groups and ensure that actions undertaken are evidence-based.

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

This has some connection to SDG 2.4 by adapting good food production systems to meet the requirements of residents in an environmentally conscious way. It also feeds into SDG 1.b through supporting the Real Living Wage City initiative (United Nations, 2023b).



**As a nutritionist and Birmingham born and bred, I'm committed to supporting the public and organisations to make healthier, sustainable food choices. Dietary inequalities have an impact on the health and wellbeing of the diverse communities living in our city and I am motivated by trying to address them.**

**Photo: Shaleen Meelu - Harborne Food School**




# Strategic work streams

The six strategic work streams are:

<b>Food Production</b>	<b>Empowering and enabling citizens and local producers to grow food throughout the year and connect to the city's food system.</b>
<b>Food Sourcing</b>	<b>Increasing both supply and demand for local, environmentally sustainable, ethical and nutritious foods in the food system.</b>
<b>Food Transformation</b>	<b>Transforming the food offer and diets to contain more diverse, nutritious and sustainable ingredients, and less fat, salt and sugar.</b>
<b>Food Waste &amp; Recycling</b>	<b>Minimising food waste and unsustainable packaging throughout the food system and maximising the repurposing and redistribution of surplus.</b>
<b>Food Economy &amp; Employment</b>	<b>Facilitating a thriving local food economy for all and maximising training and employment opportunities.</b>
<b>Food Safety &amp; Standards</b>	<b>Improving food safety and standards for Birmingham's citizens and businesses.</b>





**“I have never liked tomatoes but then the one day we did a pasta dish with the tomatoes we grew and oh my goodness they were so lovely and now I love them.”**

Vulnerably Housed Adult (Seldom Heard Food Conversations)

# Food Production

Empowering and enabling citizens and local producers to grow food throughout the year and connect to the city's food system.

Food is produced mainly through growing plants and trees or raising animals. It is then sometimes transformed through a manufacturing and packaging process into the products we see on shelves and market stalls. How we produce food has an impact on the nutritional content of what we eat, the environment around us, and the price we pay for food. Growing food brings people together, helps people understand where their food comes from, reduces isolation, and supports lifelong physical and mental health and wellbeing (Genter et al, 2015).

The practice, science and collaboration around food production is always evolving and this generates opportunities for urban and peri-urban food production, both commercially and domestically. This leads to job creation and the potential to develop new infrastructure to support a strong local food economy, such as food hubs, short supply chains and shared processing, packaging and distribution systems.

The nature of the food production cycle is that it is seasonal which can create surplus crops at peak times of the year. Innovation and partnership are required to maximise opportunities for redirecting

and preventing waste so that we don't lose food that could feed our city, to extend our growing season and make it resilient to climate change and other disruptions.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Growing more in Birmingham

- Utilising tools such as planning and licensing to maximise the potential to create, clear, maintain, access and protect growing spaces across the city.
- Supporting more community growing across the city with community champions leading growing campaigns across the city, and increase growing in parks, community spaces, schools and window boxes. Inspire and enable people to get involved and try growing.
- Empowering communities to utilise unused public spaces for short- and long-term growing co-operatives and support a city-wide Growing Network of learning and sharing.
- Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships to enable innovative urban farming opportunities as part of the growth strategy for the city, maximising the potential of the East Birmingham growth corridor.


## Maximising the good that comes from growing

- Using the levers of procurement to embed environmentally sustainable and ethical food production as a fundamental part of our food system.
- Developing competencies, training and apprenticeship opportunities to develop the future workforce and enabling citizens to work in agriculture and food production.
- Inspiring targeted evidence-based initiatives that maximise the potential benefits of growing for health and wellbeing to reduce inequalities.
- Empowering people to grow their own in a way that maximises the physical, emotional, educational and social benefits of growing.
- Exploring approaches to maximise the quality and quantity of fruits and vegetables grown in Birmingham.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Food Production feeds into SDG 2.4, which focuses on sustainable, resilient food production systems that are beneficial for the environment. By creating resilient food production systems that work in harmony with nature, we are more likely to secure affordable food for all (United Nations, 2023b).





**“There’s a relationship between everything and climate change isn’t there? The butterfly effect. I think food is important for all. If we could all get enough to eat, enjoy our diet, enjoy our mealtimes, it would build us up to be stronger, better people and we could all work together towards saving the planet.”**

Adult with a Mental Health Condition (Seldom Heard Food Conversations)

# Food Sourcing

Increasing both supply and demand for local, environmentally sustainable, ethical and nutritious foods in the food system.

Food sourcing is important as farming, production, logistics and distribution have a huge impact on people and the planet. Better food sourcing can reduce harm to the environment, mitigate climate change, reduce pollution, support the ecosystem, improve animal welfare, and support the health, wellbeing and life circumstances of people. It can also enable thriving economies and businesses that, in turn, support communities (United Nations, 2023a).

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Increasing the amount of local food in our city's food system

- Increasing demand and expectation of seasonal, local, sustainable food sourcing with ethical, transparent supply chains.
- Supporting businesses, especially those in the public sector, to adopt local sourcing in their food procurement.
- Supporting more rural-urban connection, especially through solutions that help connect local farming cooperatives, independent and small producers with local businesses and communities. We will proactively engage with the Shire counties that surround our city.

## Overcoming barriers to food sourcing

- Exploring how local food hubs and markets can overcome barriers and costs of logistics and distribution and connect fresh, locally produced and surplus foods into the food system.
- Addressing the challenge of food sourcing for at-risk groups and developing solutions for those who are unable to purchase in bulk, or afford the minimum order amount required for deliveries, and implement solutions e.g., exploring mobile affordable food buses, pop up shops and markets, and utilising unused spaces for markets.
- Exploring how surplus food can be transformed into meals and distributed e.g., through a city-wide freezer network.
- Exploring how food grown in gardens and allotments can connect into the city's food system.
- Identifying solutions when there are gluts that farmers can't sell, so it is still harvested and can connect into the food system and benefit those who need it most e.g., gleaning projects.

## Increasing understanding of the local food system

- Supporting schools and adult education providers to work with local food producers to help citizens understand the food journey and be more aware of the farmers and producers in the Midlands and contrasting them to global supply chains.
- Increasing awareness of what local foods are available, when they are in season, and where they can be purchased. Identifying the farms and producers across central UK, and what food they produce and when.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Food sourcing feeds into SDG 2.4, which focuses on sustainable, resilient food production systems that are beneficial for the environment. By creating resilient food production systems that work in harmony with nature, we are more likely to secure affordable food for all (United Nations, 2023b).





**Head chef at primary school  
leading an innovative approach**  
Photo: Matthew Knight -  
Hillstone Primary School



# Food Transformation

Transforming the food offer and diets to contain more diverse, nutritious and sustainable ingredients, and less fat, salt and sugar.

The process of transformation of food is about turning raw ingredients into another food product. Ingredients like apples can be eaten in their raw form or combined with other ingredients and transformed into products ranging from apple pies to baby food. These products can be sold in shops or restaurants.

The transformation journey can involve adding ingredients like fat, salt and sugar to create flavour as well as structure, texture and longevity to products. Although some of these are essential to the final product, there are often ways to make this better for our health and the environment. This transformation happens in various ways including manufacturers making ultra-processed food, restaurants creating dishes to serve to customers and individuals cooking at home.

We want to see a city where food is transformed in ways which are delicious, environmentally sustainable, and include diverse, nutritious and healthy ingredients. This will involve working with industry locally, regionally and nationally and increasing demand for these foods.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## **Making our city's food offer healthier, sustainable and delicious**

- Encouraging and supporting industry and food businesses to create new food offers and reformulate recipes to include more environmentally sustainable and nutrient dense ingredients including beans, pulses and dark green leafy vegetables, and less fat, salt and sugar.
- Supporting cooks, chefs and food businesses to develop skills to enable them to adapt recipes to the seasons, supply chain availability, and diverse ingredients that reduce reliance on intensive farming practices, as well as using less fat, salt and sugar.
- Supporting industry and food businesses to make changes to the food in ways that are affordable, attractive and engaging to our diverse communities through initiatives such as awards, standards, incentives and support packages.
- Inspiring food technology innovation to improve food formulation within higher education and the food industry.
- Utilising available powers and levers, such as those relating to planning and licensing, to encourage new businesses in Birmingham, including takeaways, to provide delicious, nutritious and sustainable food.

- Exploring city-wide approaches and interventions to improve diets.
- Influencing regional, national and international policy to encourage reformulation and improve the food environment.
- Challenging the status quo through open and authentic discussion of our food system and its impact on our lives and our future.

## **Increasing demand for food that is healthier and sustainable**

- Increasing understanding of food transformation and creating an environment that fosters demand for healthier and sustainability food and helps citizens know where to find it.
- Increasing the opportunities to try a wide variety of delicious healthy and sustainable foods to increase familiarity and acceptance of new foods.
- Exploring approaches and interventions to increase children's acceptance and demand for healthier and sustainable food.

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

Food transformation feeds into SDG 2.1, which focuses on ending hunger and guaranteeing access to safe, nutritious food all year round (United Nations, 2023b).





**“FareShare Midlands turns an environmental problem into a social solution by supplying good quality surplus food to local communities who tackle hunger and poverty and the root causes of both.”**

**Photo: Laura Spencer – Head of Development**

# Food Waste and Recycling

Minimising food waste and unsustainable packaging throughout the food system and maximising the repurposing and redistribution of surplus.

Food waste and unsustainable food packaging have a big impact on our city and our planet and creates a huge financial and environmental burden across the food system. We feed over 1.1 million people every day in Birmingham, so we need to address the negative impact our city has on the food system and influence supply chain processes (ONS, 2021).

Food waste happens across the food system and much of this is avoidable. 25% of all food waste in the UK occurs on farms where an estimated 2.9 million tonnes of edible food is lost and wasted each year; the equivalent of 6.9 billion meals. Nearly half of this loss is pre-harvest, meaning the food was left on fields. This loss is driven by decisions made post farmgate including restrictive standards and specification requirements from supermarkets (WWF, 2022).

Once food has left the farm, 70% of UK food waste comes from households, equivalent to a value of over £14 billion a year and 20 million tonnes of Greenhouse Gas emissions (WWF, 2022). An average family of four can save £60 per month by reducing food waste. Higher food waste is associated more with working age adults, use of ready-made meals, time pressures, dietary restriction and lack of skills and confidence (WRAP, 2022).

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Improving waste and recycling practices across the food system

- Creating and supporting a culture across the food system that avoids waste at every stage and upholds national legislation.
- Working to understand the barriers that stop people avoiding waste, such as meal planning, individuals lacking access to a fridge, and food businesses not being connected to those who could utilise food surplus.
- Encouraging food businesses to be waste wise by using best practice models and repurposing, food sharing and recycling food surplus in partnership with community organisations.
- Utilising the cross-cutting themes of food skills and knowledge and food behaviour change to help people reduce waste.

## Supporting waste reduction innovation

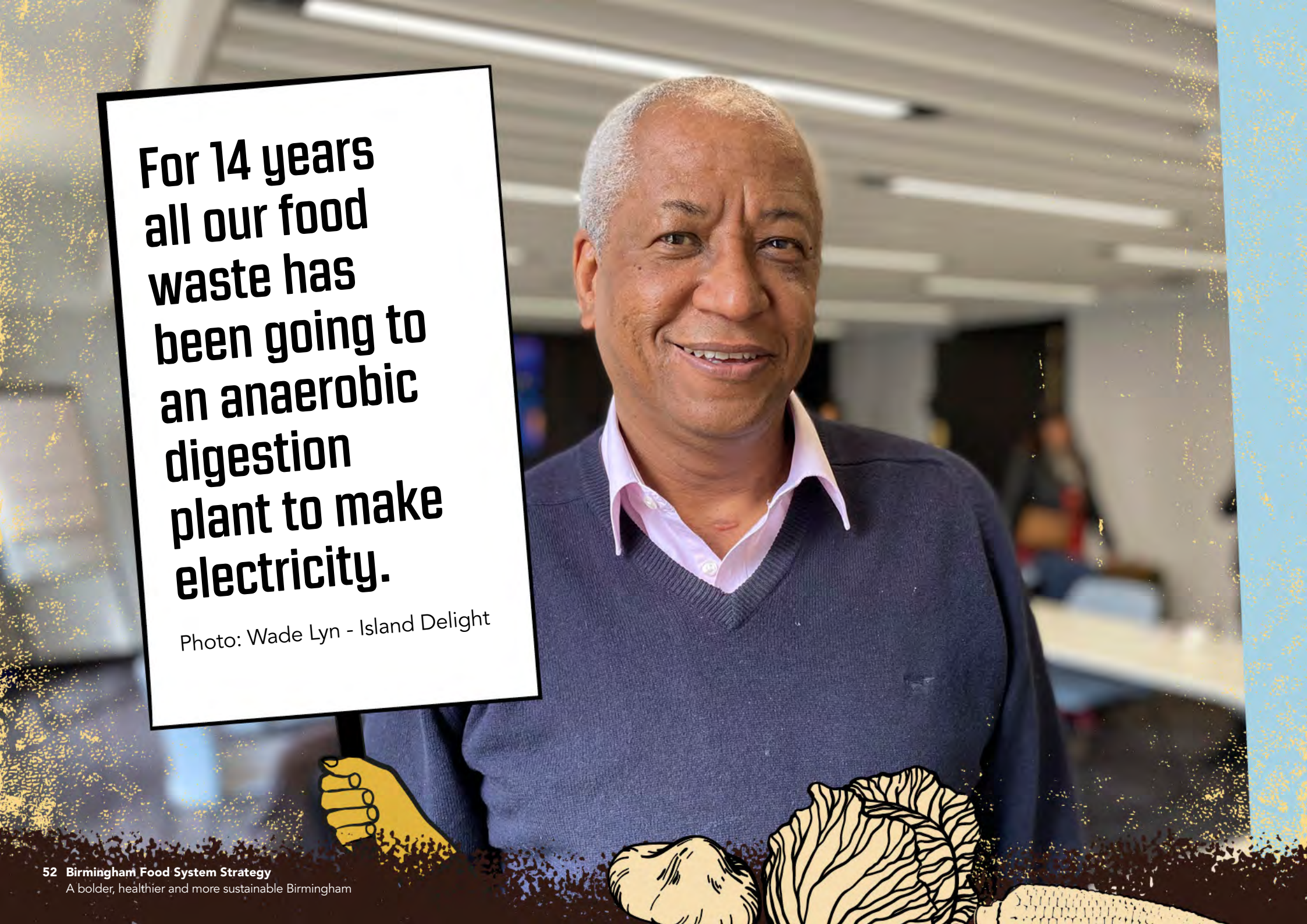
- Supporting better and easier food management for households by enabling hyper-local waste management innovation, including sharing of surplus food, composting and food waste collection.

- Exploring models of community collaboration with food producers and retailers to support access to affordable nutritious food by utilising surplus food and food close to the use by date.
- Considering how to discourage harmful practices such as using single-use plastics and excessive packaging and supporting innovative solutions.
- Exploring innovative approaches to reduce waste across a food product's lifecycle.
- Examining city-wide approaches to overcome challenges of obtaining, storing, transporting and using surplus food.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Food waste and recycling is part of SDG 12.3, which focuses on reducing food waste and loss in production and supply chains (United Nations, 2023b).



A photograph of a middle-aged Black man with short grey hair, smiling. He is wearing a blue V-neck sweater over a light pink collared shirt. He is holding a white sign with black text. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a kitchen or office. The image has a decorative border with gold speckles and a blue vertical bar on the right. At the bottom, there are illustrations of a potato, a head of lettuce, and a carrot.

**For 14 years  
all our food  
waste has  
been going to  
an anaerobic  
digestion  
plant to make  
electricity.**

Photo: Wade Lyn - Island Delight

# Food Economy and Employment

Facilitating a thriving local food economy for all and maximising training and employment opportunities.

Food is produced, transformed, sold, and disposed of by people as part of paid and voluntary job roles, and this is underpinned by a broad range of training and skills development.

The food sector is a significant part of the economy of Birmingham, and one which reflects our diverse and vibrant global heritage, and the interconnection of hundreds of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). As we come through the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, the resilience of the food economy is a key issue for the future.

Birmingham is on a journey towards a vibrant and sustainable food economy which is world-leading in innovation, diversity, and healthy and sustainable food. This journey requires us to take a holistic approach to building a food economy where we create jobs that attract and support talent and, by working with our education providers, positions our citizens for these opportunities. Due to the global nature of our city, this will then enable this ethos to be taken across the world.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## **Building a thriving, healthy and sustainable food economy**


- Further developing Birmingham's reputation as a food destination with a flourishing, vibrant, diverse food scene that celebrates the cultural diversity of the city, our excellent local produce and independent businesses.
- Celebrating businesses that innovate and lead healthy, sustainable, ethical and affordable food approaches across the breadth of the city.
- Creating a strong local economy and a culture where local, small and independent businesses, especially black, Asian, and minority ethnic businesses are supported and celebrated.
- Encouraging all businesses in the food system to become Real Living Wage employers and model good workplace practices so that the sector becomes known for good jobs e.g., exploring approaches to prevent the negative impacts that come from zero hours contracts.
- Supporting innovation opportunities and start-ups in the food sector.
- Utilising licensing tools and planning to maximise the potential to create healthy food retail environments.
- Building the Birmingham Food Revolution to highlight and learn from best practice.

## **Strengthening the future food sector and food system workforce potential of our city**

- Working with the food sector and wider food system to understand the interventions needed to support an education and skills pipeline that will help to build a healthier and more sustainable food system across the city.
- Working with education providers to understand the needs of the food system and encouraging and supporting local people to enter the sector.
- Maximising the potential of national and local schemes, such as apprenticeships, industry placement years, and work experience, to enable entry to food sector and food system employment for disadvantaged groups.

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

Food economy and employment is linked to SDGs 8.3, 8.5, and 1.b. SDG 8.3 focuses on decent job creation and entrepreneurship, whilst supporting micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. SDG 8.5 focuses on full employment with equal pay for work of equal value for all. SDG 1.b focuses on creating policy frameworks that are pro-poor and gender sensitive to eradicate poverty, such as a real living wage (United Nations, 2023b).



**“Going to the supermarket, there are aisles and aisles of stuff that you think, this has no nutritional value at all and the vegetables are so limited. Some supermarkets are better than others obviously, but you go through aisles that have nothing but crisps and fizzy drinks. It’s just so accessible, so cheap...”**

South Asian Adult (Seldom Heard Food Conversations)

# Food Safety and Standards

Improving food safety and standards for Birmingham's citizens and businesses.

Millions of meals are sourced, prepared and served across our city every day, including in homes, food businesses, healthcare settings, workplaces, education settings and community food projects and homes. To achieve our strategy's vision, it is essential that Birmingham citizens are eating food that supports their health and wellbeing and they have access to high quality, sustainable, nutritious, healthy, and safe food. To do this, we want to ensure that food is sourced and prepared in the safest way and to the highest of standards, and that those who handle food across the city are supported and encouraged to follow guidelines and best practice for food safety and standards.

The aspirations below will shape the Food System Strategic Action Plan:

## Supporting the implementation of policy, guidelines, and best practice

- Embedding awareness raising and sharing best practice and guidelines with regards to allergens, cross contamination, hygiene, hand washing, food safety, nutrition, and healthy eating across the food system e.g., in food businesses, community food projects, in the home, with education providers and within

training and development programmes.

- Supporting food businesses, community food projects and those who handle food across the city to be aware of, and access, appropriate training with regards to food safety and standards.
- Exploring methods to ensure implementation of food safety and standards e.g., through support packages, learning networks, incentives, regulation.

## Recognising good practice

- Promoting the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme across the city and encourage outlets to display their ratings prominently.
- Supporting industry and food businesses to be recognised for healthy, sustainable and ethical food offers and working practices e.g., through healthy and sustainable catering commitments, charters and awards.
- Making it easier for individuals and food businesses to identify food that is healthy, sustainable and ethical e.g., by conducting a review into food badges, awards, standards and chartered marks and creating resources that support customers when making food purchasing decisions.


## Coordinating action and innovation

- Mapping the organisations, regulatory bodies, policies and practice that impact on food safety and standards in Birmingham and facilitating collaboration on joint priorities.
- Exploring approaches to improve monitoring of food safety and standards.
- Working with the Food Safety and Hygiene group at University of Birmingham to facilitate best practice and innovation.
- Working with food businesses to increase awareness of food crime and taking action to prevent it.
- Using our global city position to collaborate and influence regional, national and international policy to encourage greater transparency and standards in national and international food chains.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Food safety and standards feeds into SDG 2.1, which covers access to safe food. This is overseen by UK Food Hygiene Regulations (United Nations, 2023b).



A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard looking towards a young child who is laughing joyfully. The man is wearing a red shirt and a necklace. The child is wearing a red and white checkered top. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on a white speech bubble with a black border.

**“For my business [sustainability] is at the backbone of what we do. We will collaborate with producers and developers on making change – opening dialogue on how they can change to regain our business with real change. Buy in bulk and repackage in paper sustainable packaging. We need to do this for the world and for the future.”**

Food provider, Summit Group



# Measuring Success

Indicators for change: outputs and outcomes

Our city-wide partnership will develop a food system dashboard of indicators to measure outputs and outcomes.

The National Food Strategy and other international papers have recognised that measurement tools need to be developed to effectively assess and monitor the food system. A wide range of indicators are needed to measure the outputs and outcomes of this strategy and the Food System Strategic Action Plan.

## Outputs from implementing this strategy will include:

- An evidence bank of effective approaches to tackle issues across the food system, through reviews, insight gathering and pilots.
- Evidence translated to make recommendations for stakeholders using the Big Bold City Tool, so our city is empowered to make a difference and implement meaningful change.
- A food system dashboard of indicators and metrics developed with partners so we have insight into the breadth and severity of food system challenges and can monitor whether our actions are making a difference.
- An ever-evolving dynamic needs assessment

informed by the food system dashboard of indicators that will shape the decisions within the Food System Strategic Action Plan and ensure we make a difference.

Example outcome measures:

## Impact on Health

- Percentage of 5yr olds with visually obvious dental decay.
- Prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in children in Reception and Year 6 (NCMP).
- Prevalence of overweight or obese adults aged 18+.

## Impact on Production and Transformation

- Number of food growers/spaces to grow food.
- Diversity of foods offered by food providers.
- Marketing of food (e.g., Percentage of BOGOF offers that are HFSS).

## Impact on Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

- Percentage of adults regularly eating '5-a-day'.
- Percentage of HFSS consumed.
- Participation in food classes.

## Impact on Food Security and Resilience

- Activity at food banks and other food security support initiatives.
- Uptake of healthy start vouchers in eligible families.

## Impact on Food Waste

- Amount of food waste collected.

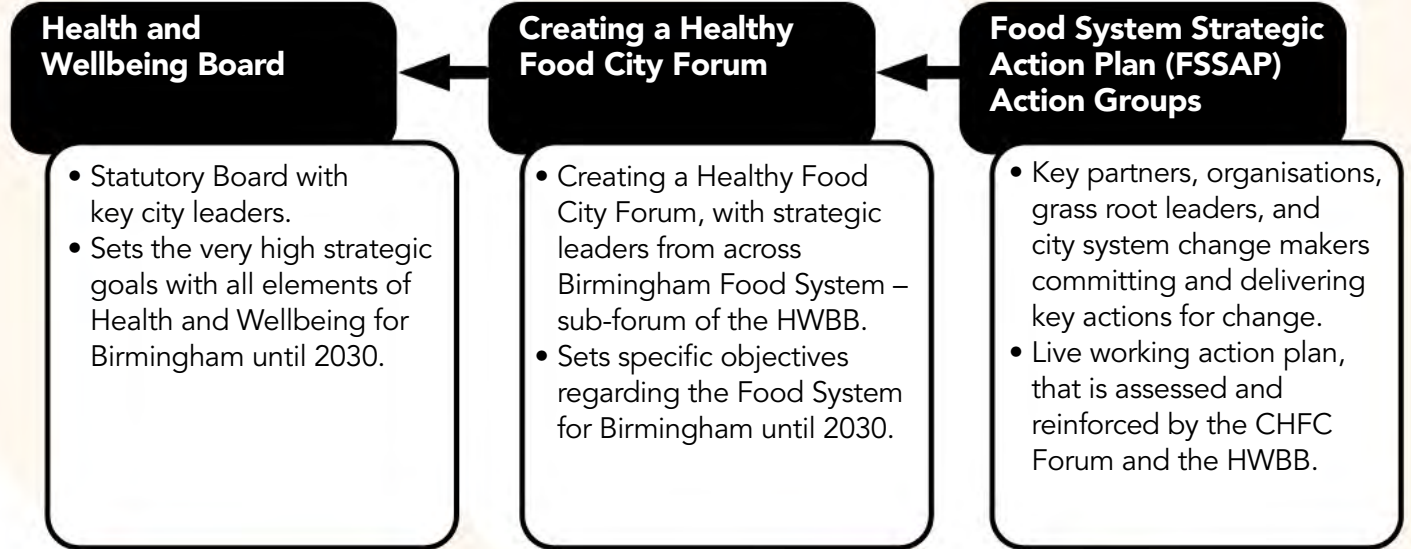


# Governance

## Strategic oversight and delivery

The Health and Wellbeing board is a statutory committee of Cabinet and they oversee the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Birmingham Food System Strategy builds on the Healthy and Affordable Food work stream of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and will also be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Creating a Healthy Food City Forum (CHFCF) will drive the delivery of the Birmingham Food System Strategy. The plan for how this will be achieved will be set out in the Food System Strategic Action Plan and updating this will be the responsibility of the forum. The Creating a Healthy Food City Forum reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board, under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care. The forum is a dynamic local food partnership and has city-wide representation from organisations and key players from across the city's food system.



**“Issues are multifaced – system change needed...what we grow, land use, access to healthy food, advertising, local transportation, income, employment opportunities”**

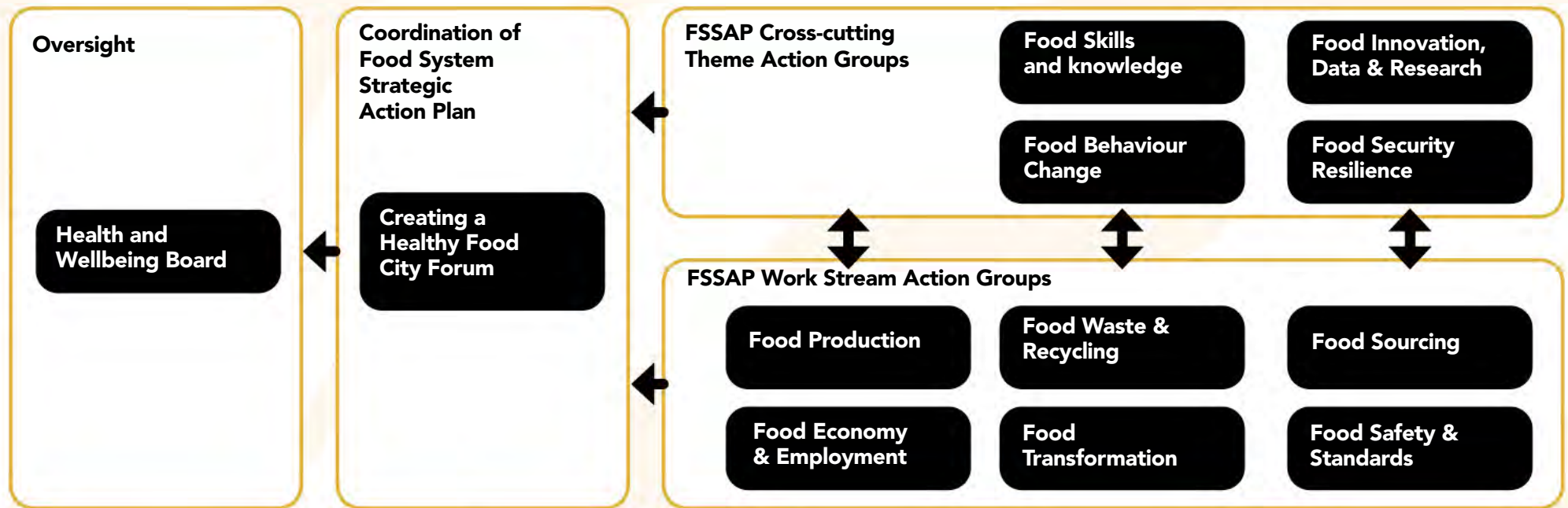
Food provider, Summit Group



An action group will be set up lead on each of the cross-cutting themes and work streams and to feed into the Creating a Healthy Food City Forum and Food System Strategic Action Plan. These action groups will be made up of a working collaboration of key organisations and change-makers from across Birmingham with influence on many key sectors such as health, economy and

business, research and innovation, education and skills, communities, food justice, and many more. We will continue to grow and develop the Creating a Healthy Food City Forum and the action groups to ensure that we are able to establish a cross-matrix working approach to leveraging change in Birmingham's food system.

Through this approach we will be able to maximise our impact across the complex and multifaceted food system, as there are most often interconnected issues and we can't treat one priority in isolation.

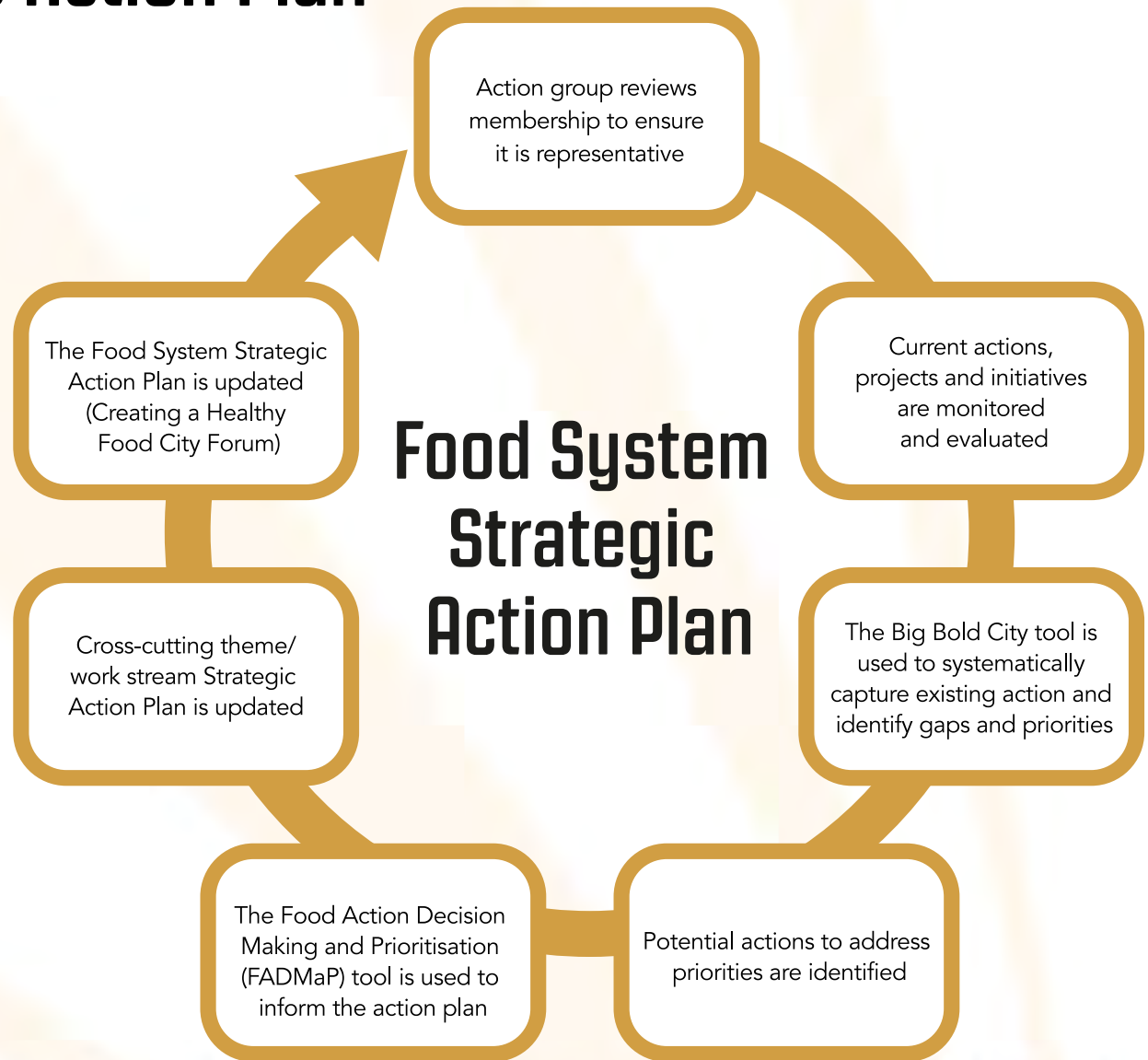


# Food System Strategic Action Plan

The Food System Strategic Action Plan will include short, medium and long term actions to achieve the objectives of each of the cross-cutting themes and strategy work streams of the eight year Birmingham Food System Strategy.

Birmingham is the largest local authority in Europe, with many moving parts, strategies, leaders, and change-makers. A key driver for success in achieving the Birmingham Food System Strategy objectives is bringing the many moving parts together and creating a plan that is regularly reviewed and developed.

It will be the responsibility of the action groups leading on the cross-cutting themes and work streams to align and influence the strategies and priorities across the city's food system. These are constantly evolving to meet the needs of Birmingham citizens and to develop a better city for all. Future strategies, initiatives and projects within Birmingham will be influenced by the aims, objectives and approaches within the Birmingham Food System Strategy, and the priorities and actions identified in the Food System Strategic Action Plan.

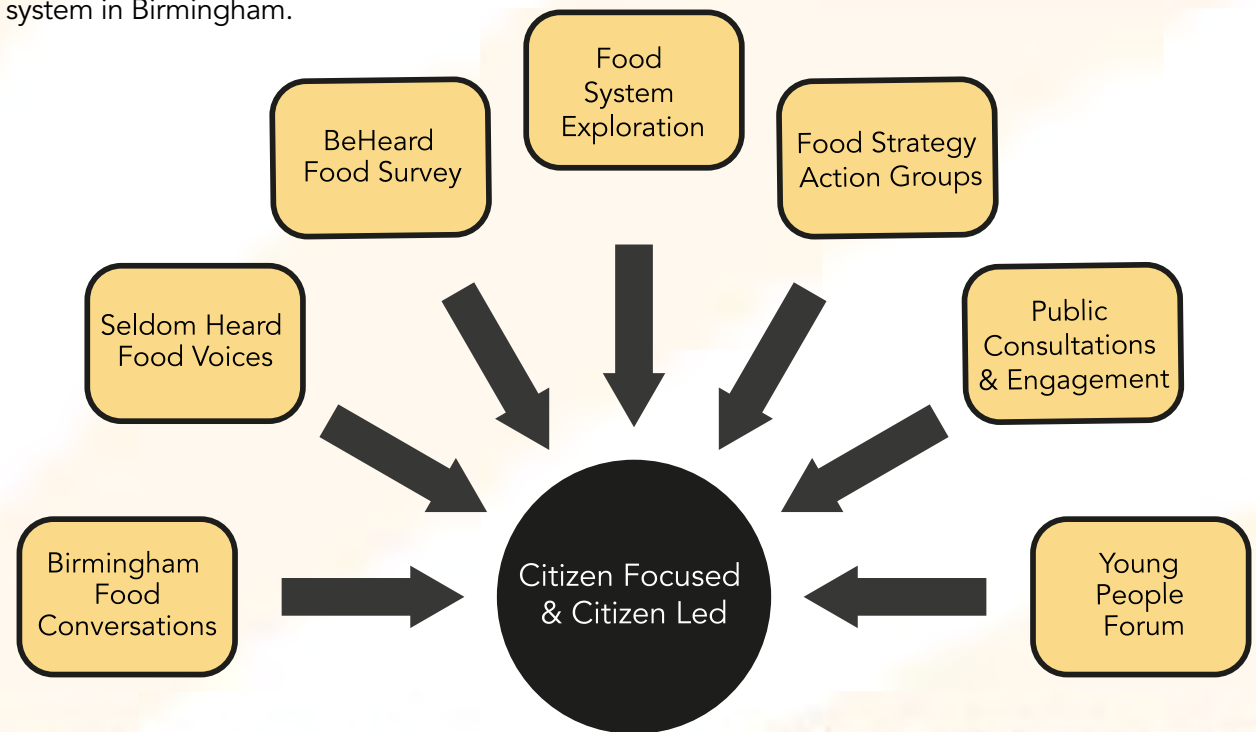


# Citizen focused and citizen led

The journey in creating the Birmingham Food System Strategy began by listening to the citizens of Birmingham. We have commissioned and curated a variety of focus groups, engagement sessions, workshops, seminars, and so much more to ensure that we hear the voice of Birmingham. We have received the input of over 600 citizens from all stages of life, from all backgrounds, and with differing interest in our city's food system. We intend to continue our endeavour of hearing and championing the voices in Birmingham, by committing to replicate and repeat the food system dialogues held during the development of the strategy at key intervals during the eight year period.

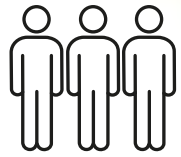
This will ensure that we:

- Continue to meet our citizens needs.
- Build stronger evidence and support for leveraging change.
- Capture the voice of our seldom heard citizens.
- Develop and deliver effective actions that citizens can see, feel, and are aware of.
- Are guided by those most affected by the food system in Birmingham.



# Annex

Birmingham's population is culturally diverse and young



**1.15**  
MILLION  
CITIZENS



**44%**  
UNDER 30



**25%**  
UNDER 18



**OVER 100**  
DIFFERENT  
LANGUAGES  
ARE SPOKEN



**423k**  
HOUSEHOLDS



ENGLISH IS NOT THE  
FIRST LANGUAGE OF  
**42%**  
OF CHILDREN



OUTSIDE OF LONDON  
OUR CITY IS THE MOST  
ETHNICALLY & CULTURALLY  
**DIVERSE**

**51%**

FROM BLACK AND MINORITY  
ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

(Birmingham City Observatory, 2023)

## Birmingham has much higher levels of poverty and deprivation than the national average.

- 88% of Birmingham's wards are more deprived than the England average (BCC, 2019).
- 64% of Birmingham's wards are amongst the 20% most deprived in England (BCC, 2019).
- Over 300,000 people live in poverty in Birmingham (BCC, 2022).
- 43% of children in Birmingham live in poverty, which is over 100,000 children (national average is 23%) (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022).
- 22% of Birmingham households are in fuel poverty (Birmingham City Observatory, 2023).
- Long term health conditions are 60% more prevalent in deprived areas (Department of Health and Social Care, 2012).
- One in three deaths can be attributed to socio-economic inequality (in England between 2003-2018) (Lewer et al, 2020).
- There is a gap in life expectancy between the wealthiest and poorest wards (PHE, 2018).



**Birmingham citizens have high levels of food insecurity which is associated with eating less fruits and vegetables.**

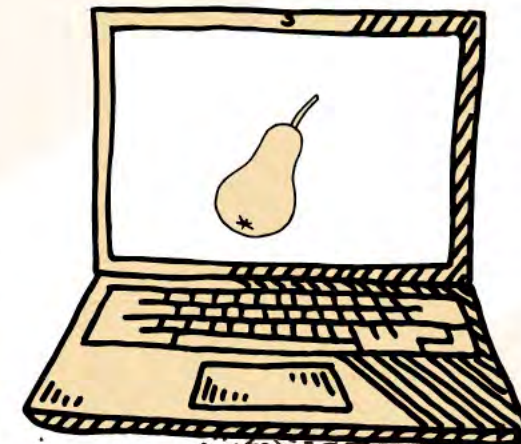
- Food insecurity is defined by the FAO as “limited access to food... due to a lack of money or other resources” (FAO, 2023).
- Both prevalence and severity are important, food insecurity can range from having uncertainty about obtaining food to going for a whole day with no food at all.
- Food insecurity is associated with poor diets and health outcomes (FAO, 2017).
- Financial hardship is associated with lower fruit and vegetable intake (Ebadi et al, 2019; Yau et al, 2020).
- The UK has the highest rate of food insecurity in Europe (FAO, 2018).
- 35,000 food parcels were given to Birmingham adults by the Trussell Trust from April 2020 –March 2021 (Trussell Trust, 2022).
- 16,000 food parcels were given to Birmingham children by the Trussell Trust from April 2020 –March 2021 (Trussell Trust, 2022).
- 6.8% Birmingham citizens reported using food banks during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

**Deprived areas in Birmingham have less supermarkets. In areas where there are less supermarkets, the food offer available in convenience stores is less healthy and more expensive.**

- Many of Birmingham’s most deprived areas don’t have a supermarket within a 15 minute walk.
- Shopping in convenience stores is more expensive as there are less healthy choices available (Black et al, 2012).
- A healthy food basket is £37.38 in a large store vs. £47.83 in a small store (Dawson, 2007).
- Deprived areas tend to have fewer healthy foods available and lower variety and quality of fruits and vegetables (Williamson et al, 2017; Black et al, 2012).
- Living closer to a supermarket is associated with better diets and less likelihood of being overweight or obese (Barrett et al, 2017; Burgoine et al, 2017).

**Those living in deprived areas are exposed to more takeaways and being exposed is associated with eating more takeaway food.**

- Exposure to both TV and outdoor advertising of unhealthy foods is greater in more deprived areas in the UK (Adams et al, 2011a; Adams et al, 2011b).
- Being exposed to takeaways in work and home environments is associated with eating more takeaway food (Burgoine, 2014).
- Takeaways often have a larger portion size, and more energy and salt content than UK recommended levels (Mills et al, 2018).
- The most popular hot food takeaway choices in Birmingham are Indian, Chinese and Pizza (Birmingham Food Survey, 2020).



**Our city's population does not eat enough fruits and vegetables and eating healthily is beyond some citizen's budgets.**

- Only 48% of Birmingham adults are eating 5 or more portions of fruit or vegetables every day (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2023g).
- 30% of eligible families aren't claiming healthy start vouchers. This means they are missing out on £222 per year that can be spent on healthy food and milk.

**Eating out is associated with eating a poorer diet.**

- A quarter of adults consume a meal out once a week in the UK (Adams et al, 2015).
- Eating out of home is associated with higher energy intake, more fat consumption, and less vitamins and minerals (Lachet, 2012).
- Although Birmingham has lots of cafés and restaurants, the spread isn't even across the city. The city centre, and areas such as Sutton Coldfield have a higher density, while other areas have much less.

**Many citizens in Birmingham are not a healthy weight**

- Two thirds of all adults in Birmingham are overweight or obese (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2023b).
- 11 in every 100 children are obese when starting primary school, and this more than doubles to 26 in every 100 being obese by the time they leave in Year 6. This figure increases to 38 in every 100 children if overweight is included in addition to obesity (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2023d).
- More children in Birmingham are underweight than the national average (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2023e).

**Poor diets lead to negative health impacts, and Birmingham has high levels of tooth decay in children, and high levels of adults with Type 2 diabetes**

- 9% of Birmingham 5 years olds experience dental decay which is higher than the national average (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2023c).
- 49% of adults aged 40 to 64 have Type 2 Diabetes. This is higher than the national average, and increasing (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2023f).

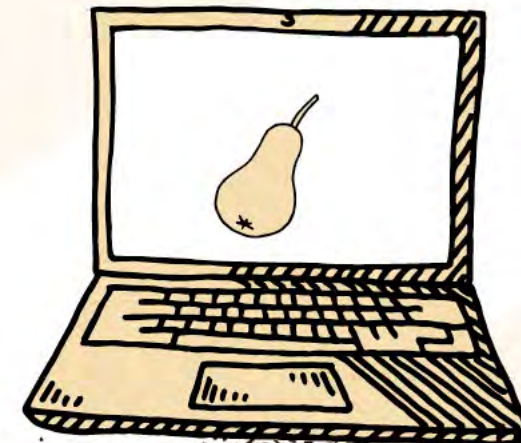




### **The food sector is a key part of our city's economy.**

- Birmingham citizens are estimated to spend ~£3.37 billion per year on food, drink and catering services (Birmingham Food Council, 2021).
- Over 8500 food businesses (Food Standards Agency, 2020).
- 30% of all food outlets in Birmingham are takeaways compared to 26% in England (Living Costs and Food Survey, James et al. 2017).
- 98 businesses involved in food production or transformation, including processing plants for meat, fish and dairy products (Food Standards Agency, 2019).
- 3100 people in the city are employed in the food sector (Birmingham Employment Update, 2019).
- 835 food outlets in the city only reach 2/5 for food hygiene standards.

In addition, there are 113 growing and allotment sites in Birmingham with almost 7000 plots (BCC, 2023).



# Food Action Decision-Making and Prioritisation (FADMaP)

Is this action...

## People focused?

### 1. Citizen-first

We will consider whether proposed action will benefit Birmingham citizens and whether we are acting on what the citizens want and need. We will put the citizen at the heart of our approach, working with citizens across the city to help co-produce a healthy, sustainable, economically viable food environment that is accessible to everyone.

### 2. Celebrate diversity

We know that there are significantly different relationships with food in different cultures and communities across the city and our action needs to work with, and for, these communities to find solutions and approaches that work in the context of celebrating this diversity. In addition, we will consider accessibility of proposed actions and reduce barriers e.g., language, delivery method or context. We also consider the diversity of food requirements and choice, without judgement e.g., religious or ethical food choices. Food is a big part of how we express our culture, diversity, heritage and experiences.

### 3. Empowering

This strategy aims to empower the citizens, communities, businesses, and organisations of Birmingham. Our actions must strive to overcome barriers faced by individuals and organisations to establish positive food system change. We should also use our actions to enable citizens to do what they are driven and motivated to do, to create a healthier, bolder food city.

## Working towards our ambition and addressing key priorities?

### 4. Address poverty and inequalities

We aim to prevent food poverty and help people survive it and recover well. Birmingham citizens should have access to food, and the means to cook and prepare meals. Food, and nutritious fulfilling food, in the city of Birmingham should be a right of all its people, not a luxury. We will consider whether proposed action benefits those who need it most in a way that will work. Beyond food and fuel, we will consider accessibility of proposed actions in terms of equipment, technology, internet access, literacy, transport and more.

### 5. Healthy and safe

All citizens should have access to nutritious and safe food. We want to support retail, businesses, and public sector to provide nutritious and safe food, whilst following hygiene guidance. We also want to make the most of the everyday contact between food regulation and enforcement authorities and food environments so we can work towards our shared ambition of a healthy, safe, and affordable food system in Birmingham.

### 6. Environmentally sustainable

Local, national, and global environmental sustainability will be a key driver for all actions. The impacts of Birmingham's food system on the environment will also be considered. We want to support individuals, retailers, businesses, the food supply chain, and the public sector to be environmentally sustainable, and ultimately move beyond this and support regenerative practices.



## 7. Economically sustainable

The food system is intrinsically connected to the economy of our city and citizens, so all our actions must be economically sustainable for consumers, businesses, and enterprises. Our actions must create incentives and/or opportunities for benefits, be aligned to their priorities, and avoid perception of damage or deficit.

## Effective and realistic?

### 8. Evidence-based

Our actions will be high impact, embedded, and sustainable. Actions will be developed in line with the best current evidence, and where evidence is lacking, we will seek to undertake research. We will use evidence from our national and international partners to learn from their experience, research, and best practice.

### 9. Cost-effective

We will ensure cost-effectiveness through cost-benefit analyses and being evidence-based in order to be effective. We will work to make the relative benefits greatest to those who need them most.

## 10. Risk-aware and resilient

Nationally, the food system is subject to potentially significant challenges due to the currently unknown long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the exit from the European Union. We need to ensure that the impacts of these risks are understood, and that Birmingham is as prepared as it can be. The potential risks that could impact the delivery of planned actions will be considered, and mitigations proposed.

## 11. Scaled and paced

Birmingham is a large city with a diverse community, and it is important that we keep a focus on moving at pace and scaling to reach every part of Birmingham with our work, building on successes and finding ways to scale across the city to ensure that every citizen benefits. Horizon scanning will be a part of every action, including actively exploring how the resulting resources could be developed to ensure they are future-proofed and can be utilised in future larger-scale action.

## 12. Learning and improving

We know we need to listen and be humble in our approach, learning in true partnerships with cities, in the UK and across the world, learning from research and practice-based evidence and from citizens. We will be open and honest in our conversations about the challenges as well as the opportunities and successes.

**“I feel like I started to eat a lot of fast food, when I first came...now I’ve gone back to my home foods”**

First Generation Migrant  
(Seldom Heard Food Conversations)



**“Promote sustainable and environmentally-friendly food choices: educating people on what food is seasonal, on how to reduce food waste, on how to grow your own, how to eat less meat and more vegetables etc. Health and environment go hand-in-hand.”**

(Birmingham Food Conversations)



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