Public procurement of sustainable food: evidence of impact and lessons learnt

Roger Mortlock, Soil Association
City University, 10 May 2012
We want everyone to be able to access and afford food that is healthy for them, and the planet.

CAMPAIGNS FOR CHANGE THAT NORMALISE & UNBLOCK

AN EVIDENCE BASE THAT DEMONSTRATES OUR IMPACT
The UK Cabinet Office Strategy Unit said the twin challenges that food and farming have to meet are:

- climate change, and
- providing a healthy diet
“Tackling social inequalities in health and tackling climate change must go together. Creating a sustainable future is entirely compatible with action to reduce health inequalities: sustainable local communities, active transport, sustainable food production… will have health benefits across society.”

Marmot Review

“Local government is …well placed to harness the potential of a wide range of other instruments, including: sustainable transport plans…and healthier catering provision in local authority and education premises…”

‘Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A call to action on obesity in England’
A campaign that began with Jeanette

- Founder of FFLP and inspiration to Jamie Oliver
- Now working with over 20% of schools in England
- Over 300,000 Food for Life meals served a day
- 80 caterers with Food for Life approved menu
- Over half of London Boroughs now offer FFL menu to all their primary schools
- It’s growing every day
What we do
What impact have we had?

• 3-year programme evaluation by the University of the West of England (UWE) and Cardiff University

• Supporting studies by New Economics Foundation (NEF), National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Centre for Research in Education and the Environment (CREE)
Public health impacts

An increase in the number of primary school-age children reporting eating

• 5-a-day went up 5% points to 21%
• 4-a-day went up 12% points to 49%

Significant positive associations between pupil participation in cooking, growing, farm visits and these reported increases.
Impact travels home

45% parents report eating more vegetables as direct result of the Food for Life Partnership

43% parents report changed food shopping behaviour
Free school meal take-up

Over a 2-year evaluation (July 2008 – September 2010) free school meal take-up increased

• + 13% points on average
• + 20.9% points in secondary school
• + 21% points in Silver/Gold schools

These figures can be compared to national figures (August 2009 – September 2010)

• + 0.2% points in primaries
• + 2.7% points in secondaries
School meal take-up

3.7% point increase in first year of evaluation (2008 - 2009)
Nationally, take-up decreased 3.7% points that year.

5% point increase over two years of evaluation (2008 - 2010)
Impact greatest in:
• Secondary schools (+5.7%)
• Gold schools (+6.0%)
• Disadvantaged schools (+7.1%)
Social return on investment

NEF: for every £1 invested in Food for Life menus, there is a return of over £3 in value to the local economy and society.

Most of this value lies in local economic opportunities around supplying local, seasonal food, and resulting employment.
Learning impacts

Twice as many Food for Life Partnership primary schools received an Ofsted rating of outstanding following their participation (37.2% compared to 17.3% pre-enrolment).

Attainment levels in Food for Life Partnership schools increased at a greater rate than the national average.
What impacts count most?

• **Department for Education**
  – Closing the Gap: learning, behaviour & manners
  – school meal viability
  – children’s health?

• **Directors of Health/local Directors of Public Health**
  – Health Inequalities
  – obesity, especially childhood obesity
  – self-esteem, emotional health & wellbeing

• **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
  – British farmers
The Food for Life Catering Mark

- UK’s fastest growing best practice scheme
- Covers 100 million meals each year
- Independently verified
- Promotes healthy eating & environmentally friendly menus
- 20% of English schools involved in Food for Life Programme – over 50% of schools in London have Food for Life school meals
Bronze criteria

- No undesirable additives or trans fats
- 75% freshly prepared
- Meat farmed to UK welfare standards
- Eggs from cage-free hens
- Seasonal menus
- No GM ingredients
- Free drinking water prominently available
- No endangered fish
- Information on display about how and where food is produced
Silver and Gold criteria

• Meet bronze, plus achieve points thresholds for ingredients in three categories:
  – Making healthy eating easy
  – Ethical and environmentally-friendly food
  – Championing local producers

• Points awarded for every percentage of total ingredient spend
Making healthy eating easy

Points are awarded for the following:

- Meat-free day or equivalent
- Steps to serve meat in moderation
- Actions to cut plate waste/support eating well
- Actions to promote meal take-up
- >50% bread is wholemeal or granary
- Fruit cheaper than dessert (where sold)
- Monitoring against food & nutrient-based standards
- Steps to minimise salt
- Healthy vending
Ethical and environmentally-friendly

Points are awarded for the following:

- Organic
- Free range
- MCS ‘fish to avoid’
- Freedom Food
- Fairtrade
- LEAF
Championing local producers

Points are awarded for the following:

- Serving food produced in your region
- Serving UK fresh produce above the national average
Who’s in the scheme so far?

- **Majority schools** - over 4,000 - 24 LEAs & 27 contract caterers
- **Nurseries** - we now have 249 in the scheme, majority bronze but also 19 gold. Busy Bees now have 142 nurseries accredited.
- **Restaurants** - we now have about 25, including 6 National Trust
- **Universities** - we now have 6 in the scheme
- **Hospitals** - we now have 4 awarded, 2 applicants
Food

- Health and wellbeing for all
- Environmental sustainability
- Local economic prosperity
- Resilient communities
- Fairness in the food chain
THE PLYMOUTH FOOD CHARTER

The Plymouth Food Charter aims to improve health and wellbeing for all and to create a more connected, resilient and sustainable City.

Good food is vital to the quality of peoples' lives in Plymouth.

By promoting healthy & sustainable food as part of a thriving food economy, the Plymouth Food Charter aims to improve health & wellbeing for all and to create a more connected, resilient & sustainable City. Signatories to the Charter – which include public, private and community partners – are committed to promoting the pleasure and importance of good food to help create a vibrant and diverse food culture.
### Thriving Local Economy

**Outcome**: Encouraging a greater number and diversity of food enterprises and jobs, making the region’s healthy food and agriculture the region’s hallmark.

**Action**:
- New food enterprises and markets
- New food service centres
- Mobile market vans
- New food enterprise training
- Support for local food producers and processors

**Who**: Food Plymouth Partnership

**When**: September 2013 - March 2015

### Health and Well-being for All

**Outcome**: Promoting healthier lifestyles through awareness of nutritious and sustainable food, and improving availability of accessible, affordable produce.

**Action**:
- Healthier lifestyles
- Access to nutritious and sustainable food

**Who**: Food Plymouth Partnership

**When**: November 2013 - March 2015

### Reduced Eco Footprint

**Outcome**: Plymouth to be a ‘Sustainable Food City’ supported by a city-wide cross-sector partnership to embed healthy and sustainable food into the city's culture. Help to develop a national localising programme and network to inspire and inform best practice.

**Action**: Plymouth Food Partnership

**Who**: Food Plymouth Partnership

**When**: April 2015 - September 2015

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**OUTCOME**

**ACTION**

**WHO**

**WHEN**

### Life Long Learning and Skills

**Outcome**: Ensuring everyone has opportunities to learn and develop around food - schools, colleges, universities, local communities, and in the home.

**Action**: Life-long learning opportunities for all children and young people.

**Who**: Food Plymouth Partnership

**When**: March 2014 - September 2014

### Building Resilient and Close Knit Communities

**Outcome**: Building community resilience through a local food-led, soil-based economy, supporting food enterprises, promoting local food, and encouraging healthy eating and living.

**Action**: Building community resilience through a local food-led, soil-based economy, supporting food enterprises, promoting local food, and encouraging healthy eating and living.

**Who**: Food Plymouth Partnership

**When**: March 2014 - September 2014

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**Food Plymouth Action Plan 2011-14**

Food Plymouth | twitter.com/foodplymouth
Food for Bristol - feeding bodies, feeding minds

Food Charter

Access to safe, affordable and nutritious food is vital for people to be able to live fulfilled, active and healthy lives, in line with article 25 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and WHO Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion.

As a local authority, the council has a responsibility for the health, wellbeing and sustainability of the city, on behalf of and in the interests of the people of Bristol. The council is tasked with “ensuring the availability of, and access to, affordable, safe and nutritious food sufficient for an active lifestyle, for all, at all times” (Cabinet Office 2008).

In January 2010, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published a food strategy, Food 2030. This lays out the major food challenges facing

The 10 ambitions

1. Work with all food interests within the city council and within the common definition of “sustainable food”.

2. Advocate for income, employment, housing, land-use planning and transportation policies that support secure and sustainable access to the food people need.

3. Adopt food procurement practices that serve as a model of health, social and environmental responsibility whilst maintaining Bristol’s accreditation as a Fairtrade City.
Good Food on the Public Plate

Public Sector Food Procurement

Leveraging the power of public procurement can have a huge influence over the food system. £2.2 billion of the public purse is spent on food in the UK every year. If this spend can be realigned to prioritise healthy and sustainable food it will make a substantial positive impact on the food system.

CASE STUDY: London Borough of Enfield

Auditing Enfield’s food purchases led to Enfield using only free-range eggs because it was cost-neutral. Some fish was already from sustainable sources and work continues to ensure only demonstrably sustainable fish is served. Enfield has worked with its fruit and vegetable supplier to identify suitable seasonal and local produce and have applied for Soil Association Food for Life Bronze status.

b. Offering guidance on sustainable food procurement policies

GFPP has advised on this to many organisations. Policies then dictate the standards for food bought and tenders issued.

CASE STUDY: Transport for London (TFL)

TFL worked with GFPP to improve food sustainability. As a result Fairtrade products are offered wherever possible, organic milk is served, no Marine Conservation Society “fish to avoid” is served, all eggs are free range, and 50% of products are locally sourced or British.

c. Encouraging collaboration
Lessons learnt?

- Transforming food culture is a great vehicle for change – and not just food
- Cash in on take home value – it’s not just about lunchtime
- Need to be ‘multi-lingual’ – and understand what drives the sectors we’re working in
- Senior level/institutional buy in is crucial
- Ladders of improvement do work
- Tell people they are doing well
- Changing the food that’s served alone doesn’t necessarily give you the results you want
- It all takes time ...