

Making Devolution Work for Food



A practical guide for food partnerships in England

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Section 1: How to use this guide

This is a working reference for food partnership coordinators engaging with English devolution. It can be used across the full spectrum: from areas with no combined authority yet but perhaps positioning for one, to combined authorities without a mayor, holding some devolved functions and funding, through to established mayoral authorities with the fullest set of powers. Its purpose is practical: to help you find the devolved powers that food policy can attach to and make the case for food, whatever point on the devolution spectrum you're on.

A note on framing: these powers are best understood not as 'food levers' but as strategic authority levers that can be applied to food. Authorities deliver outcomes such as economic growth, better health, and resilience. The case for food succeeds when it shows how food helps deliver the outcomes an authority is already committed to.

English authorities have had no duty to address food across the board, which often leaves food work siloed and reliant on local initiative. Devolution introduces a new layer of regional powers that partnerships can work with. This guide is a route into that opportunity, but it is not a comprehensive account of devolution law.

How to read this guide:

- [Section 2](#) sets out the devolution landscape, providing a legal and structural orientation for practitioners.
- [Section 3](#) maps the powers, that is, the 'levers', that are open to strategic authorities for food.
- [Section 4](#) offers ideas for gaining traction for food issues at different stages of the devolution journey.



Section 2: The devolution landscape

Food is cross-cutting: it touches health, planning, the local economy, skills and the environment, so no single tier of government 'owns' it. Devolution spreads the relevant powers across several levels, from neighbourhood, council, county, or upper-tier authority to strategic authorities and national government.

Strategic authorities are the focus of this guide, but some powers sit below or above them, and not everything that is badged as 'devolution' goes through this level of government. For example, some funding goes straight to councils and neighbourhoods. Much of the practical task is determining which level contains the levers you need, and we hope this guide helps you in that effort.

2.1 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 creates a new tier of what are termed 'strategic authorities': Foundation (a strategic authority without a mayor, holding the baseline set of powers), Mayoral (led by a directly elected mayor, with additional powers and funding), and Established Mayoral (a mayoral authority that meets the government's criteria for the deepest powers and an integrated funding settlement). Powers and funding expand by level, and there is scope to deepen these over time.

Throughout this guide, we use the term 'strategic authority' to describe the regional bodies that hold these powers. In most areas, this is what you know as a combined authority.^[1]



[1] 'Strategic authority' covers four kinds of body: combined authorities (the most common), combined county authorities (used in two-tier county areas, such as the East Midlands), the Greater London Authority, and (rarely) a single council designated as a strategic authority. This guide applies to all four types.

The Act sets out a menu of nine ‘areas of competence’: transport and local infrastructure; skills and employment support; housing and strategic planning; economic development and regeneration; the environment and climate change; health, well-being and public service reform; public safety; culture; and rural affairs and coastal communities. These describe the fields in which strategic authorities can be given powers. No authority automatically holds functions across all nine. What your authority actually holds, and the competences it prioritizes, depends on its type, devolution arrangements and political choices. Investigate which competences your strategic authority holds and which are a priority for them.

Two enabling powers exist alongside these competences:

The general power of competence specifically gives strategic authorities the ability to do anything an ordinary person or organisation could lawfully do, unless another law forbids it. Normally, a public body can only act where a law specifically gives it power, so the general power of competence is exceptional. Because no law grants a dedicated food power, it is often what allows a strategic authority to act on food.

The mayor’s power to convene means that a mayor can formally call local partners together on an issue, and those partners have a duty to respond. A separate duty on mayors requires them to collaborate with neighbouring mayors.

A health inequalities duty requires strategic authorities to have regard to improving health and reducing inequalities arising from wider determinants, such as housing, transport, employment, public safety, and environmental factors such as air quality and green space. This duty supports the demand-side levers set out in Section 3.



2.2 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 reintroduces strategic planning across England through the spatial development strategy (SDS): a high-level plan, modelled on London's, that sets the direction for housing, infrastructure, climate and land use across a wider area than covered by a local authority.

An SDS must address health issues, and local plans must conform to it. This ties strategic planning to the health inequalities duty. It offers a route for food into spatial development policy, including land for growing food, space for food markets, food infrastructure, and the wider food environment.

The duty to prepare an SDS falls on 'strategic planning authorities', a term specific to planning that in areas without a strategic authority includes the upper-tier county and unitary councils. These can be grouped into a 'strategic planning board' for their area.

2.3 The Procurement Act 2023

The Procurement Act 2023 and its National Procurement Policy Statement change the rules for public buying, moving away from the lowest price towards long-term value and wider social, economic and environmental benefit. This shift creates room to buy for health, sustainability, and the local economy.

This is an opportunity, but not a power of strategic authorities per se. Food is bought by individual contracting bodies, such as councils, hospitals, schools, and other anchor institutions. A strategic authority's route in is therefore indirect: convening buyers, aggregating demand, and helping local suppliers meet it. Section 3 shows how this is being done in practice.



Section 3: The levers – what strategic authorities can do

This section sets out the documented powers (the levers) that strategic authorities can use to bring food policy into devolution governance arrangements. Levers are grouped in three sets:

Demand-side levers shape the food environment: what food is available, promoted and accessible.



Supply-side levers act on the food economy: production, jobs, skills, logistics, and infrastructure.



Cross-cutting levers span supply and demand: procurement, convening, and food strategy.



The status of each lever is identified to show how far it has been tested in practice:

- **Demonstrated:** a strategic authority has used it for food, with evidence of its effect.
- **Emerging:** a strategic authority has used a lever for food, but the work is early or the effect is not yet demonstrable.
- **Untested:** the power exists, but no strategic authority has yet used it for food.

Devolved powers expand as an area moves from no strategic authority to a strategic authority without a mayor, to an established mayoral authority. Some levers are open only to a mayor, but many are available to any strategic authority, and some can be worked on before a strategic authority exists. Each lever documents the position relative to this spectrum.



Demand-side lever: HFSS Advertising Restrictions



Status: Demonstrated

SFP Key Issue: Healthy food for all

Available for: All, councils can act before a strategic authority exists

Pre-mayoral position: this lever does not need a mayor. Councils can restrict HFSS advertising on the assets they own, and around 14 had done so or were close to doing so by early 2026. A strategic authority can apply a single standard across its whole transport network, rather than one council's estate at a time.

The powers

A strategic authority can restrict the advertising of food and drink high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) on the advertising space it owns or controls, mainly its transport network. This opportunity rests on the Devolution Act's general power of competence and the authority's control of its own assets.

Since 5 January 2026, advertising of less healthy food and drink has been restricted across the UK online and on television before 9pm. These national rules do not cover outdoor advertising, such as billboards, bus shelters, and station sites. Strategic and local authorities can help close this gap through their asset-management, procurement and advertising contracts, working across tiers where control is divided.

The lever in action

The Mayor of London restricted HFSS advertising across the Transport for London network in 2019. Transport for London is part of the Greater London Authority, which is itself a strategic authority. The policy has been evaluated: households bought around 7% less energy from HFSS products, and modelling estimated long-term reductions in obesity and NHS costs, with the largest benefits for less well-off groups. Because it improves health by acting on a wider determinant, the lever also helps meet the health inequalities duty. The Liverpool City Region began restricting HFSS advertising on its publicly controlled sites, including bus shelters, in early 2026.



Demand-side lever: Spatial Development Strategy and the Food Environment



Status: Untested

SFP Key Issue: Healthy food for all, Food for the Planet

Available for: All, duty falls on upper-tier and unitary councils where no strategic authority exists

Pre-mayoral position: the SDS duty does not require a mayor, or even a strategic authority, to begin. Where no strategic authority exists, the duty falls on upper-tier and unitary councils. The opportunity is to get food into the evidence base and early framing while a strategy is being developed, rather than once it is complete.

The powers

The Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) offers a route for food policy (see Section 2) through strategic authorities.

At the time of writing, the SDS duty is not in force: in early 2026, the government consulted on which areas will be strategic planning authorities, and the regulations needed to operate the system are still awaited.

The lever in action

No SDS has been adopted under the new framework, and none has been used for food. This is a first-mover opportunity rather than a proven lever.



Supply-side lever: Local Growth Plan – Food as a Priority Sector



Status: Emerging

SFP Key Issue: Sustainable Food Economy

Available for: Mayoral, Established Mayoral

Pre-mayoral position: areas without a strategic authority are encouraged to set out an economic vision. Naming sustainable food and farming in that vision positions it for a future growth plan.

The powers

Every mayoral strategic authority must produce a Local Growth Plan, a statutory long-term economic strategy setting out the sectors and investments it will prioritise. The lever is naming food and farming as a priority sector: doing so directs economic-development effort, business support, and investment towards the food economy.

The framing is important here: naming the sector creates an opening to emphasise farm resilience and sustainable supply chains. But it also carries a risk that a growth plan pursues efficiency and productivity with no regard for regenerative practices.

Community wealth building offers a further thematic route in and is captured explicitly in the York and North Yorkshire plan.

The lever in action

York and North Yorkshire's Local Growth Plan, approved by government and launched in 2025, names food and farming innovation as one of the sectors where the region has a competitive advantage, with an explicit aim to raise productivity in food and farming. The plan is recent, so its effects are not yet visible, placing this lever in the emerging stage. Resourcing varies. The Local Growth Fund, which began in April 2026, provides money to deliver these plans, but only to eleven mayoral authorities in the North and Midlands with GDP per head below the UK average. Other authorities must rely on their own funds and settlements.



Supply-side lever: Adult Skills Fund – Food-sector Training



Status: Emerging

SFP Key Issue: Sustainable Food Economy, Good Food Movement

Available for: Foundation, Mayoral, Established Mayoral (requires devolved skills funding)

Pre-mayoral position: this lever does not need a mayor, but the strategic authority must hold devolved skills funding to be eligible. Foundation strategic authorities (those without a mayor) can receive the core Adult Skills Fund and prioritise food-sector training within it

The powers

The Adult Skills Fund is devolved to strategic authorities as an unringfenced grant, so the authority decides how to spend it within adult education rules. An authority can use this discretion to fund training for the food sector, from farming and food production to processing and catering, and align it with local employers' needs.

The lever in action

This is beginning to happen but is not yet developed. Authorities are starting to direct skills funding towards their priority sectors: York and North Yorkshire, which has named food and farming a priority, supports skills in the sector through the Grow Yorkshire programme. There is as yet no large, evidence-based food-skills programme at strategic-authority level, so the lever is emerging.



Supply-side lever: Food Infrastructure Investment



Status: Demonstrated

SFP Key Issue: Sustainable Food Economy, Healthy Food for All

Available for: Foundation, Mayoral, Established Mayoral (scale depends on funding authority holds)

Pre-mayoral position: the power to invest is available to any strategic authority, with or without a mayor, but the level of devolution affects the scale of funding an authority controls. A pre-mayoral authority can invest on a smaller scale, and areas without a strategic authority can pursue food infrastructure through their controls

The powers

A strategic authority can invest directly in physical food infrastructure such as storage, distribution, and processing capacity. Doing so is based on the general power of competence and depends on the investment funding the authority holds.

The lever in action

The West of England Combined Authority shows this in practice. In 2026, it committed £2 million towards a regional hub to store and redistribute surplus food and other essentials, run with Bristol Charities and FareShare South West.

The authority tied the investment to its Child Poverty Action Plan, addressing both food waste and hardship. The hub is still being developed, but the investment has been committed, and the approach is clear.



Cross-cutting lever: Procurement



Status: Emerging

SFP Key Issue: Catering and Procurement, Community Wealth Building

Available for: Foundation, Mayoral, Established Mayoral

Pre-mayoral position: the buyers are anchor institutions that exist now, independently of any mayor. Partnerships can begin aggregating demand and building supplier relationships ahead of devolution, so the groundwork is ready when a strategic authority can convene at scale

The powers

Strategic authorities themselves buy very little food, so this lever is not about the authority's own purchasing. **The Procurement Act 2023** and the **National Procurement Policy Statement** have shifted public buying towards wider social, economic and environmental value (section 2).

The lever for a strategic authority is to act on that shift across the region: convening the public bodies that buy food; connecting councils, hospitals, colleges and other anchor institutions; sharing what works; helping remove barriers and amplifying successful approaches across the region.

The lever in action

The North East shows it in practice at an early stage. As a food region, it spans two mayoral strategic authorities, and a dense network of food partnerships coordinates across them. Through that network, it has convened procurement bodies, councils, and anchor institutions to test dynamic food procurement and is drawing together findings on what makes it work. The work is exploratory rather than embedded, which places the lever at the emerging stage.



Cross-cutting lever: Convening and the duty to collaborate



Status: Demonstrated

SFP Key Issue:

Governance and Strategy, Good Food Movement

Available for: Mayoral, Established Mayoral

Pre-mayoral position: an area without a mayor can still build partnerships now. Partnerships can position themselves to be convened once a strategic authority is set up. The Sussex Alliance of Food Partnerships is doing exactly this ahead of a future mayor.

The powers

Mayors have power to convene partners, who then have a duty to respond, and mayors also have the duty to collaborate with their neighbours (section 2). The lever is to use these powers to bring food partners together and to coordinate across boundaries, turning a scattered set of food initiatives into a regional effort.

The lever in action

Authorities are already doing this. Greater Manchester shows the lever in practice: its Food Partnership Board brings together councils, the NHS, public health bodies and community organisations within the strategic authority's structures.

In the East Midlands, the Combined Authority has commissioned the two universities of Nottingham and University of Derby to lead on research, community asset mapping and stakeholder engagement with the purpose of developing more coordinated responses to potential food shocks, emergencies and crises. All local food partnerships are involved.



Cross-cutting lever: Food Strategy and Governance



Status: Demonstrated

SFP Key Issue:

Governance and strategy, all 6 Key Issues as the umbrella

Available for:

Foundation, Mayoral, Established Mayoral

Pre-mayoral position:

food can be embedded before a strategic authority exists. The Sussex Alliance of Food Partnerships has set out a template for doing so.

The powers

A strategic authority can embed food in its existing strategies and decision-making, using the general power of competence. A standalone food strategy is another option that some areas may choose. This lever turns food policy into a standing part of regional decision-making rather than a series of separate projects.

The lever in action

Greater Manchester goes furthest: its Food Partnership Board reports into the strategic authority and Live Well Board, so food is embedded in the region's health and strategy structures. The authority's devolved health powers make it better

placed than many authorities to focus specifically on food. Liverpool City Region is developing a strategy: the combined authority commissioned a report on affordable and sustainable food, agreed to take it forward, and has since mapped its food system and launched a roadmap, though a full strategy is not yet adopted.



Section 4: Getting traction – how to do it

Alongside the powers that devolution offers, there is the practical work of getting food onto a strategic authority's agenda and maintaining it. This is important at each stage of the devolution journey, including where areas do not yet have a strategic authority. This section sets out what's worked in other areas, based on what food partnerships have found in practice.

Choosing the entry point

Getting food onto a strategic authority's agenda requires a framing that matches what the authority already prioritises. Five frames are in use across England.



1. Health and prevention: Greater Manchester treats food as prevention and as a way to reduce health inequalities, framing its food work within the Live Well programme and the Fairer Health for All framework. This suits authorities with a strong public health mandate.

2. Child poverty: The West of England framed its food redistribution work as part of its Child Poverty Action Plan. In the North East, partnerships make the same link through food insecurity and the cost of living, connecting food to holiday and family support schemes. This works where reducing poverty is a stated priority.

3. Economic growth: York and North Yorkshire treats food and farming as a growth sector, with an interest in farmgate profitability. In Northumberland, the case is made via economic development (a local producer brand scheme), and the North East authority's rural business programme. This suits rural and food-producing regions.



4. Civil food resilience: The East Midlands is developing food work through preparedness: a feasibility study for a food-resilience asset map identifies community assets that could be mobilised in a food emergency. This connects food to the authority's public-safety role and local resilience structures. It draws on a 2026 Sustainable Food Places report on civil food resilience.

5. Climate and nature: In Greater Manchester, food's strategic value was demonstrated through the climate budget. The largest share of the Green and Blue Spaces Fund went to community-group funding for food growing. This reframed the authority's view of food, leading to an overview of food-based activity. Climate commitments and budgets exist in nearly every strategic authority, making this a widely available hook.

Political navigation

Effective food partnerships work across changing political administrations with different priorities and perspectives. This does not have to mean changing your values or evidence base. Rather, it means understanding the issues that matter to local decision-makers and demonstrating how healthy, sustainable food systems contribute to those priorities.

Climate, nature, health and equity are central to Sustainable Food Places' vision. The challenge is to communicate those goals in ways that build broad support, whether through economic resilience, public health, energy security, thriving local businesses, community wellbeing or environmental outcomes.

Food partnerships are most influential when they remain trusted, evidence-led and non-partisan. Political priorities will change over time, but strong evidence, enduring relationships and a clear sense of purpose help partnerships maintain influence across administrations of any scale.



Two examples come from food partnerships in the North of England:

- 1. Framing the case without compromising the goal.** York and North Yorkshire renamed its climate plan from *A Routemap to Carbon Negative* to *A Strategy for a Sustainable Future* and increasingly emphasises outcomes such as lower energy bills, warmer homes, resilient local businesses and economic opportunity alongside climate action. The underlying ambition remained the same, but the language broadened the conversation and connected with priorities shared across different political perspectives.
- 2. Choosing a neutral setting when politics are sensitive.** In Gateshead, after an election brought in a council new to the food agenda, the partnership introduced it by inviting members to an independent, non-party-political food event where they could hear the case without it becoming a party-political issue.

Embedding across structures

Food stays on the agenda when it is connected to the structures that already hold power and budgets. Embedding across structures means getting food on the boards, strategies, and plans where decisions are made.

Greater Manchester offers the fullest example. Food is attached to priorities in the strategic authority, Live Well Board and region's health and economic strategies. Across the North East the models differ: Gateshead's partnership sits inside the council's public health team; Sunderland is moving its partnership out of the council and into the voluntary and community sector, to root it in communities while keeping a link back to the council; and Northumberland, without a partnership yet, drives food through a cross-service action plan led by economic development.



Positioning to be convened

Before a strategic authority exists, there is work to do to position to be convened. Engaging a new mayoral cycle is one route. Ahead of the 2025 West of England mayoral election, Feeding Bristol published a Manifesto for Sustainable Food for All, a short set of asks for whoever was elected and framed around incoming mayoral priorities such as regional growth, green jobs and skills, health and resilience. It put food on the new administration's agenda from the start.

Being ready also means clearly being a partner to convene. In the North East, food partnerships have organised into a single regional group, NESFA, which liaises across two mayoral strategic authority areas – the North East and Tees Valley – so each authority has one credible body to work with. Existing structures offer entry points, for example, local resilience and emergency planning forums are a way in, particularly where food is framed as preparedness.



Influencing place-based investment

Not all devolved funding flows through the strategic authority. The Pride in Place programme, with up to £20 million per neighbourhood over a decade in selected deprived areas, bypasses strategic authorities entirely: funds go direct to councils, which act as the accountable body, and to resident-led neighbourhood boards that decide how the money is spent on high streets and community spaces. Councils can only reject board spending that fails planning or legal obligations, so neither the strategic authority nor the council directs how this money is spent. Influence here means working with the neighborhood board themselves.



A regional food partnership has no direct lever here, but indirectly has the opportunity to (a) shape neighbourhood board plans so food features and (b) connect with council regeneration, housing and funding officers who hold the funds. Food leads are often not linked to those officers, and bridging that gap is much of the work. A cross-sector food strategy or action plan, led by a food partnership, can create the foundation for this work.

In Gateshead, the food partnership has been engaged with high-street regeneration and bringing empty shops into community ownership, steering them towards community food spaces such as cafes and shops.



Continuity through reorganisation

Where councils are being merged into new unitary authorities, food work risks being lost in the change: programmes, partnerships and relationships tied to a council that is disappearing may need to be brought across deliberately. Reorganisation is therefore both a risk and an opportunity to shape the priorities for a new authority from the start.

In Sussex, ahead of new unitary authorities and a new mayor, the Sussex Alliance of Food Partnerships has embedded food in existing council strategies, secured formal recognition of food partnerships as strategic partners, and named food in the baseline assessments, service reviews and handover documents the new bodies will inherit.



Sustainable Food Places as a mark of trust



Accreditation can be a signal that opens doors. A Sustainable Food Places award, particularly Gold, marks a place as a credible, high-performing food partner. That signal is increasingly used by national government to decide where to invest.

A cross-sector food strategy, led by a food partnership and given credence through Sustainable Food Places awards, can help to secure a strategy, action plan and progress towards a healthier food future. SFP members have found this particularly valuable in times of political change and reorganisation: whilst investment in new relationships and navigating new structures will be required, the structures and strategies held by the food partnership can anchor progress and fast-track engagement and commitment in dynamic contexts.

In March 2026, Defra funded a small group of councils, at £155,000 each, to pilot better local and sustainable food procurement, as part of the government's Good Food Cycle and its ambition for at least half of public-sector food to be local or sustainable. The grants went to places holding a Gold Sustainable Food Places or Gold Food for Life Served Here accreditation.



For a partnership, accreditation can be a strategic asset, serving as evidence that a strategic authority can rely on when choosing partners, and a route to national funding that rewards demonstrated practice. Building towards and holding accreditation is itself a way to get traction.



Making the most of moments

Strategic authorities are shaped by cycles of political, organisational and policy change



New administrations are elected, strategies are refreshed, funding programmes are launched, organisational structures evolve, and senior leaders move on. These moments often create greater opportunities to influence than business as usual.

Food partnerships are well placed to help strategic authorities respond to these moments by bringing together evidence, local relationships and practical solutions. Rather than waiting for a dedicated conversation about food, consider how food can contribute to priorities that are already being shaped.

Opportunities may include:

- the election of a new mayor or political administration
- development of a Local Growth Plan or Spatial Development Strategy
- preparation of health, climate or economic strategies
- spending reviews and investment programmes
- organisational restructuring or local government reorganisation
- responses to emerging issues such as food insecurity, flooding or other resilience challenges.

Anticipating the introduction of a Sussex Mayoral Strategic Authority and local government reorganisation, the Sussex Alliance of Food Partnerships was established, coming together to develop a shared voice, strengthen relationships across Sussex and begin engaging with emerging regional priorities.



Making the ask

How the ask is framed makes a real difference to how it is received:



- **Come with a solution, not a request:** It's easy to turn down a request, but framing the ask as a statement of what you're trying to achieve and the barriers to doing so invites the authority to apply its powers to a problem you have already defined.
- **Say why public intervention is needed:** Authorities weigh proposals in terms of market failure and public value. Explain what the market is not delivering and why it will not deliver it without intervention, not just why the project is worthwhile.
- **Ask for enabling, not delivery:** Strategic authorities can convene partners, invest, remove barriers, connect you to others and put pressure on government. They do not deliver food programmes. Shape your ask around what strategic authorities can do.
- **Be specific:** A defined problem with a role for the authority gives them something to act on, rather than stating a broad ambition related to food systems.

If you can set out the challenge, the evidence, the desired outcome, the barrier(s), why public intervention is justified and the role the strategic authority could realistically play, then you're ready to make the ask.



Further reading

Check what your authority holds

- English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act: [devolution framework explainers](#) and [area factsheets](#). Plain-English explainers of the devolution framework, plus factsheets setting out the position area by area. The quickest way to establish what your strategic authority holds, or what your area's proposal seeks.
- Local Growth Fund (England): [Policy statement](#) and [allocations](#) for the 11 eligible mayoral strategic authorities in the North and Midlands. Confirms whether your authority holds delivery funding for its Local Growth Plan.

Devolution landscape

- English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026: The [Devolution Act](#) establishes the strategic authority tiers, areas of competence, the general power of competence, the mayoral power to convene, and the health inequalities duty.
- Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025: The [Planning Act](#) establishes the spatial development strategy duty (s.58) and the requirement that an SDS address health issues.
- Procurement Act 2023: The [Procurement Act](#) establishes the legal framework for public buying
- National Procurement Policy Statement (Cabinet Office, February 2025): The [NPPS](#) establishes the strategic priorities all contracting authorities must have regard to: value for money defined to include social, economic and environmental benefit.



Further reading

Levers for change

- Yau et al. (2022), Changes in household food and drink purchases following restrictions on the advertisement of high fat, salt, and sugar products across the Transport for London network: A controlled interrupted time series analysis. PLOS Medicine: Evaluation evidence behind the TfL restriction found an estimated 7% reduction in household energy purchased from HFSS products. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1003915>
- Thomas et al. (2022), The health, cost and equity impacts of restrictions on the advertisement of high fat, salt and sugar products across the transport for London network: a health economic modelling study. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity: The modeling study found an estimated 94,867 fewer obesity cases and £218 million in NHS and social care savings, with the largest benefits in the most deprived areas. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01331-y>
- York and North Yorkshire's Local Growth Plan. Food and farming innovation identified as a competitive-advantage sector, with community wealth-building explicitly in the plan. <https://yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk/our-strategy/localgrowthplan/>
- Grow Yorkshire. The York and North Yorkshire partnership channelling support, including skills, into the food and farming sector. <https://yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk/project/grow-yorkshire-spf/>
- West of England Combined Authority: regional food and essentials distribution hub (January 2026). A £2 million commitment with Bristol Charities and FareShare South West, tied to the Child Poverty Action Plan. <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/news/new-partnership-to-support-families-in-need-with-food-and-essentials/>



Further reading

Getting traction

- Manifesto for Sustainable Food for All (Feeding Bristol, Bristol Food Producers and Bristol Food Network, March 2025). Pre-election asks document described under "Positioning to be convened" - a template for engaging a new mayoral cycle.
<https://feedingbristol.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Manifesto-For-Sustainable-Food-For-All.pdf>
- Pride in Place Programme prospectus. How neighbourhood funding works: boards, plans, and the council as accountable body. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pride-in-place-programme-prospectus>
- Defra local food procurement grants (March 2026), Pupils, patients and public sector workers to prosper through local food procurement. Grants to Gold-accredited places, and 50% local-or-sustainable ambition related to "SFP as a mark of trust".
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pupils-patients-and-public-sector-workers-to-prosper-through-local-food-procurement>



Making Devolution Work for Food: A practical guide for food partnerships in England



Outcomes first, food second

These are strategic authority levers that can be applied to food. Authorities exist to deliver growth, better health and resilience. Your case succeeds when it demonstrates how food helps deliver the outcomes your authority is already committed to achieving.

Before anything else, check these three things

- 1. What your authority holds.** The nine areas of competence are a menu, not a given – check your devolution agreement or area factsheet on gov.uk.
- 2. What it prioritises.** Priorities are shaped by political choices and leadership, not just formal powers.
- 3. What money sits behind it.** A new strategic authority does not automatically mean new funding.

The lever	Status	Who can use it	SFP Key Issue
HFSS advertising restrictions	Demonstrated	Any strategic authority; councils can act now	Healthy food for all
Spatial Development Strategy & the food environment	Untested	All: duty not yet in force	Healthy food for all; Food for the planet
Local Growth Plan: food as a priority sector	Emerging	Mayoral authorities	Sustainable food economy
Adult Skills Fund: food-sector training	Emerging	Any authority holding devolved skills funding	Sustainable food economy; Good food movement
Food infrastructure investment	Demonstrated	Any strategic authority: scale depends on funds held	Healthy food for all; Sustainable food economy
Procurement	Emerging	Any strategic authority: the role is convening, connecting, amplifying	Catering & procurement; Community wealth building
Convening & the duty to collaborate	Demonstrated	Mayoral authorities	Governance & strategy; Good food movement
Embedding food in strategy & governance	Demonstrated	Any strategic authority and before one exists	Governance & strategy; all 6 Key Issues as the umbrella

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Getting traction

Choose your entry point. Frame food within existing authority priorities: health and prevention, child poverty, economic growth, civil food resilience, climate and nature.

Navigate the politics. Stay trusted, evidence-led and non-partisan; translate your goals into the language of the administration of the day and work through councils that are already ahead.

Embed across structures. Get food into relevant strategies and plans, and onto boards that already hold power and budgets. Your food partnership has the food system expertise to help them define it and deliver it.

Position to be convened. Organise into one credible regional body / alliance of food partnerships before the authority exists; publish your asks ahead of a mayoral election.

Influence place-based investment. Some funding (e.g. Pride in Place) bypasses strategic authorities – work with neighbourhood boards and council regeneration officers directly.

Keep continuity through reorganisation. Get food / your partnership written into strategies, baseline assessments and handover documents before councils merge. If it isn't written in, it risks disappearing.

Make the most of moments. New mayors, strategy refreshes, spending reviews and reorganisation open doors that business-as-usual does not. Be ready with a clear ask or direct political fit.

Use SFP accreditation as a mark of trust. An SFP award, especially a Gold, signals a credible partner, and national funding is already following.

Making Devolution Work for Food: A practical guide for food partnerships in England



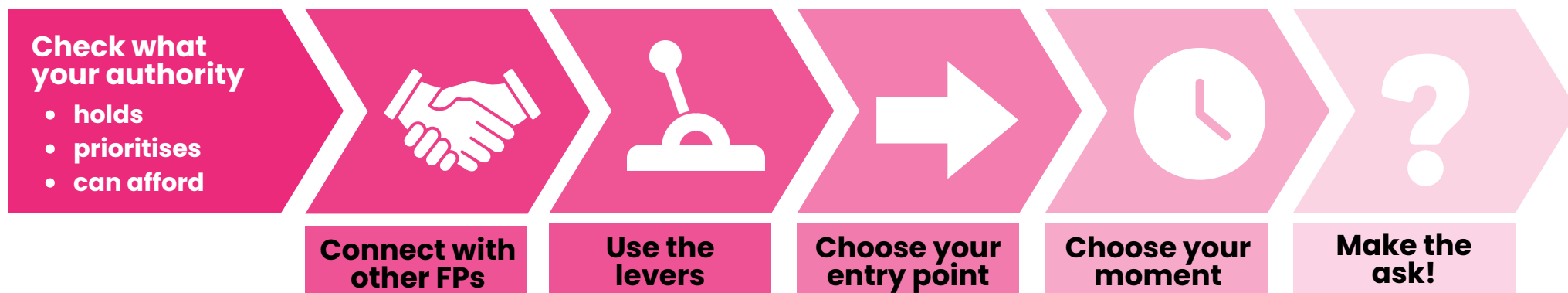
Making the ask

Come with a solution, not a request. Define the goal and barrier(s); invite the authority to apply its powers.

Say why public intervention is needed. Authorities think in terms of market failure and public value, not project merit.

Ask for enabling, not delivery. They convene, invest, unblock, connect and lobby – they do not run food programmes.

Be specific. A defined problem with a realistic role for the authority beats a broad food-systems ambition.



Want the detail? The full guidance explains the legal basis, gives examples and offers sources for further information.



[Download the full guidance](#)

This toolkit was commissioned by Sustainable Food Places and written by Elta Smith, Co-founder and Director of Root and Reason, Chair of the Food Ethics Council.

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