Communities Scrutiny Panel

DATE 19/11/2026

REPORT OF Diane Lee, Director of Public Health

SUBJECT Food Health Action Plan

STATUS Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Food Health Action Plan strongly supports North East Lincolnshire Council's Stronger Economy and Stronger Communities priorities. As well as being a source of energy and nutrients, food is central to many celebrations, holidays, and social occasions, and can help individuals and communities to connect with one another. The Food Health Action Plan therefore aims to improve access to fresh, nutritious food while supporting local industry and employment and strengthening communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, a Notice of Motion on Food Poverty was passed by Full Council, which included commitment to the delivery of a Food Poverty Action Plan by North East Lincolnshire Council. Following completion of a Food Poverty Assessment in 2025, a Food Health Action Plan has been developed in partnership with local residents to both address food poverty in the borough and to tackle rising levels of diet-related ill health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Panel:

1. Notes the priorities identified within the Food Health Action Plan.
2. Considers the actions identified within the Food Health Action Plan and provides feedback, advice and guidance to support and strengthen their effective implementation and delivery.
3. Provides oversight and constructive challenge of the Food Health Action Plan as the work progresses.

REASONS FOR DECISION

Full Council agreed in July 2024 that a Food Poverty Action Plan should be produced as part of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and that this should be considered, in due course, by the Communities and Health Scrutiny Panels.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

In 2025, a Food Poverty Assessment was completed for North East Lincolnshire, to understand the scale of food poverty in the borough, who was most at risk, and how

support for those experiencing or at risk of food poverty could be improved.

This assessment identified that in North East Lincolnshire, a variety of groups may be more at risk of or struggling to access support for food poverty, including older adults, families with children, households from ethnic minority groups, and individuals experiencing ill-health or living with a disability. The Food Poverty Assessment also highlighted that to address food poverty, wraparound support is essential, in order to support residents with wider factors which impact their lives. The assessment provided a clear rationale for moving towards a model of food provision which provides a safety net for those experiencing food poverty, whilst supporting people to move back towards mainstream food provision, underlined by the key principles of dignity, choice and control.

Based on the findings of the Food Poverty Assessment, draft priorities for a Food Health Action Plan were identified. These were then consulted on with local residents and a variety of professionals. Based on this feedback, the Food Health Action Plan was refined to ensure that the actions and priorities in the plan reflected the experiences and priorities of local people and partners.

Food poverty is not only a major inequalities issue, but an issue with stark implications for population health. Given that North East Lincolnshire has high levels of diet-related ill health such as cardiovascular disease and obesity, the Food Health Action Plan looks to both address food poverty and also to improve health and reduce stark inequalities by ensuring that everyone in North East Lincolnshire can access good quality, healthy food which meets their dietary needs.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

There are stark health inequalities in North East Lincolnshire. On average, those living in the most deprived areas of North East Lincolnshire can expect to live shorter lives than those living in the least deprived areas. They are also more likely to spend a greater proportion of their lives living in poor physical health, as well as to suffer from poor mental health and wellbeing. A significant contributor to these health inequalities is diet-related ill health such as cardiovascular disease, and obesity. The Food Health Action Plan provides an opportunity to address these inequalities by working to ensure that all residents of North East Lincolnshire can access sufficient, good quality, healthy and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and protects their health.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The development of an action plan to address food poverty in the borough is required following the Notice of Motion on Food Poverty passed by Full Council in March 2023.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Working alongside local residents to deliver the Food Health Action Plan is likely to

support the council's relationships with individuals, communities and partner organisations.

A public survey ran from July to August 2026 to support the development of the Food Health Action Plan. This identified strong local interest in improving access to healthy and nutritious food in the borough, with over 50 local residents responding to the survey to indicate that they would be interested in shaping the Food Health Action Plan in more depth.

In early November 2026, two follow up focus groups were held with local residents who had responded to this survey. These workshops identified local people's priorities around food in more depth, thus supporting the prioritisation of the actions in the plan and helping ensure that the delivery of the plan will be guided by local people's needs and experiences. These focus groups identified particularly strong support for introducing a mobile greengrocer in North East Lincolnshire, expanding access to community kitchens, working with local convenience stores and takeaways to improve access to healthier foods, community growing initiatives and food education for all (especially children and young people).

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Food Health Action Plan is a long-term plan, running alongside North East Lincolnshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It is intended where possible to fund the actions in the plan through the ring-fenced public health grant and through the Good Food Neighbourhoods funding awarded to North East Lincolnshire Council by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in October 2026. However, alternative funding sources, such as grant funding, may also be explored where relevant to the individual actions in the plan.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The Food Health Action Plan has a strong focus on improving diet and food education for children and young people and therefore will help to meet the aspiration of giving every child in the borough the best start in life.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the Food Health Action Plan is geared towards tackling diet-related ill health in the borough, many of the actions within the plan also contribute to improved environmental outcomes through reducing food miles and food waste.

8. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

The Food Health Action Plan is designed to reduce inequalities in diet-related ill health by responding to the inequalities that mean some of our residents face greater barriers to eating well, as well as by improving the food environment for the whole population. The plan will run alongside North East Lincolnshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, seeking to operationalise the priorities in this strategy in relation to good

food. The Plan is also strongly aligned to Marmot principles, in particular the principles of giving every child the best start in life, strengthening the role of ill health prevention and supporting health equity. It also supports the move towards a model of food provision in North East Lincolnshire which gives people choice and control over what they eat.

9. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The Food Health Action Plan is relevant to all wards in North East Lincolnshire.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Notice of Motion on Food Poverty (March 2023):
https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2022/06/8.-DRAFT-Minutes-16th-March-2023.pdf
North East Lincolnshire Food Poverty Assessment (September 2025):
https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2025/05/9.-Food-Poverty-Assessment-Report.pdf

11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Vanessa Firth, Public Health Principal (Health Inequalities & Healthy Life Expectancy): vanessa.firth@nelincs.gov.uk

Diane Lee
Director of Public Health

North East Lincolnshire Food Health Action Plan

2026-2035

Foreword

There is much to celebrate about food in North East Lincolnshire. Grimsby, once the world's largest fishing port, is synonymous with the food industry and known as 'Europe's Food Town', with approximately 70% of seafood processed in the UK each year coming from Grimsby.[1] Food is also a central component of Cleethorpes' visitor economy - tourism businesses and accommodation providers regularly promote the vast array of local businesses using Lincolnshire produce via the popular North East Lincolnshire Food Map.[2] However, there are also many challenges facing our local food system, including food poverty, population ageing, high levels of food related ill health, and declining healthy life expectancy.

This Food Health Action Plan was initially born out of a food poverty assessment, which identified that some North East Lincolnshire residents cannot access a sufficient quantity or quality of food, with certain communities being more at risk of this. However, as this plan demonstrates, North East Lincolnshire has high levels of diet-related ill health. Therefore, instead of a plan focused solely on eliminating food poverty in the Borough, this Food Health Action Plan goes further, looking to ensure that all our residents can access sufficient, good quality, healthy and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and protects their health. This means recognising and responding to the inequalities that mean some of our residents face greater barriers to eating well, as well as improving the food environment for the whole population.

North East Lincolnshire's Food Health Action Plan, although focused on the local footprint of North East Lincolnshire, has a national and international context. Food systems within the UK are complex and do not consistently supply every community with fresh, healthy, affordable food. Instead, highly processed food which often has low levels of nutrients, but high levels of salt, sugar, or fat is widely accessible, heavily marketed and often cheaper than healthier alternatives. Eating a healthy, balanced diet is also unaffordable for many of our poorest communities. The Food Foundation's 2026 report 'The Broken Plate' found that in 2025 an average household in the lowest income quintile would need to spend 49% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the government recommended healthy diet (the Eatwell Guide), compared to just 11% for the average household in the highest income quintile (Food Foundation, 2026).

This Food Health Action Plan aims to capitalise on the strengths and assets of North East Lincolnshire to improve health and reduce inequalities by making healthy, nutritious food something which all our residents can access.

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[1] *Grimsby is one of the largest seafood processing clusters in northern Europe, employing nearly 6000 people across over 50 factories. The broader supply chain supports over 10,000 jobs in logistics, cold storage, packaging, and more as part of a seafood sector in Grimsby valued at over £2 billion:* https://www.seafish.org/seafood-for-life/seafood-for-trade/grimsby-has-its-roots-in-tradition-but-is-ready-for-tomorrow/

[2] https://discovernortheastlincolnshire.co.uk/things-to-do/northeastlincolnshirefoodmap/

Food in North East Lincolnshire – key statistics

Food is integral to North East Lincolnshire's economy. There are around 1,800 registered food businesses in North East Lincolnshire. The latest ONS figures also show that 4,000 people in North East Lincolnshire were employed in food and beverage service activities in 2024, and 5,000 people were employed in the manufacture of food products (ONS, 2024). Additional local employment is also found in crop and animal production, fishing and aquaculture and the manufacture of beverages, with food related employment therefore accounting for 13.4% of total employment in North East Lincolnshire (ONS, 2024). However, local intelligence highlights that not everyone in the Borough is able to access nutritious food, which has contributed to high levels of food related ill-health in the Borough:

- **Life expectancy** in North East Lincolnshire remains below the England average for both males and females. Male life expectancy at birth is 77.7 years locally compared with 79.5 years for England, while female life expectancy is 82.1 years compared with 83.2 years nationally (State of the Borough, 2024).
- Inequalities within the borough are stark: males in the East Marsh ward (North East Lincolnshire's most deprived ward) have a life expectancy of around 70.7 years compared with 81.9 years in Haverstoe (the borough's least deprived ward), while females in East Marsh have a life expectancy of 75.9 years compared with 86.3 years in Haverstoe (State of the Borough, 2024). Cardiovascular diseases (heart disease and stroke) are the biggest contributors to the life expectancy gap between those living in the most and least deprived areas of North East Lincolnshire.
- Healthy life expectancy in North East Lincolnshire has declined markedly over the past decade. As of 2022-2024, a male born in North East Lincolnshire could expect to live **54.7** years in good health and a female born in the Borough could expect to live **54.9** years in good health. This means that many North East Lincolnshire residents experience long periods managing ill-health.
- 8.8% of North East Lincolnshire residents aged 17 or over were recorded on GP practice registers as having **diabetes** in 2024/25.
- North East Lincolnshire has the highest percentage of reception aged children (4-5 year olds) who are living with overweight and obesity in England. In the 2024/2025 academic year, 32.4% of reception aged children in North East Lincolnshire were living with **overweight or obesity**, compared to 23.5% of reception aged children in England.
- 39.1% of year 6 children (10-11 year olds) in North East Lincolnshire were living with overweight or obesity in the 2024/2025 academic year, higher than the percentages in Yorkshire and Humber (37.9%) and England (36.2%).

- 70.2% of adults (18+) in North East Lincolnshire were living with overweight or obesity in 2024/25, compared to 68.2% of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber and 64.6% of adults in England in the same period.
- 30.7% of 5 year old children in North East Lincolnshire had visually obvious **dental decay** in 2023/24, which was significantly worse than the national picture (22.4% of 5 year olds in England).
- Only 10% of secondary school aged pupils (11-16 year olds) in North East Lincolnshire reported eating the recommended 5 portions of **fruit and vegetables** a day in the 2024 Adolescent Lifestyle Survey. 47% of young people also reported that they wanted to eat more healthily in the same survey.

We also know that:

- 34.5% of pupils in North East Lincolnshire were known to be eligible for **free school meals** in the 2025/26 academic year – this equates to 7,851 pupils and compares to an England average of 24.9% (LGI Inform).[3] However, not all eligible families take up this offer. This also means schools miss out on pupil premium funding.
- North East Lincolnshire has an **ageing population**, with the 2021 Census showing that 20.9% of the local population were aged 65+ years, an increase from 17.7% of the population in 2011, and a higher proportion than the 18.6% of the national population that is aged 65+ years.
- There are **food deserts** in North East Lincolnshire (neighbourhoods that have limited access to affordable and nutritious foods). For example, an audit of access to fruit and vegetables in the West Marsh undertaken as part of North East Lincolnshire's Let's Go Grimsby programme[4] identified that most convenience stores in the West Marsh sell little or no fresh fruit or vegetables, and that where fruit and vegetables were sold, the prices were often much higher than in supermarkets. To buy fruit and vegetables, West Marsh residents therefore rely predominantly on the larger supermarkets, which are not within a reasonable walking distance for many West Marsh residents.

[3] This is the total number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) for all types of schools. This includes state-funded nurseries, state-funded primary schools, state-funded secondary schools, Pupil referral units (PRUs), state-funded special schools and non-maintained special schools. General hospital schools are excluded. This includes full time and part-time pupils who are sole or dual main registrations, boarding pupils, and pupils registered with other providers and further education colleges. From September 2026, access to free school meals has been widened in England and all children in households receiving Universal Credit will now be eligible for free school meals.

[4] Let's Go Grimsby is a two year pilot programme in the East and West Marsh of Grimsby which aims to reduce inequalities in childhood obesity. The programme is an afterschool club for children and their families, operating out of primary schools in the East and West Marsh, and focusing on healthy eating and budget cooking. A whole family, holistic approach is taken (all family members are welcome to participate, not just the primary school aged child).

How this Food Health Action Plan has been developed

In 2024 a motion was adopted in North East Lincolnshire Council which called for the introduction of a Food Poverty Action Plan for the borough. In 2025, a Food Poverty Assessment was completed for North East Lincolnshire, to understand the scale of food poverty in the borough, who was most at risk, and how support for those experiencing or at risk of food poverty could be improved. This assessment identified that in North East Lincolnshire, a variety of groups may be more at risk of or struggling to access support for food poverty, including older adults, families with children, households from ethnic minority groups, and individuals experiencing ill-health or living with a disability. The Food Poverty Assessment also highlighted that to address food poverty, wraparound support is essential, in order to support residents with wider factors which impact their lives. The assessment provided a clear rationale for moving towards a model of food provision which provides a safety net for those experiencing food poverty, whilst supporting people to move back towards mainstream food provision, underlined by the key principles of dignity, choice and control.

Based on the findings of the Food Poverty Assessment, initial draft priorities for the Food Health Action Plan were identified. These priorities were consulted on with a variety of professionals (see below). A Food Health Action Plan Survey then ran from late July to August 2026, to seek feedback from local residents on their experiences of finding and accessing the food they need to stay healthy, and to gather feedback from local people on the draft priorities for the Food Health Action Plan. The survey was predominantly online; however, paper copies of the survey were given out via two community food providers (St Peter's Food Bank and We Are One Community Pantry). The survey was promoted by local food banks, the voluntary and community sector, as well as via standard Council routes. Based on this feedback, the Food Health Action Plan was refined to ensure that the actions and priorities in the plan reflected what local people and partners had told us.

What the public told us

A full analysis of the findings from the consultation on the Food Health Action Plan will be published as an appendix to the Food Health Action Plan. Key findings from the public consultation included that:

- 74.5% of respondents thought there were too many hot food takeaways in North East Lincolnshire.
- The cost of healthy food was the most commonly reported barrier making it harder for people to eat a healthy, balanced diet both inside and outside of the home. Free text responses in the survey also mirrored this, highlighting that the local retail and hospitality offer in North East Lincolnshire makes it hard for people to access affordable, healthy food. People spoke about how unhealthy food is widely available within the area:

'Every other shop is bad food'

'In the town centre the only quick options for workers seem to be Greggs or rubbish meal deals. M&S do some great salads that are filling but the prices are unrealistic for anything other than an occasional treat. A sausage roll from Greggs is approx £1.30 or a salad (which I would prefer to eat) from M&S or Subway is touching £5 sometimes more!'

'In NEL we are surrounded by takeaways, fast food restaurants and corner shops with are filled with vapes and UPFs. It's almost impossible to get "healthy" takeaway food which is available in other towns and cities. You are also almost exclusively restricted to supermarket for healthy food, other than the odd fruit and veg stall.'

- There was strong support for each of the priorities in the Food Health Action Plan, ranging from 72.6% of respondents thinking that supporting policies that help people to more easily find and afford healthy food in their local area (such as by reducing the number of hot food takeaways in areas where there are many already) was extremely important or very important to 87.9% of respondents thinking that improving education and communication about food and nutrition was extremely important or very important.

What professionals told us

As part of the consultation on the Food Health Action Plan, a variety of local partners were consulted on the draft priorities for the plan. This included consultation with the Health and Care Partnership, health visitors, North East Lincolnshire's Food Forum[5], and a workshop with senior managers from across North East Lincolnshire Council, the latter of which was also used to generate ideas for how to improve North East Lincolnshire's local food system.

Professional feedback emphasised the importance of meaningful coproduction as part of the development and delivery of a Food Health Action Plan, as well as highlighting that food is an engagement tool which can start conversations and build relationships. Professionals also highlighted how food touches all aspects of our lives and links into many other local strategies and programmes of work. For example, professionals highlighted the importance of compassionate messaging around food given the links with mental health and eating disorders, and the strong links between food, employability and local business needs. A variety of different professionals advocated for the importance of wraparound support to address structural barriers

[5] North East Lincolnshire's Food Forum brings together community food providers (food banks, food pantries, community kitchens, social supermarkets), and wider support agencies such as Centre4, Citizens Advice North East Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, HEY Credit Union and Navigo, who meet bi-monthly to discuss challenges and opportunities in relation to food access and provision.

leading to food insecurity, as well as the need for accessible support, for example, taking healthy food to people via outreach methods and ensuring emergency food provision is easy to cook.

However, professional feedback also highlighted gaps in support which need exploration. For example, health visitors face several barriers when supporting families with weaning guidance due to the timing of routine Healthy Child Programme contacts. The last universal face-to-face Healthy Child Programme contact before a child reaches 10 months occurs at 6–8 weeks, creating a significant gap before the period when weaning advice becomes most relevant. Gaps in support for families with infants experiencing food insecurity were also highlighted, and the need to ensure a comprehensive pathway of support both to meet the immediate needs of families and to address structural barriers leading to food insecurity.

Stakeholders consulted

The following stakeholders were consulted in the development of this plan:

- North East Lincolnshire Health and Care Partnership
- North East Lincolnshire's Food Forum (community food providers and wider support agencies)
- We Are Fish
- Centre4
- YMCA Humber
- Faraway
- Learning4Life
- One Voice Community
- Health visitors
- Senior managers across Council departments
- North East Lincolnshire Councillors
- 349 local residents, who shared their views as part of a widely promoted Food Health Action Plan Survey

Vision

As well as being a source of energy and nutrients, food is central to many celebrations, holidays, and social occasions, and can

help us to connect with one another. In North East Lincolnshire, we want healthy and nutritious food to be something we can enjoy individually and as communities. The following vision for food in North East Lincolnshire reflects this, and was developed following consultation with both North East Lincolnshire's Food Forum and senior managers across North East Lincolnshire Council:

Everyone in North East Lincolnshire can access healthy, sustainable food that meets their needs with dignity and choice, while food brings people together, strengthens communities, and supports a thriving local economy.

Links to other local strategies

North East Lincolnshire's ten year Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2025-2035) provides a clear mandate for coordinated action to improve the food we all eat as a vehicle to improve population health and wellbeing: the food we eat is one of the strategy's eight essential building blocks for health. This Food Health Action Plan will run alongside the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, seeking to operationalise the priorities in this strategy in relation to good food.

North East Lincolnshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy also places additional focus on children and young people, the environment and inclusion health, in order to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage, create sustainable healthy places, and ensure that marginalised and vulnerable groups are not left behind. The Food Health Action Plan echoes these ambitions. The plan outlines actions to provide support around food through pregnancy and the early years, right through to older age, as well as considering the needs of those groups who are more likely to experience food poverty, such as ethnic minority communities and people living with ill-health and disabilities. Although the plan is geared around improving health, many of the actions in the plan also have environmental benefits, for example supporting the procurement of food which is climate friendly and connecting local people with locally produced food.

North East Lincolnshire is also working towards becoming a Marmot Place, working to improve health and reduce inequalities by tackling the wider factors that shape our lives, such as housing, education, employment, transport, the environment and strong communities. The Food Health Action Plan strongly supports this, especially the Marmot principles to:

- **Give every child the best start in life –** much of the actions identified in this plan are geared towards pregnancy and the early years, recognising that our taste preferences are formed early in life.

- **Enable everyone to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives –** this plan supports the move towards a model of food provision in North East Lincolnshire which gives people choice and control over what they eat.
- **Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities** – initiatives such as community food growing and community kitchens bring people together to connect over food, as well as reducing food miles and food waste.
- **Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together** – as referenced, many of the actions within this plan can contribute both to improved health and environmental outcomes.

North East Lincolnshire's Draft Healthy Weight Strategy (in development) is taking a compassionate approach to weight, recognising that coordinated action is needed from multiple sectors to protect residents, where possible, from the unfair environmental, social, economic and commercial factors that constrict their lives. The strategy aims to create an environment which makes it easy for people to eat well and be active, thus promoting health and supporting healthy weight outcomes. North East Lincolnshire's Food Health Action Plan will directly feed into the work of North East Lincolnshire's Healthy Weight Strategy Group.

Links to national strategy

England's national food strategy is organised around the good food cycle, ten interconnected outcomes describing what a food system working for people, the environment and the economy would look like. This spans healthy and affordable food, thriving food businesses, sustainable farming and strong food cultures. England's national Food Strategy identified the junk food cycle, the invisibility of nature and the resilience gap as the market failures which need addressing to transform the national food system**.**

The strategy looks to deliver a thriving UK food sector that feeds a healthier and more productive UK population and enables economic growth.

Principles underpinning the Food Health Action Plan

- **Fairness, inclusion, and sustainability –** This Food Health Action Plan mirrors the central principles of North East Lincolnshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Making nutritious, locally grown food more accessible and affordable for everyone is not just a health issue but is a matter of fairness.

- **Reducing inequalities** – There are stark health inequalities in North East Lincolnshire. On average, those living in the most deprived areas of North East Lincolnshire can expect to live shorter lives than those living in the least deprived areas. They are also more likely to spend a greater proportion of their lives living in poor physical health, as well as to suffer from poor mental health and wellbeing. A significant contributor to these health inequalities is diet-related ill health such as cardiovascular disease, and obesity. We want a food system in North East Lincolnshire that works for everyone and therefore need to take action to reduce inequalities in access to nutritious food, not only for those in our most deprived areas, but also for those groups which the Food Poverty Assessment highlighted are likely to be at greater risk of food poverty, such as older adults, people living with disabilities, households with children and ethnic minority households.
- **Dignity, choice and control -** North East Lincolnshire's Food Poverty Assessment highlighted that giving people choices about food affords people safety and dignity and also empowers people to make positive choices about what they do want to eat, helping people feel at ease and in control. This plan therefore promotes dignity-preserving models of food provision, connecting people to affordable, local food and enabling choice and agency.
- **Collaboration –** Food access is impacted by a complex interplay of factors, including environmental, social, cultural and economic factors. Ensuring that all neighbourhoods and communities in North East Lincolnshire can access and afford fresh and nutritious food therefore requires collaborative, cross-sector working from multiple sectors.
- **Addressing wider determinants** – The food poverty assessment highlighted that food poverty is rarely an isolated issue, but rather issues in relation to low income, debt, benefits, housing and addiction are key challenges in our local area, which are impacting on residents' financial resilience and in turn their food security. One of the priorities of this plan therefore relates to wraparound support and ensuring that residents can access holistic support with any issues which are impacting their finances and ability to access food. This will help to both address and prevent food poverty in the Borough.
- **No Wrong Door –** This plan echoes and embeds a key principle of the Crisis Resilience Fund - that individuals should be able to access support through any entry point without being turned away or passed from pillar to post. Where people are experiencing food poverty, it is important that they are guided to the most appropriate support quickly, and without undue barriers or duplication. This includes access to appropriate wraparound support, depending on an individual's needs.
- **Coproduction –** Working with and continuously listening to local residents to deliver the Food Health Action Plan will lead to better results by ensuring work is guided by the experiences and needs of those most affected by issues in our local food system, ensuring that action is effective and meaningful. Community engagement will be treated as essential infrastructure for the delivery of the plan, requiring dedicated time, trusted relationships and sustainable support for voluntary, community and social enterprise partners.

Priorities

The seven priorities of North East Lincolnshire's Food Health Action Plan, as agreed with local partners and local residents, are:

1. **Expand Access to Healthy and Fresh Food:** Support initiatives that bring fresh produce to under-served areas through mobile markets, community allotments, farmers' markets, and rural food networks. Partner with food banks, community organisations and support agencies to increase access to healthy, affordable food, while promoting financial resilience and reducing long-term reliance on emergency provision.
2. **Local Partnerships to Combat Food Deserts:** Work with retailers and community organisations to encourage the availability of affordable, fresh foods in local convenience stores. Collaborate with seafood manufacturers and local farmers to supply healthy, locally sourced food to schools, food hubs, and community organisations
3. **Education & Communications:** Build community food knowledge and educate residents how to make healthy, budget-friendly meals through schools, community centres, and food banks. Raise the profile of healthy food and combatting food poverty as a critical public health issue for North East Lincolnshire
4. **Policy Advocacy for Food Environment Improvements:** Advocate for policies that limit the proliferation of fast-food outlets in low-income areas and support incentives for retailers offering healthy foods.
5. **Health & disability:** Ensure that people who have health issues or disabilities that necessitate special diets that can be more expensive are able to access food that maintains their health and wellbeing
6. **Wraparound support:** Ensure that support for food insecurity is provided in collaboration with support linked to other aspects of financial inclusion such as debt advice and fuel poverty.
7. **Intelligence:** increase intelligence around food and nutrition and its links to the healthy weight agenda in North East Lincolnshire

Actions

Below is a high-level action plan outlining evidence-based actions to improve our local food system and thus improve access to affordable, nutritious food. These actions have been identified through public and professional consultation, alongside collaboration with Sustain, whose Good Food Local tool identifies actions to take across the food system based on research, expert input, and good practice in other local authority areas.

Not everything will happen at once and some actions will take time. Prioritisation of actions will take place in collaboration with

local residents and partners. This in turn will shape timescales. Nevertheless, indicative timescales have been given to illustrate those actions which are felt to be feasible in the short (1-2 years), medium (3-5 years) and long (6-10 years) term.

Priority	Actions	Indicative timescale	Supported by
Expand Access to Healthy and Fresh Food	Support and resource development of community-led and culturally relevant food projects which go beyond charitable food provision towards self-organising, financial sustainability and empowering communities.	Medium term	
	Develop a coordinated pathway of support for families with infants under 12 months experiencing food insecurity. This should include: • Strengthening partnerships between health, early years, community, and voluntary sector services to identify and support families at risk of food insecurity. • Ensuring that actions address both immediate food access and the wider wraparound support needs of families. • Maximising the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers by pregnant women and families with children under 4. • Working with accommodation providers to ensure that infant feeding standards are maintained for those in emergency accommodation. • Ensuring families have access to clear, consistent information on infant feeding.	Short term (by March 2027)	UNICEF guidance on supporting families with infants under 12 months experiencing food insecurity https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/local-authorities

	• Embedding UNICEF's focus on early nutrition, responsive feeding, and reducing inequalities.		
	Explore the feasibility of a fruit and vegetables on prescription service for residents with or at risk of food-related ill health, and for families with young children on low incomes.	Short term (by March 2028)	Learning from the Market Voucher Scheme piloted in North East Lincolnshire between July 2022 and March 2023. Existing schemes elsewhere in the UK offering fruit and vegetables on an outreach model (for example, Queen of Greens in Liverpool). Development of Neighbourhood Health Hubs. In Cornwall, vegetables prescribed for food-related illness (e.g. diabetes) have produced results that match medicine.
	Where possible provide micro-grants to community groups, utilising the Sustainable Food Places Good Food Movement framework, to support more people to get involved in community food action.	Short term (by March 2028)	
Local Partnerships to Combat Food Deserts	Work collaboratively with local groups to identify and map suitable land for growing and establish a clear process for residents to request and access publicly owned land for cultivation. This could include reviewing the council's asset list with a view to allocating land for community food growing.	Short term (by March 2028)	Right to Grow initiative in Hull
	Explore the possibility of investing funding or resources into projects to improve the availability, accessibility and affordability of healthier food in convenience stores, or other local retail settings and/or the possibility of investing in a 'Community Shop on the Go' (mobile market) programme in North East Lincolnshire.	Medium term	Ideas for how this could be done were suggested in the consultation on the Food Health Action Plan, for example, providing a weekly mixed veg box for all corner shops with all items sold at £1, with leftovers given out as donations.

	Maximise the potential of community plans to ensure that residents can access local retail selling healthy food within their neighbourhood.	Medium term	East Marsh Community Plan outlines a strong desire to improve access to healthy food in the East Marsh area.[6]
	Support schools in the rollout of free breakfast clubs, with a particular focus on achieving high and equitable uptake among all pupils from reception to year 6.	Medium term (there is a phased rollout of free breakfast clubs in England).	
	Work with the local seafood sector to connect locally sourced, healthy seafood to our communities, particularly through schools, community food hubs, and retail partnerships.	Medium term	
	Work to expand access to community kitchens in every neighbourhood of North East Lincolnshire, so that all residents can access affordable, healthy meals.	Long term	
Education & Communications	Celebrate good food initiatives across the Council's communications channels and through events and projects	Ongoing throughout length of plan	
	Work with early years providers to maximise the impact of the Early Years Nutrition Guidance and to facilitate collaboration and shared learning between providers around food education and nutrition in the early years. This could include:	Medium term	

[6] The East Marsh Community Plan brought together the voices and priorities of local people and professionals and identified that East Marsh residents want to eat healthy food, but it can be hard to access. Key focuses of the East Marsh Community Plan include starting a community garden where people can grow food and flowers together, helping people learn how to cook and stay healthy, and creating a community hub where people can cook and share food, fix things in a Repair Café, access health and benefit support and learn new skills and find jobs.

	• Having an active programme to support and monitor compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance • Exploring options for providing a package of financial support and training for early years settings to grow, cook and provide healthy food and food education for children in their setting (following the Westminster model) • Providing support for increasing access to Free Early Years Meals in state-maintained settings for children who attend before and after lunch • Seeking to address the prevalence of commercial baby food through support and advice for families and early years settings • Exploring options to fund accreditation programmes in early years settings which improve the food offer e.g. HENRY, Food For Life Early Years, Healthy Early Years London or others		
	Develop a package of weaning support for families through working with Family Hubs, health visitors and developing a digital platform.	Short term (by March 2028)	
	Support initiatives which provide access to free or discounted healthy food or education on obtaining and preparing healthy and appropriate food for families with early years children.	Short term	
	Maximise the potential of the Holiday Activities and Food programme to provide nutritious food and opportunities to learn about food during school holidays	Short term (by March 2028)	

	Expand the availability of cooking courses for residents of all ages, including consideration of the needs of pregnant women.	Medium term	Public consultation feedback highlighted that many residents felt cooking courses and improved education was important for helping people in North East Lincolnshire to eat more healthily.
	Explore the feasibility of introducing auto-enrolment for Free School Meals to ensure that all pupils entitled to benefits related Free School Meals (FSM) are registered. In the meantime, enhance communications to schools and families about registering for free school meals and pupil premium, including all families receiving Universal Credit.	Short term (by March 2028)	Learning from more than 50 other areas (e.g. York and North Yorkshire) that have implemented this: Free School Meals Auto-enrolment Toolkit and Resources - FixOurFood
	Engage with young people and schools (primary and secondary) to understand young people's experiences of the school food environment, including the availability and affordability of healthy options at break and lunch times, and the school dining environment.	Short term (by March 2028)	
	Strengthen the Public Health offer to schools (primary and secondary) by providing a holistic package of support around food, nutrition, physical activity, emotional health and wellbeing, and other public health topics. This could include: • Working to improve the quality and monitoring of school food (e.g. compliance with School Food Standards) • School governor training to improve understanding of statutory responsibilities relating to compliance with school food standards. • Exploring the feasibility of providing funding for fruit and vegetables in schools beyond	Medium term	

	government-funded School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme for four - to six-year-olds. • Supporting schools to develop school food policies that go beyond the school food standards e.g. water only policies, plant-based days. • Ensuring that the development, delivery and evaluation of educational content in schools is free from industry influence.		
Policy Advocacy for Food Environment Improvements	Maximise opportunities to limit the density of hot food takeaways and to promote positive action through the Local Plan, e.g. restriction of hot food takeaways in areas with high levels of childhood obesity, development and/or enhancement of open spaces, including allotments, as part of new development, etc.	Long term	Existing planning restriction on hot food takeaways within 400m of a secondary school. 74.5% of respondents to the Food Health Action Plan Survey thought there were too many hot food takeaways in North East Lincolnshire.
	Explore possible incentives to encourage businesses to open in North East Lincolnshire with healthy food offerings.	Medium to long term	Public consultation feedback in relation to the limited healthy options available outside of supermarkets in North East Lincolnshire.
	Ensure NELC procurement policies ensure council food procured meets diverse dietary requirements and preferences of people in the local authority area and that food provided across council services is healthy and climate friendly. e.g. food in schools, meals on wheels, nurseries and early years, holiday-period food provision.	Short term (by March 2028)	The Social Value Act gives public bodies the legal basis to prioritise local and social value.

	Work with restaurants and other small-scale catering outlets to improve their food offering as part of national accreditation schemes such as Food for Life Served Here and the Sustainable Restaurants Association and/or through a locally developed scheme.	Medium term	Public consultation feedback included suggestions for healthier takeaway options. Opportunities in light of Council ownership of Freshney Place Shopping Centre.
	Assign resource to develop a healthier food advertising policy for the council following Sustain's good practice guidance	Short term (by March 2028)	Public consultation feedback highlighted support for healthier food advertising.
	Continue to provide officer support for the Northern Lincolnshire Food Partnership	Ongoing throughout length of plan	
Health & disability	Meet with local providers and organisations offering meals and food support to older and disabled people to identify any unmet need and/or barriers to support as well as ways to ensure support reaches people.	Short term (by March 2027)	
	Resource nutritious meal provision inside and outside of the home for older adults and people living with disabilities who need it.	Short to medium term	
	Support emergency food aid providers and/or community food projects to include foods from a variety of cuisines and for a variety of dietary requirements which are appropriate to the beneficiaries they provide for.	Short term (by March 2028)	
	Support strong referral pathways into food support services for older adults and people living with disabilities, e.g. by working with health professionals, hospital discharge teams and/or adult social care, and ensure that staff have the right skills and knowledge to support people to prepare and eat meals.	Short to medium term	

	Take steps to enhance the food and eating support provided within homecare and social care, for example through food preparation training, advice or support for individual care workers (beyond food hygiene)	Short to medium term	
	Engage and consult with older people and people living with disabilities in policy and interventions that impact them, including around food	Ongoing throughout the length of the plan	
	Map local action on food for older people and people living with disabilities to better understand current practice, gaps and needs, as well as opportunities for specific interventions to address needs.	Short term (by March 2027)	Food at Home for disabled and older people: local action mapping tool - https://doi.org/10.15131/shef.data.27159072.v3
Wraparound support	Strengthen and embed accessible cash-first crisis support schemes and financial resilience-building services, in line with the new Crisis and Resilience Fund. This can include wraparound services co-located with community food projects including advice and support to maximise income at the earliest opportunity.	Short term (by March 2028)	Crisis Resilience Fund
	Work with support services to enhance the wraparound support offer for foodbanks, including a particular focus on support for debt, addiction, low income, benefits and housing.	Short term (by March 2028)	
	Embed wider wraparound support in or alongside the Holiday Activities and Food programme for families (e.g. employment support, signposting to income maximisation advice / crisis support etc)	Short term (by March 2028)	
	Work towards achieving Living Wage Places recognition within North East Lincolnshire.	Long term	

	Have a preventative system in place to clearly share information on options to maximise income, aiming to reach people before crisis point. For example, provide accessible and clear information on websites, posters and leaflets in relevant public spaces, helping people to identify local cash first advice and support options. This should include consideration of translation and interpretation for those residents where English is not their first language.	Short term (by March 2028)	
Intelligence	Explore the use of validated survey measures for assessing food insecurity in whole population surveys conducted by the Council	Short term (by March 2028)	Our Place, Our Future Survey, Adolescent Lifestyle Survey)
	Work with community food providers to continue to capture data of who is experiencing food poverty and what their support needs are, to inform preventative strategies to reduce the duration and severity of food poverty.	Ongoing throughout the life of the plan	
	Work with North East Lincolnshire's Food Forum to enhance data sharing between community food providers, with a view to enhancing understanding of the scale of food poverty in North East Lincolnshire, and understanding reliance on food banks.	Medium term	
	Build on existing mapping work of hot food takeaways, for example to map community food provision, as well as holiday providers that include food in the local authority area, and land used for community growing.	Short term (by March 2028)	Existing mapping work previously conducted by North East Lincolnshire Council

Anticipated outcomes: what will change as a result of the Food Health Action Plan?

North East Lincolnshire's Food Health Action Plan provides an opportunity to celebrate and strengthen our unique local food heritage and culture, ensuring that everyone in North East Lincolnshire can benefit from this. As North East Lincolnshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2025-2035) sets out, strengthening the links between our seafood sector and local communities can help to improve access to fresh, nutritious food while supporting local industry and employment. In addition, the borough's rural areas offer untapped potential for community-supported agriculture, local farming initiatives, and fresh produce markets, all of which can diversify the local food system and improve access to seasonal, healthy options—especially in areas which are currently underserved.

Ultimately however, this plan aims to improve our local residents' health and reduce stark inequalities by ensuring that everyone in North East Lincolnshire can access good quality, healthy food which meets their dietary needs. This will help to increase life expectancy and reduce health inequalities by reducing the prevalence of diet-related ill health such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity.

How residents can get involved

North East Lincolnshire's Food Health Action Plan has its roots in the lived experiences of local residents and was born out of the findings of a local Food Poverty Assessment. As part of the consultation on the plan so far, we have heard the voices of 349 local residents from a diverse range of backgrounds. In delivering the Food Health Action Plan, we want to continue to listen to and champion the voices of local residents.

This will ensure local people have a meaningful role in shaping solutions, supporting delivery and evaluating the plan's impact. It is intended for the Food Health Action Plan to be a living document, which continues to grow and change. There is commitment to review the plan regularly and to keep listening to and involving local residents and partners in its operationalisation.
Initial public consultation for the development of the Food Health Action Plan has identified that there is interest from local residents in getting further involved in the development and delivery of the plan, with over 50 local residents responding to the Food Health Action Plan Survey to indicate that they would be interested in shaping the Food Health Action Plan in more depth. Moving forwards there will be opportunities for local people to take part in focus groups to help prioritise the actions and ideas identified in the Food Health Action Plan.

Governance and review

North East Lincolnshire's Healthy Weight Strategy Group and North East Lincolnshire's Food Forum will drive the delivery of the Food Health Action Plan, working with the Northern Lincolnshire Food Partnership to identify opportunities for collaboration across a Northern Lincolnshire footprint. All of these groups are coordinated and/or supported by North East Lincolnshire's Public Health Team.

Progress will be reported each year to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the statutory committee which oversees the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for North East Lincolnshire. The plan will also have oversight from both the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel and the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

It will be explored whether local residents can be involved in the governance of this plan, for example, through incorporating local people into the membership of North East Lincolnshire's Healthy Weight Strategy Group.

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