SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2025

This form is for completing an SFP Bronze or Silver Award application. **If you are considering applying for a Gold Award, please contact the SFP team at info@sustainablefoodplaces.org to discuss the process.**

Before starting your application, please fully read this form as well as the following documents:

- SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants
- SFP Awards: Activity and Impact: SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx

Please do not alter the formatting of this form or redesign it and only return as a Word document not a PDF. This is essential for you application to pass the initial eligibility check.

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= mandatory):

Name of your partnership*:
Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership (BG Food)
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Chris Nottingham, Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership Coordinator: chris.nottingham@taicalon.org
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Award you are applying for*:
Bronze

Please provide us with background information about your place (not scored)*: Advisory word limit: 400 words

This is to help the panel understand the context in which you are working. *You may include (but not limited to): Population and demographic information, location/geography & economic and social challenges.*

ANSWER:

Blaenau Gwent is the second smallest local authority in Wales, with a population of around 66,900, and covers the smallest geographic footprint of any Welsh authority at 108km². The population is 99.1% White and has the lowest proportion of Welsh speakers in the country. At a regional level, Blaenau Gwent is one of five local authorities that make up Gwent, with many strategies and workplans developed collaboratively, for example through the Gwent Public Service Board and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Politically, Blaenau Gwent is historically a Labour stronghold in both Westminster and the Senedd.

The borough's geography is defined by 3 steep sided valleys. Much of the agricultural land is low grade and situated at higher altitudes, making it better suited to sheep and cattle grazing than horticulture. Although the area is predominantly rural, the network of towns and villages runs through the three valleys creating an urban feel. Poor public transport and low car ownership make travel difficult, leaving some communities isolated. Ebbw Vale is the main town and has been labelled the UK's 'fattest town', showing the challenges the area faces.

Blaenau Gwent also has a proud heritage as an industrial powerhouse, once famous for coal and steel. It is often said that Blaenau Gwent "built the world," and while Tredegar holds particular significance as the birthplace of the NHS, through the work of Aneurin Bevan. The legacy of

deindustrialisation finds Blaenau Gwent consistently ranked among the worst in Wales for health, social and economic outcomes. Healthy life expectancy is especially poor, with women in Ebbw Vale expected to live 20 fewer years in good health than those in Monmouthshire only seven miles away.

Economic challenges remain severe. There are just 0.4 jobs per resident, half the national average. Children in absolute low-income families account for 22% of the population, five points above the Welsh average, while attainment is low with only 21% of free school meal eligible pupils achieving five GCSEs A*–C. Blaenau Gwent also has the highest proportion of adults earning below the Real Living Wage in Wales.

In response, Blaenau Gwent became Wales' first Marmot Council, as part of the wider Gwent Marmot Region. This demonstrates a commitment to preventative, partnership-led action to reduce inequalities. Despite ongoing challenges such as low attainment, a brain drain of young people and limited good quality employment, the post-industrial landscape has regenerated, now offering rich habitats for flora and fauna, a striking contrast to its industrial past.

How have you considered equity, diversity and inclusion in the structure and work of your partnership (not scored)*: ? Advisory word limit: 300 words

ANSWER:

The member organisations in the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership all have EDI values embedded in their values. These values are also represented in our Terms of Reference and we seek to represent a diverse and wide range of views from our community. We do this through co-production and participation from stakeholders. Our mission to deliver Healthy Food For All ensures we work towards a fair and equitable food system.

Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership has attended EDI training provided by Food Sense Wales. This training helped shaped our partnership governance to seek more inclusivity through the development of an EDI action plan. As a partnership we have signed the 'Wales Zero Racism' pledge and have a commitment to brining equity, diversity and inclusion to our work. Our recent small grant scheme, focused on Protected Characteristics. As a result £15,000 of good food activity was rolled out with a specific EDI focus.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

Please read SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants before completing this section.

Please describe the activity and impact of local food work delivered in your place within the last three years against the relevant key issues (1-6) and action areas (A and B) below.

We advise that you keep answers to within 600 words for each action area (i.e. for each A and B under the key issues). Whilst you won't be penalised for going over this limit, this will help the panel focus on your main achievements. For sections C, 250 words is the mandatory limit.

For Bronze and Silver awards, there are mandatory actions for some key issues. These are laid out in *SFP Awards - Activity and Impact:* SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx. This document also provides a broad benchmark for each award, rationale for SFP's inclusion of each key issue, and example actions for each action area.

Only submit additional documents for food action plans and strategies related to Key Issue 1 mandatory criteria. All other additional documents will not be assessed. You may add links to online documents but always check the links and permissions as we will not be requesting changes from you after submission.

Key Issue 1 Mandatory Criteria Checklist

NB failure to provide Key Issue 1, Action area B mandatory criteria will result in rejection at the eligibility stage.

- Bronze applications require a one year action plan
- Silver applications require a three year action plan

1. **Have you submitted a current food action plan or food strategy with an action plan?**
    - Yes
2. **How are you evidencing this action plan?**
    - Attachment as a Word, PFF, Excel document? Yes
    - Link to a document? No
    - If a link place here as well under Key Issue 1
    - Action Plan link:
3. **Has the action plan less than 6 months to run?**
    - No
    - If less than 6 months to run what is happening after the action plan expires? (100 words)

Key Issue 1: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
Action area A: Establish a broad, representative, and dynamic local food partnership
BG Food Partnership was established following a decision by the old Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (now BG Local Well-being Partnership) to implement a well-being programme on sustainable food & food insecurity. This programme was led by Tai Calon Community Housing as the Public Services Board (PSB) sponsor organisation but was taken forward via a partnership approach with GAVO, Natural Resources Wales, Aneurin

Bevan Health Board and the Local Authority. BG Food Partnership became a Sustainable Food Places member in October 2021. hip

Since then, the BG Food Partnership has widened its membership to include the Aneurin Leisure Trust as well as additional local authority officers at Flying Start and Health Board officers running the Integrated Wellbeing Network.

Partnership Board

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Aneurin Leisure Trust

Blaenau Gwent Borough Council (BGCBC)

Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)

Natural Resources Wales

Tai Calon Community Housing

The initial Terms of Reference was created in 2021 and was updated in 2025 to reflect the development and changes within the partnership. The board meet regularly on the 3rd Tuesday of every month where partners discuss how the four objectives of our current strategy is being delivered on.

As a representative and dynamic partnership, we have an active member base which meets on a quarterly basis through a 'gathering' event either online or in person events. These events are topic focused and seek to provide inspiration from good practice examples. Within this member base we coordinate three sub group areas of focus; community food aid network, schools network and community food growing.

The Community Food Aid Network is the main working group of the food partnership with 18 food organisations seeking solutions to tackle the root causes of food poverty.

The School Food Network has 10 schools registered with additional schools participating in cluster meetings which the food partnership uses to promote funding, campaigns and good food activities.

Community Food Growing Network is a smaller forum to share ideas and resources around food growing reaching 4 main organisations. This has recently included private allotment groups and is establishing a future event in the style of a 'country show'.

The BG Food Partnership has a presence at PSB level ensuring the BG Local Well-being Partnership's local well-being priorities involve tackling food insecurity, relieving cost of living pressures and addressing health inequalities in line with the food strategy.

As a local authority within a wider Gwent Region the BGFP have been part of a wider regional approach with other Gwent food partnerships to share good practice and tackle common issues.

Action area B: Develop, deliver, and monitor a food strategy/action plan

BG Food have recently launched a three year Community Food Strategy 2025-28. This has been developed on several years of evidence and building on the work on previous action plans which have been limited to a 12 month period.

To launch this strategy we conducted a consultation period covering November to December 2024 (for further info view page 22 of the strategy appendix). To avoid duplication, the online element was delivered in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, who were doing a similar consultation at the same time. ABUHB cover five local authority areas so when a participant selected Blaenau Gwent, they were provided with a specific food partnership survey to inform our strategy consultation. The success of this partnership resulted in 92 Blaenau Gwent residents providing over 50% of responses despite being the smallest local authority. This partnership approach continues with BG Food being part of the ABUHB Healthy Weight Alliance.

Our face to face consultations were conducted at 15 venues across the borough. These events resulted in 146 respondents contributing to our consultation asking about the burning food issues in Blaenau Gwent.

As a result the food strategy reflects our own knowledge and experience with these consultations which have created 4 objectives; Food Access, Health, Community & Business and Climate & Nature. To support these objectives we have created a three year action plan to underpin the strategy. To do this we created four task and finish groups with stakeholders. As a result, we have a clear roadmap and accountability of how we will deliver the strategy and who will deliver it.

This strategy has been approved by the local PSB delivery group and local authority cabinet members. The approach is in line with the Gwent as a Marmot region and uses food as a lever to reduce health inequalities.

Whilst the linked strategy document has an overview of the action plan, the more detailed action plan has been submitted separately detailing partner delivery. This internal document acts as a cornerstone for food partnership steering group meetings.

We aim to track and provide transparency through our impact hub, with a new one planned to be released every financial year.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

In 2024, in response to the increase in local food activity and focus on food as a lever for change, the local authority created a Food Resilience team. This has quickly become part of the food partnership leadership group and provide vital capacity and scope to deliver on the strategy.

The Food Partnership is represented across several key multi-agency groups and provides consultation on the Integrated Wellbeing Network, Social Prescribing, Healthy Weight working group and Local Nature Partnership. Reports on food partnership work are made to Welsh Government and Local Authority Scrutiny Committee.

Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

NB at Silver *we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

BG Food utilise a various communication channels including our own website bgfoodpartnership.co.uk, Facebook (574 followers), a newsletter via Mailchimp with 87 subscribers.

The brand and logo were developed with a local marketing agency which meets Welsh Government standards for bilingual content. The branding was initially launched as 'Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership' and is now moving towards using 'BG Food' more as the partnership has gained wider recognition and is synonymous with community development through food systems change. The BG Food Charter launched in 2021 after a period of visioning meetings with the burgeoning network. These network meetings establish common themes in line with the SFP framework to represent how reflected in their place. The food charter has since been updated in 2023 with a business specific section in development. The strapline for the Food Charter umbrella campaign is 'No matter how big or small your actions, you can make a difference!'.

October 2025 will be BGFP first food summit, expected to attract about 120 people with panel discussions and workshops as well as an expo area showcasing good food activities from members and stakeholders. Link to the agenda can be found here.

Examples of building a good food movement can be seen through many BG Food projects. Libraries was instigated by BG Food and has promoted growing food at home since 2023 where it started as a community project. Over 300 people have been encouraged to take home vegetable seeds and grow at home. Extra support for growing is given on the food partnership website and delivery partners Aneurin Leisure have seen the project thrive at

their book library sites where participants can also borrow gardening books. This was most successful targeting families during school holidays and has received continuation funding for 25/26 combining summer book reading challenges and food growing. One spin off project from the libraries saw Hungry Munchkins inspiring new parents about good food weaning highlighted on page 13 in this case study.

BG Food instigated work with schools as a cornerstone of inspiring and engaging about good food. Recently we have agreed to run a farm visit for lambing season with a local school taking its children to connect with farming. Other school visits have been around harvest time and another 6 week project saw a local school take on a 'dig for victory' allotment project in connection with the World War II classroom focus.

As BG Food is hosted by a housing association, we attend tenant events such as 'Summer Fun Days' to amplify our good food work, where we operate smoothie bikes, run a fruit kebab stand, do an apple pressing demonstration or have fun games like head-to-head pea podding tournaments.

We attend regular events throughout the calendar to promote food partnership activity. A recent example would be at a local food festival where we promoted the food partnership, our aims and objectives as well as providing reusable water bottles. At Go Wild which attracted over 2000 visitors, BG Food had a hands on wormery for people to learn about the power of worms to transform food for soil health and engaged the public on climate friendly diets by playing climate footprint 'top trumps' and inviting people to taste roasted crickets as an ice breaker for the future of sustainable food.

BG Food as also participated in Pentref Tyleri past, present and future project to help the community identify what the role of food was and could be for a sustainable, resilient community.

Partners Flying Start host a regular 'Antenatal Baby Shower' which attracts parents to be to attend an event promoting need to knows for new arrivals and how to access services such as smoking cessation. BG Food are a regular attendee and have provided nutritional information, promoted Healthy Start and given out 'Overnight Bag Emergency Food' with overnight oats and DIY pot noodles.

Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations promote and volunteering opportunities for food growing, cooking and distribution. This has led to a strong third sector movement with good food activities. A recent example would be the award of a Volunteering Wales grant of £60,000 from WCVA for a volunteer coordinator to develop food growing and cooking skills for young people to develop confidence at Llanhilleth Miners Institute.

BG Food recently held a grant award round to promote good food activities around EDI and protected characteristics. Notable award winners introduced a food festival to

celebrate different food cultures. Whilst other projects address social need from a range of backgrounds such as people living with disabilities, neurodiverse and older people.

Action Area B: Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement

Our regular network meetings bring together community leaders and volunteers of community food activities both through face to face and online opportunities. At these meetings we share good practice, provide peer support and troubleshoot an issue presented by a network member. We have conducted field trips to local projects for inspiration and hosted topic led meetings with guest contributors such as Fareshare Cymru.

Our website acts as a digital asset library, hosting directories and asset maps of shop local opportunities, community growing projects and food access points.

In Spring 2025 our Sustainable Food Week launched to work on our goal of children leaving school as good food citizens. A week of lessons at six participating schools where food was tied to the curriculum reaching over 500 children. Using the community food network we worked in collaboration with local practitioners to deliver workshops such as 'Bread Squad' where children learned about bread from field to plate using the Welsh language, art, cooking and nutrition skills. Other workshops saw children cooking outside, playing games in the classroom centered on tasting new fruits and vegetables as well as food growing lessons and exploring different cultures through a world food lesson. Sustainable Food Week created a legacy of new partnerships with schools and practitioners.

''Food week was fantastic, learners were very engaged and taking an interest in the activities, I think it really helped to open their eyes on certain aspects of food which they may not have noticed before. It was a lot of work but very much worth it and the effort the food partnership put into organising the sessions with the local practitioners was amazing, possibly next year we could look at running more activities that are like things we teach in the classroom like looking at fakeaways and expand it to more year groups but our pupils learned a great deal and had wonderful experiences at the practitioners, so it was a huge success.'' - **Mr O'Connell Ebbw Fawr Secondary School**

We have supported access to community assets, some examples of that would be Tai Calon Community Housing providing community access to houses which have been converted into food pantries. Whilst another example is the rejuvenation of a community centre with a shared lease agreement for multiple partners, which will provide access to surplus food and a community growing project.

To build our good food movement we have run successful small grants programs to raise awareness in the community. Examples of this are our veg plant giveaways, a continuation of the Food For Life Get Togethers plant and share grants. Through these

grants we have distributed 1000s of veg plants over the past 3 years with a spring event being attended by 150 people.

Events have been key to engaging the public on the good food movement. BG Food have amplified key food sustainability issues through events such as Low Carbon Lunches and Food and Climate sessions at a local café.

One successful pilot project with Sirhowy Woodlands and Tai Calon Community Housing delivered 20 tenants raised beds from timber felled and milled at the woodland. Tenants were then given the DIY skills to build the raised beds at home and supported to fill their raised bed through 'sheet mulching' style to encourage no-dig principles. The result has been an increase in health and wellbeing for tenants.

Three community growing projects have been highlighted in a case study in partnership with Social Farms & Gardens, The Landworkers' Alliance and Shared Assets. This case study highlights how communities can realise the opportunities of access to land for local communities to take part in agroecological practices such as community supported agriculture.

BGCBC Green Infrastructure team improved allotment space for growing food, creating new plots and reviving 'lost' plots through £25K funding. The Green Infrastructure team have also supported an allotment forum through surveys and consulting with allotments of what topics they needed support with to implement more sustainable ways of growing food.

The community food development grant led by the BGCBC Food Resilience team reached 29 projects all across the borough to foster a good food movement with a total of £147000 reaching good food projects. A key example was a Community Baking Workshops to build social connection.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 3: Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food

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Action area A: Tackle food poverty

At a multi-agency level the Gwent Public Service Board have agreed to become a Marmot Region and adopt the Marmot principles to reduce health inequalities across Gwent. Gwent is the first area in Wales to become a Marmot Region. In partnership with the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) the PSB has committed to addressing the social determinants of health. The IHE landmark Building a Fairer Gwent recommends to:

- Shift to prevention approaches in delivering sustainable and healthy food security.
- Eliminate need for food banks, replace with actions addressing the causes of food poverty.

Within that report (pg 73) highlights the role of The Food Partnership host, Tai Calon Housing Association having an additional focus on food security and networks to support tenants. This compliments the BG Local Wellbeing plan work that first recognised the need to implement a well-being programme on sustainable food & food insecurity. This work uses the food partnership strategy as a roadmap to achieve this.

BG Food have had a specific focus on increasing Healthy Start uptake, currently statistics published by NHSBSA are not available but previously Blaenau Gwent had the highest uptake in Wales. BG Food Partnership sits on an all Wales Healthy Start network discussing how to implement best practice across the country. At a local level we have worked with Early Years Transformation teams, Flying Start managers, Health Visitor manager, community food initiatives and Family Services leads to increase local knowledge. The result has seen a phased approach starting with a scoping exercise of community knowledge, frontline staff training, a local retailer booster top-up voucher trial, vitamin collections at community hubs and a local campaign with an accompanying video shared on our YouTube page.

Housing Association tenants make up a considerable demographic of residents needing support accessing food. BG Food have supported tenant projects from meal kits, cooking classes, social eating opportunities and growing projects, some of which are highlighted in this article.

Six primary school sites delivered Food and Fun funded by Welsh Government in summer 2025, reaching 440 children and celebrating 10 years of delivery. This essential provision of nutrition support and physical activity reaches children who would be eligible for free school meals. As well as the Aneurin Leisure Fit and Fed alternative funded by Street

Games which delivered 476 meals to 412 participants and contributed 118 hours work in the community.

After the successful Slow Cooker Club funded by The Food Partnership has been rolled out to four additional venues in the borough. Recently Welsh Government Food Partnership Development fund has enabled more projects to tackle the root causes of food poverty. In 2023 The Fed Line Project delivered cooking on a budget courses at food pantries and community venues. as have the 'Cooking with Charlie' project. The Food Partnership has endeavoured to target underserved areas and delivered cooking skills classes in new areas as highlighted in the SFP case study.

The Food Partnership, Community Food Aid network has a focus on tackling food poverty. This group has its own defined action plan which feeds into the BGCBC Cost of Living operational group. Part of that action plan saw BG Food provided citizens advice training for the community food aid network, training 36 volunteers in their cost of living/income maximisation course. In 2025, Christians Against Poverty have launched a budgeting course and BG Food have co-created a Worrying About Money Leaflet with the Independent Food Aid Network. In partnership with the health board, we have seen 18 tablet devices made available throughout the community food aid network to allow volunteers to instantly signpost to service users, this utilises volunteer training through citizen advice and meets the need to address digital exclusion. Community Food Organisations have also attended The Alliance for Dignified Food Support webinars and are seeking to develop and design dignified food access principles.

Through Cost of Living operational working group with the Local Authority, 20 groups have received capacity building and grants for food provisions during Winter 2023/24. This saw over £60,000 go to independent groups and £30,000 to The Trussell Trust.

All of The Food Partnership steering group member organisations are accredited with the Living Wage Foundation.

''By paying the Real Living Wage employers are voluntarily ensuring that their employees can earn a wage which is enough to live on as determined by the Living Wage Foundation'' (BGCBC Pay Policy Statement)

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

Blaenau Gwent has some of the highest obesity rates in the UK with 79.9% of adults measured as overweight or obese. Just 14% of adults eat their recommended 5 portions of fruit and veg. As a result many organisations have a strong focus on this area. With any projects directly supported by the food partnership we strongly encourage accredited Nutrition Skills For Life Level 2 training delivered by the health board. To date 24 people have attended this training.

Taking a best start in life approach, Blaenau Gwent became the first Gwent County to become 'Breastfeeding Welcome', a network of public, private and third sector who have all committed to promote accessible breastfeeding in public areas.

Healthy Schools Transition Project

Working with the Healthy Schools team and meeting with school leaders, BGFP identified that the transition phase from Early Years to Primary Education was resulting in some healthy behaviours not being continued. To do this we worked with 12 cluster sites to support healthy messages being continued in the schools such as 'water only, healthy snack' policies and new growing projects. Including funding to provide healthy swap tuck shop where students could swap their unhealthy snack for a healthier option. The success of this project has enabled continuation funded being sourced.

Schools overall have demonstrated a commitment to healthy eating promotion. One keystone project to highlight is the Willowtown Big Bocs Bwyd providing 50 families with a £5 cook from scratch meal kit to take home on a Friday. Along with wraparound services of family support, community gardening and modelling lunch time good practice with teachers eating with the students and encouraging social connections at mealtimes.

Sirhowy Hill Woodlands 'Plant-to-Plate' project taking produce from the community gardens, grown by volunteers, local school children and members of the community and demonstrate how to prepare and cook simple nutritious healthy and inexpensive meals and snacks from home grown foods.

Taste of Nature was an innovative project in collaboration with a community arts delivery service which received Arts Council funding to use art and nature to promote healthy eating. The project reached 100 participants with every person trying at least one new food. The legacy was the creation of a booklet and a template for workshop delivery at local schools including introducing novel foods for learners with additional needs.

The Community Health Program pilot launched in Blaenau Gwent by health board dietetics put dieticians into the community. With a focus on prediabetic outreach, dieticians ran food education sessions on nutrition and cooking at venues such as food banks, schools and community centers. This work was recommended in the Wales New Zero 2035 Challenge Group report 'How Can Wales Feed itself by 2035?''.

In the 2024 report by Barnados: A recipe for success, they call on a local food partnership in every community, evidencing BG Food as good practice, citing a project where we distributed 80 meal packs to families via the library service during the school holidays.

Community dieticians outreach work now continues locally with the Foodwise and Cooking in Pregnancy course as well as the Pathways Cook With Us cooking course targeting parents and carers for children 0-4 where the practitioners are trained in Community Food and Nutrition Skills Level 2. The Community Food Aid network has also put 13 volunteers through this accredited nutrition skills course

Opportunities to access good food can be found throughout the borough as ad hoc delivery as well as established regular activities

- CookFresh equipping people with skills, produce and confidence to create healthy meals at home. A BGFP funded pilot project which has become core delivery as an alternative to a previous food parcel provision, this has also been delivered at satellite sites which have been inspired through food partnership gathering events. More details can be found on their food hub page.
- EVI Pantry Healthy Eating on a Budget
- Aneurin Leisure Trust One Pot Cooking project for youth services and adult healthy cooking classes.
- Housing association community houses delivering meal kits and soup making workshops. Whilst also giving equipment to attendees.

The work of BG Food tackling key issue 3 was covered in a case study in print and video published by Food Sense Wales. This is also covered in the Welsh Government Community Food Strategy (pg. 26).

BG Food are members of the Gwent Healthy Alliance, a multi-agency body tasked with supporting Public Health Wales delivery of Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy.

The School Health Research Network which monitors the health & wellbeing of secondary school-aged children identified that young people (11-16) in Blaenau Gwent were the highest consumers of energy drinks in Wales. As a result BG Food have commissioned a public health campaign to deter excessive energy drink consumption. Using the Sugar Smart work as a guide there are assets available for schools to run PSE lessons and assemblies to have a discussion with children. There are also workshops planned in schools with partners 'Healthy Dragons' the community outreach program of the regional Wales rugby team, Dragons RFC.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

NHS Healthy Start data is not reliable but it is believed we are performing above the national average when it comes to Healthy Start uptake.

Funding peaks and troughs has meant that Public Health dietetic support has not always been at the level to support Blaenau Gwent. In partnership with ABUHB, we are seeking solutions as to how consistent, reliable nutrition messages can be cascaded through the community.

Key Issue 4: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy

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Action area A: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

Within the borough, food enterprises bringing community development and regeneration. Good food is used as a leverage point to train, upskill and seek employment opportunities for Blaenau Gwent residents.

Caffi Tyleri have utilised the government Kickstart scheme to bring 12 employment opportunities to individuals under 25 not in education, employment or training (NEET). Llanhilleth Miners Institute HIVE Connect project enabled by UK Government Shared Prosperity fund both brought catering employment opportunities with holistic employment coaching and volunteer pathways.

V21 catering school is located in a residential care scheme. Apprentices develop both social and customer care skills, at the same time as providing a catering service to the residents who live in the development. On the job catering training incorporates Food Hygiene and Health and Safety training.

A partnership project with BGCBC Social Services and Blaina Institute have launched a community café with the aims of providing hospitality training to individuals with learning disabilities.

Ebbw Vale Institute run a Hospitality Academy in partnership with Communities for Work Plus support opportunities available to school leavers, job seekers and businesses to gain key hospitality skills and job-ready accreditation covering food safety, customer service, first aid and barista training. In addition to this EVI operate a café and lunch club providing affordable food in a social setting. Whilst their Food Pantry brining an alternative retail model to the food access space. The EVI pantry has proved to be a big success as a membership alternative to food shares/banks. The past 15 months trade has attracted 3500 'shops' with an estimated benefit to pantry members of over £48500. This has been a point of good practice and has resulted in two other venues taking on a membership model and one venue shifting from a food bank to a community shop, filling the gap of isolated communities missing local services such as a shop.

Local coffee roasters Big Dog Coffee have become exemplars of responsible supply chains both local and global. They create strong, adaptable, and resilient coffee communities that benefit the supply chain throughout, using ethically sourced coffee and commitment to producer focused procurement. This has resulted in BG Food steering group members Aneurin Leisure Trust using Big Dog Coffee at their cafes and park venues.

A recent summer food festival in Brynmawr attracted 1000s of visitors to the town with 30 food vendors from Blaenau Gwent and all across Wales.

BGCBC provide support for businesses, identifying funding opportunities and suitable sites. BGCBC have encouraged better access for potential new food businesses by introducing a 'meanwhile lease' scheme which guarantees favourable conditions for business success.

In 2025, Blaenau Gwent received Trailblazer funding to get the economically inactive back to work. Accepted onto the scheme are several BG Food partners who can promote hospitality and good food as a leverage point for economic development.

Welsh Government have enabled the creation of 8 Enterprise Zones, one of which is in Ebbw Vale which aims to kickstart *''the creation of a vibrant, world class high technology hotspot for Welsh based manufacturing companies of all sizes spanning many key sub sectors including food.''* The Ebbw Vale zone has offered £1.3 million for business rates and has seen several Blaenau Gwent Food Cluster businesses relocate to the enterprise zone as well as bringing new food manufactures from neighbouring local authorities. The BGCBC food cluster brings over 1000 jobs to the area have created sustainable employment opportunities.

Action Area B: Promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers

The Food Partnership has created a directory of healthy, sustainable and independent food businesses. Funding through the Food Partnership has enabled Sirhowy Hill Woodlands to expand their food growing capacity resulting in an occasional veg box enterprise, the first of its kind in Blaenau Gwent. Food is grown following organic permaculture principles. The woodlands also have a thriving apple juice business which is pressed and bottled on site and sold online, at events and local businesses.

Fresh 'N' Fruity the main greengrocer in Blaenau Gwent is currently collaborating with the food partnership to deliver a Welsh Government funded fruit & veg voucher scheme. This enables families with young children who have been identified as food insecure receive a weekly £10 voucher to spend at the greengrocer. This 6 month procjet will stimulate local shopping and evaluate behaviour change in both dietary and shopping habits. As transport is such a barrier to access this collaboration has enable free delivery of 'saver' boxes to reach customers.

Pentref Tyleri CIC operate a Hearty Stew or Soup delivery service to fund their Cawl I Bawb (Soup for all) food insecurity project. An available E-Cargo Bike means deliveries can be made in the local community promoting the benefits of getting your 5 a day. The venue also have a commitment to source ethically produced meat following the less and better meat mantra. As a result, this group were the inaugural award winners of the Blaenau Gwent Food Sustainability award delivered by food partnership steering group member GAVO.

Mental health charity Growing Space run a cafe which has a productive supports volunteers and NHS referrals to provide a café space with homegrown produce promoting the wellbeing benefits of healthy eating.

BGCBC promote a 'shop local' campaign highlighting the independent food businesses on offer. They provide social media support and share advice on how to promote activity. Recent benefits include free website design for food businesses without an existing one.

Aneurin Leisure Trust properties bring independent food businesses to Parc Bryn Bach with their Friday Street Food Sessions creating routes to market for local vendors. Whilst Bedwellty House walled garden is another thriving food growing space which primarily supplies its own café with produce but also provides direct to the consumer at very low cost.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Despite regular news stories highlighting Blaenau Gwent as an obesity hot spot, BG Food has faced significant challenges influencing a good food economy. Regular objections made to local authority planning on new takeaways has been met with a fierce response from the Local Authority Planning Committee. Health is currently deemed not a material planning concern despite our Marmot approach. Whilst we continue to seek changes to the national framework, lower town centre saturation points for fast food and petition the Future Generations Commissioner to back change to planning regulation, this remains a concern.

Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising **local and sustainable food supply chains**

NB at Silver *we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates

The Food Partnership is represented at the local authority in different departments and the Food Resilience team have a presence on the food partnership and the local authority food procurement group which ensures policy and good practice are on the agenda. Yet, due to its small size BGCBC has relied on regional work where food procurement framework has acted on a 32 member group led by neighbouring Local Authority, Caerphilly. This cluster way of working is exploring food procurement through the PSB work *''Food Procurement; Construction and Decarbonisation; Procurement Policy and Manufacturing Deep-Dive. A series of working groups have been established for each area of focus and the development of implementation and delivery plans''.*

BGCBC is now part of Welsh Public Sector Collaborative Food Group (WPSCFG) Food Framework. The requirement is for the direct delivery of various food goods to various

establishments throughout the public sector bodies participating in the tender exercise with the ultimate aim being to establish a new all-encompassing food framework agreement for Wales. This £228 million contract is to meet Welsh Government guidance to Buy Food Fit for the Future.

The Welsh Government Universal Free School Meals has created a new pathway for securing local food on the public plate. Whilst The Social Partnerships and Public Procurement (Wales) bill now creates favourable conditions to see Blaenau Gwent implement a way to buy food fit for the future.

BGCBC have a shared dietician with neighbouring Torfaen Borough Council, and the food partnership works closely with the Healthy Schools team, all of whom contributed to complying with the Health Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Regulations) (Wales) Regulations. As a result BGCBC Catering Management have led on the reduction of HFSS content in the recipes and increased fibre. BGCBC policy ensures that frozen fish is MSC certified. From October 2025, 4 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent will be participating in a UKRI DeCIPHer project researching how children can be better supported to make healthier choices.

Local schools also take the opportunity to run Food Theme Days where the menu reflects food of geographical or cultural significance. Examples of this has been exploring the cuisine of Italy, Mexico and Wales.

Many cafes and leisure services participate in providing tap water and refill points for customers. Caffi Tyleri, are an exemplar project taking a less but better meat serving meat to a higher welfare standard.

The launch of our 2025 community food strategy targets improved policy and practice through catering and procurement. One action in development is a specific Food Business Charter to attract the private sector and provide examples of sustainable practices businesses can adopt.

Action Area B: Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain

Due to the National Procurement Service bringing public procurement frameworks under national control it has limited the role in what can be delivered to support and strengthen local supply chains. One shining light in Wales is the Welsh Veg in Schools project which BGCBC is submitting an expression of interest to be the 14th Local Authority to join, supplying organic Welsh produce to 10 primary schools in with project delivery expected in 2026. In combination with the UKRI DeCIPHer project mentioned in Action Area A above, these projects provide the opportunity for increased collaboration and BG Food will be providing wraparound support to improve connections between these projects, food literacy amongst children and monitoring plate waste through the Waste Warriors project highlighted in Key Issue 6.

BGCBC school catering department, utilise their relationship with main catering supplier Castell Howell to expand collaboration opportunities, one example being the grab and go concepts that incorporate wholemeal pasta and provide authentic Welsh meals in schools.

The network of independent food businesses show collaboration with local supply chains. Clam's Cakes who were awarded a recent business development grant supply local cafés and restaurants as well as national retailers. Big Dog Coffee supply both private and public sector venues including food partnership steering group members The Aneurin Leisure Trust. Sidoli's Ice cream who were recently awarded a business development grant to reduce its carbon footprint, supply Aneurin Leisure Trust and local theatre and the cinema.

There are four apiaries providing local honey selling direct to market and through a network of local shops like greengrocers, cafes and leisure trust properties. Two of these are promoted through Big Barn, all are strongly promoted on social media. BG Apiary also has a relationship with schools and delivers school workshops to promote the need for local. There are also local enterprises supplying seasonal regional delicacies such as whinberries (bilberry), including whinberry ice cream.

Welsh Government funding has been received by BG Food to create a fruit and veg voucher scheme for 6 months delivery. This scheme targets the best start in life approach and makes fruit and veg accessible to 60 families facing hardship, especially those who might not be eligible for the Healthy Start scheme. Whilst this fits well with tackling food poverty and promoting healthy eating, without the collaboration with one of the few remaining local greengrocers this project couldn't work. By boosting the local economy by working with Fresh 'n' Fruity greengrocers the scheme supports shopping locally, increasing local supply demand and changing eating and shopping behaviours. To increase access, Fresh 'n' Fruity will make home delivery possible to negate the known transport issues locally. The greengrocer has devised a 'family saver box' which is available at the cost of the £10 voucher, saving participants £0.99 from the retail price with free delivery. This working relationship was brokered by BG Food and as a result, there is improved customer connections with the local shop supplier and collaboration involving partners such as Tai Calon Housing and Flying Start.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Public sector procurement is set at a regional level which means there is currently a restricted influence Blaenau Gwent can have on deciding its own supply chains.

Key Issue 6: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste

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Action area A: Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

After declaring a climate emergency, Blaenau Gwent became the first local authority in Wales to hold a climate assembly. One action from the climate assembly commits to *''Supporting communities in activities including food growing, recreation, bio-diversity, green prescribing, green space planning and aesthetics''*. An elected member has been made Climate Change Champion and is a committed advocate for sustainable food and the climate.

The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan commits to respond to the nature and climate crisis and enabling connected communities and in part will measure this through the impact of its decarbonisation plan and efficiency in waste, recycling and impact on the environment and biodiversity.

The Decarbonisation Plan that BGCBC is responsible for the sustainable land management of carbon stocks captured in tree and peatland. As a result, Blaenau Gwent having the highest woodland coverage due to the abandonment of land previously degraded during the industrial revolution.

The Marmot Principles adopted in the Building a Fairer Gwent plan has introduced a number of recommendations for the Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board to adopted on promoting healthy and sustainable food:

- Enable powers to transition to healthier and more sustainable diets, to be reflected in UK dietary guidelines.
- Develop labelling system to inform consumers about health and environmental impacts of purchases
- Support interventions such as changing marketing of food, VAT structures and waste reduction duties
- Increasing the supply of locally grown food is better for nature, our health and reduces pollution. If we change how we travel around Gwent we can reduce carbon emissions, benefit local wildlife and our well-being.

BG Food partners Natural Resources Wales, South East Wales Area Statement, declares that Blaenau Gwent becomes 'climate ready' by achieving four key successes;

- Natural resources are not continuously declining and are not being used faster than they can be replenished
- The health and resilience of our ecosystems across the four attributes of ecosystem resilience is not being compromised and where there is a need, is being enhanced

- Natural resources are being used efficiently and the supply of different ecosystem services is being optimised for well-being
- The benefits derived from natural resources are being fairly and equitably distributed and the contribution they make to well-being is meeting our basic needs and is not declining now or in the long term

In 2024 Tai Calon Community Housing received £250,000 to transform unused areas of land into thriving food growing hubs, in partnership with EarthWatch Europe, this project will be completed January 2026 and increase opportunities for housing association tenants to access fresh produce. The leading site at One Life Autism has delivered sessions delivered on composting, planting and creating wildlife habitats on allotments.

Tai Calon and Blaenau Gwent CBC have adopted and sustainable grounds maintenance strategy to nurture diverse green spaces and as a result achieved the Welsh Government Bee Friendly award which included the heavily restricted use of pesticides. Other policies that work with food growing and nature can be found with Gwent Green Grid directive for managing green spaces such as 'Nature isn't Neat'. Whilst a £250,000 grant form The Nature Network Fund aims to strengthen resilience by protecting local habitats such as peatlands.

Five community allotments capacity has increased due to BG Food Partnership funding as well with a partnership project with the Local Nature Partnership and Tai Calon Community Housing providing public access to 5 new community orchards sites including community orchard training for residents. This follows on from success with Sirhowy Hill Woodlands who have increased their outreach work to schools, communities and NEET individuals to support people get hands on experience with orchard, green woodworking and timber management skills. At this site, organic permaculture principles are promoted, they gained recognition winning the Social Farms & Gardens Community Land Management and Food Growing prize, a good overview can be found in this video. The woodlands also became national partners for a Welsh Government climate resilience project My Tree, Our Forest distributing free trees to Blaenau Gwent residents, now the project is part of the National Forest For Wales program creating crucial biodiversity corridors.

Pentref Tyleri CIC have delivered an innovative project growing wheat in a lawn to loaf project. This saw 1.8kg of Welsh heritage wheat grown to produce 5 loaves of bread. Unable to find any local knowledge, this is the first time wheat has been known to be grown locally in living memory. The success of this pilot has led to expansion plans involving local schools. Pentref Tyleri have also been successful in a postcode gardener project funded by Friends of the Earth bringing 50 neglected micro-spaces into production in a bid to build climate resilience. This builds on the Natural Resources Wales funded project to create a peri-urban wetland to support biodiversity near their growing space.

BGCBC have recently enabled a community asset transfer with a community growing group, Barefoot Farming, to make a meadow area productive for food growing. A local

social enterprise TAFY are used for many community growing projects and private allotment work such as ground clearance and maintenance.

Other notable growing projects can be seen at Terence Gardens where a disused public park area has been transformed into a productive growing space, highlighting the importance of horticulture as a therapeutic tool for participants. Through engaging horticultural sessions benefits have been recorded that improve mental health and behaviour change towards healthier eating habits.

BG Food Partnership ran a Food and the Climate event attended by 16 residents and included the promotion of sustainable food production such as coffee harvesting and climate friendly consumption with climate friendly diets. At this event we launched the Plant and Share grants resulting in the issue of 10 small grants. There has also been the Pledge system adopted encouraging Blaenau Gwent residents, groups and organisations to commit to adopting sustainable food principles within their lifestyle.

Aneurin Leisure Trust recently supported the local authority Fair Trade campaign, hosting a bake off competition for schools and adults using Fair Trade ingredients.

CVC and partnership member GAVO have secured RHS Level 2 Horticulture training for four community garden volunteers, supporting volunteers, training and equipping people with green skills to find employment.

Action Area B: Reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste

2025 saw the launch of Waste Warriors at 5 primary schools. This was two weeks of food waste action where audits of plate waste were carried out, assemblies on food waste and pupil led food waste champions. Schools saw dramatic reductions in the plate waste, up to 27kg in one setting. The success of this pilot means there will be wider roll out this academic year. BGCBC also do outreach and education work on recycling with a new Dennis to the Rescue service teaching children about all aspects of recycling including food waste. A summer project reached 15000 residents to encourage at home food waste recycling using the provided food waste caddies. In combination with the national 'Be Mighty' campaign, which assets are posted around the borough as well as online, this is expected to improve food waste recycling rates and contribute to Wales' ambition to become world leaders.

Seven schools have signed up to the Let's Go Zero campaign, these are led by the school eco-committee and include commitments to reduce the amount of waste they throw away, including plastic as well as improve school composting for the growing projects.

BG Food have delivered composting workshops in the community and at schools, where children have made their own 'rot pot' and learned the do's and don't of composting.

Online, BG Food have highlighted food waste tips from fridge management, shopping savvy methods to cooking commonly wasted items such as pumpkins, bread and potatoes.

Llanhilleth Miners Institute have made reducing food waste part of their core delivery with popular fermenting & pickling workshops along with batch cooking and 'fill your freezer' sessions.

Pentref Tyleri received community food development grant money to run a community composting project, the resulting compost is then distributed to the community. In addition to that they use biodegradable packaging and encourage people to bring their own containers and fill up water bottles.

Fareshare Cymru provide 5 of the community food aid network. One member Willowtown School have taken the opportunity to take on more surplus fresh produce to turn it into accessible and healthy ready meals. Further food waste is diverted back into human consumption with the very in demand end of day surplus supplying food aid networks across the borough. One example of food preservation can be found at Brynmawr Rotary who convert surplus into sauces and items like bread and butter pudding which are donated to a homeless organisation.

The community food aid network endeavour to share food mutually when there are surpluses. Harvest festivals and donation drives form the leisure trust or schools and churches are regularly distributed throughout the aid network. BG Food have worked with trading standards to support the network comply with laws on taking waste food to feed animals. This has facilitate conversations with large supermarkets about the burden they place on the food aid network by leaving them with unmanageable quantities of certain products like bread.

Reusing equipment is promoted through the network with a gardening tool shed available as a lending library and BG Food have a pop up community kitchen which is available to share with groups who want to get cooking.

Aneurin Leisure Trust promote water refill at all five of their leisure centres and both public parks.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).