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 your 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*:
Gateshead Food Partnership
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Nikki Dravers
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
Borough of Gateshead
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.*

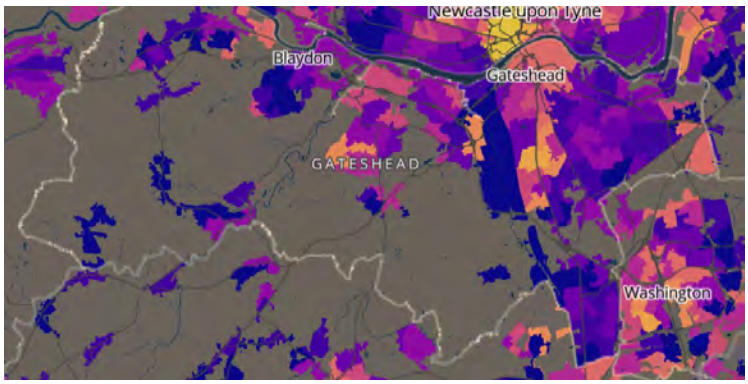
ANSWER:

Gateshead is a diverse borough in North East England, covering 55 square miles on the south bank of the River Tyne, opposite Newcastle. Home to around 202,800 people (as of mid-2024), it includes a mix of rural ex-mining villages like Chopwell and High Spen, urban multicultural areas around the town centre, and predominantly white working-class estates in the east such as Felling and Leam Lane. While the population is largely White British (93.5%), Gateshead is becoming increasingly diverse, with one of the UK's largest Orthodox Jewish communities and a growing number of refugees and asylum seekers. Despite regeneration efforts, the borough continues to face deep-rooted challenges linked to industrial decline, including economic inequality, poor health outcomes, and limited access to opportunity. Many residents still experience low-paid, insecure employment, limited access to opportunities, and health disparities across different wards**.**

Food Insecurity

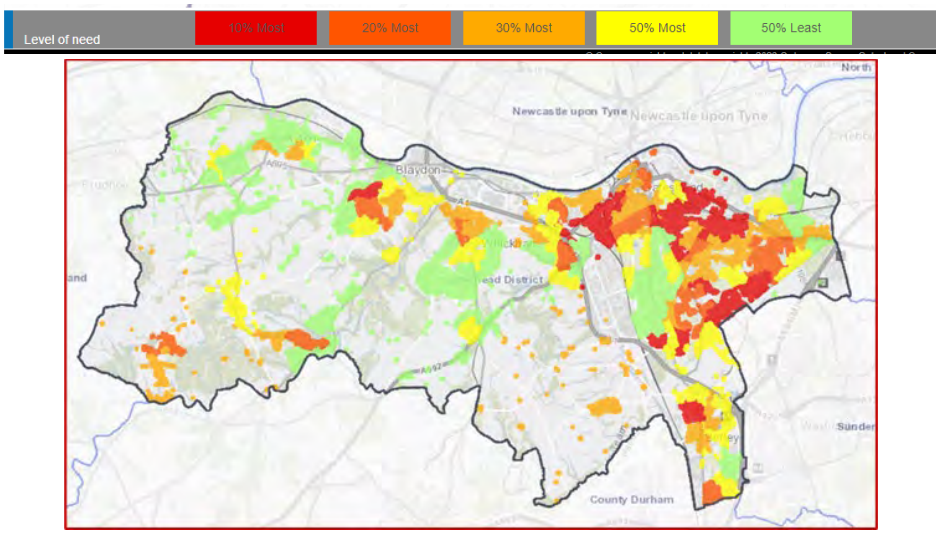
- One in four children in Gateshead are in poverty (JRF, 2024).
- 7,700 children are eligible for Free School Meals, representing 4,500 families.

- Gateshead has been identified as having one of the highest levels of risk of food insecurity when looking at factors such as proximity and access to supermarkets, fuel poverty, and access to online deliveries. (Source: Priority Places for Food Index, CDRC, 2024)



Gateshead 005E E01008279	
Overall decile	2
Supermarket proximity	3
Supermarket accessibility	6
Access to online deliveries	3
Socio-economic barriers	6
Non-supermarket food proximity	3
Family food support	2
Fuel poverty	7
Local Authority (2023) Gateshead	

- Inequality in Gateshead is pronounced: the Local Index of Need map below shows Income & Poverty colour-coded into level of need.



Health inequalities and diet-related disease

- Diet-related disease is now the highest cause of preventable early mortality. Healthy life expectancy in Felling, East Gateshead, is almost 15 years lower than in Whickham South.
- Surveys have found that just over half of adults in Gateshead eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables. Children eat less, with just one in four aged 8-11 and one in six aged 12-15 eating recommended amounts. Around a third of Gateshead's school children eat crisps, sweets or chocolate on most days. Source- Gateshead JSNA
- Children in most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to be living with obesity. 37.9% of children in year 6 in Gateshead have obesity or are overweight (England 36.6%). 68.4% of adults are reported as living with obesity. Higher rates in a number of the more deprived areas and lower levels in less deprived areas: in Felling, Saltwell, Dunston & Teams, and Lobley Hill & Bensham at year 6, which all have excess weight rates over 45% This is significantly worse than the England average of 63.8%.
- 1 in 3 children in Gateshead are affected by tooth decay by age five.

- In 2021-23, the rate of deaths in those under 75 from cardiovascular disease that was considered preventable was 38 per 100,000 in Gateshead, compared to an England average of 31 per 100,000.

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

ANSWER:

We are committed to ensuring that all voices are heard and represented in our work. We want to actively partner with underrepresented communities to understand their unique needs and support solutions that are culturally appropriate and accessible. For example, we commissioned a survey, research project and facilitated discussions with refugee and asylum-seeking communities to understand their unique needs in tackling food insecurity and diet-related health inequalities. We have also engaged with the Jewish community in Bensham through JCCG, though further work and discussion is needed to see how we can work with them more.

Our events, such as the Food Summit and From Gardens to Gatherings, are designed to be inclusive and welcoming. We ensure that all dietary requirements are catered for, including Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, vegan, and allergen-free options, so that everyone feels valued and included. We work to remove barriers to participation by offering events in accessible venues, providing transport or reimbursing transport costs where needed, and ensuring digital inclusion.

Our steering group has representation from a broad range of ages, backgrounds, and experiences. However, we recognise we could increase our steering group and working groups diversity to include those with lived experience of food insecurity, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, young people, and more from different cultural and faith groups. This is a priority in our action plan this year as we build a longer-term and more comprehensive food strategy.

To embed EDI in our strategic direction, our food strategy will be subject to the Council's Combined Impact Assessment. This ensures that our plans are scrutinised for their impact on equality, diversity, and inclusion, and that we are held accountable for delivering equitable outcomes.

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.

They 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 they 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 ~~/ No~~
2. **How are you evidencing this action plan?**
   - Attachment as a ~~Word, PFF~~, Excel document? Yes ~~/ No~~
   - Link to a document? Yes / 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?**
   - ~~Yes /~~ 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

Gateshead Food Partnership is hosted by Gateshead Council, with a coordinator part of the Community, Health, and Wellbeing team within Public Health, funded for the first two years by UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund. The coordinator role was made permanent in August 2024, and, though no further project funding has yet been agreed from March 2026, there is commitment from the council to ensure that some resource is allocated to Food Partnership activities.
We're working hard to ensure that the direction and decisions in forming a Good Food Strategy are determined by the steering group, with a variety of representatives from local businesses, community groups, experts, public sector partners and voluntary organisations. The initial steering group was formed early 2024, and it has had additional members join over the past 1.5 years.
The Steering group meet in person and online regularly. A Terms of Reference was agreed in the first few months and has recently been reviewed and updated.

Food Charter

The group then worked on creating a Food Charter for Gateshead. They built this Food Charter with a combination of:

1. inspiration from Sustainable Food Places, other UK food partnerships; framework of the six key themes from Sustainable Food Places
2. a 'vision' meeting, with steering group members working through questions such as "How would you describe Gateshead Food Partnership to a stranger you just met?" "What does success look like, in 10 years time?" "What is the number one issue related to food in Gateshead?"
3. refining and editing multiple drafts: iterations presented at food network meetings, one to one meetings with partners, and asking partners to get feedback from their beneficiaries and volunteers

Anyone on our mailing list is considered a member of Gateshead Food Partnership: they have 'signed' the Food Charter either at one of our events or through our website.
As of October 1st 2025, there are 175 individuals on the mailing list; of which there are 25 individuals/members of the public, and 150 people representing voluntary and faith organisations, public sector services, or private businesses, colleagues in Council and Public Health teams, have 'signed' the Food Charter, showing commitment to work together towards a better food system in Gateshead.

See appendix 1 for list for Food Partnership Steering group members and member organisations

Food Summit

The Food Charter for Gateshead was officially 'launched' at a Food Summit event in November 2024: held at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts. The Food Partnership 'officially' launched at a Food Summit event in November 2024, with over 170 attendees. The event picked up the momentum that was already building around the Food Partnership, and was an excellent day of discussion, networking, and passion for food system change.

The morning's speakers included Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Catherine Donovan; Andrew Forsey from Feeding Britain; 18-year-old Yacub, representing campaigning organisation Bite Back, who gave a powerful plea to fight against unhealthy food advertising: and Sheinaz Stansfield, retired Practice Manager at Rawling Road Medical Group, who spoke of her experience witnessing diet-related physical and mental health issues, shocking revelations about Ultra-Processed Foods, and the power of growing food in communities and eating food across cultural divides. Food Partnership Coordinator Nikki Dravers then introduced Gateshead Food Partnership and illustrated the idea of a 'whole food system' approach using a 'web' of string around the room.

An interactive, creative discussion time before lunch was facilitated by LIM. Top comments that came out of discussions in groups around the room included:

- *They have to recognise the value of community members and stop using their skills without proper renumeration for their time and expertise.*
- *Listening to residents- they have many of the answers.*
- *Very inspiring hearing the breadth of enthusiasm and political will across the borough!*
- *They need more spaces and times like this conference to make the connections necessary to create change.*
- *Youth voice and experience is imperative. They experience the food system in very different ways to adults.*

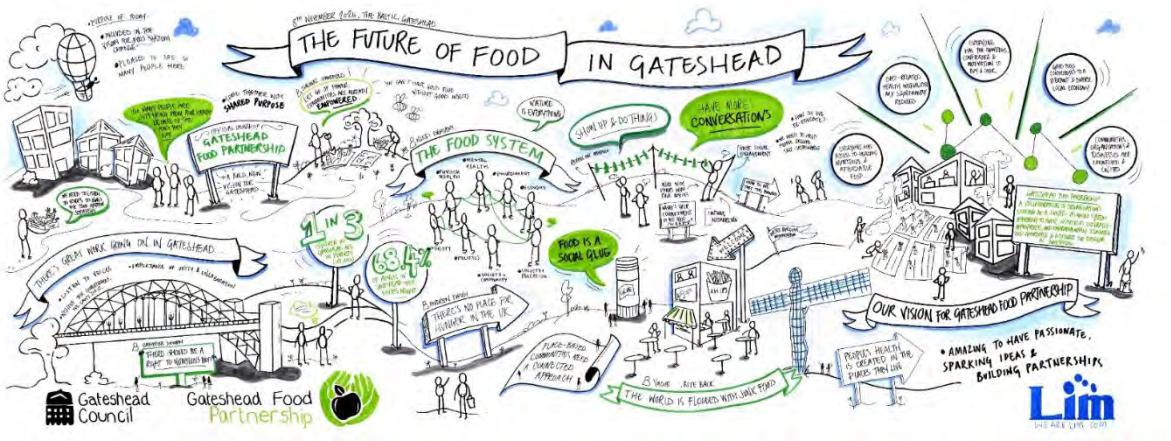
All attendees were asked to 'sign' the Food Charter by writing their name or organisation name and a pledge on a paper person, which was hung up as bunting for a photograph.

]

Catering was provided by Catering to be provided by Samosa Sisters, Gateshead Community Organisation (Deals on Meals), and Pickle Palace. REfUSE and Bensham Bites to provide zero-waste snacks on the tables, and North East Diversity, Education and Solidarity provided "Noah's Pudding": apparently "the world's oldest dessert".

It was great to support local charities and social enterprises in providing catering: though it meant more work to organise. coordinate food safety and hygiene paperwork, etc., the food provided was excellent and illustrated a diversity of food projects in Gateshead.

LIM Visuals were live-illustrating the morning talks and main stage panel on a large mural. There was also a roaming illustrator capturing attendees thoughts on an iPad, asking the questions “What does good food mean to you?” and, “What can you contribute to this in Gateshead?”



The event was captured in film by Digital Voice, including recording the morning talks, and making a vox-pop compilation of attendees answering “What does good food mean to you?” The films will be shared on the new Gateshead Food Partnership website and social media :e.g. **see this video** **GFP Summary of the day-Master on Vimeo.** Films of the day, the morning talks, photographs and artwork capture live throughout the day can be found on Gateshead Food Partnership website. www.gatesheadfoodpartnership.co.uk

Communications, website, social media, monthly newsletter communications

The Coordinator has met one-to-one with over 100 individuals from around 60 different VCSE partners and businesses in Gateshead since starting the role, working to gather momentum and ideas around the food partnership and food system change in Gateshead. A newsletter has been shared with this contact list every month, including offers of support, funding opportunities, requests or offers from those in the network, minutes of meetings, invitations to events, and interesting links related to food system transformation.

A Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn Page have been created and are regularly used: especially Facebook, which is a good means of sharing partners’ projects and activities. They have 231 followers on Facebook as of October 2025. They initially also had an X account but this was closed early in 2025 with unanimous steering group agreement.

Finally, a WhatsApp Group called “Food Redistribution Gateshead” has been set up to share surplus food between organisations who provide food. This has been effective not only in redistributing food and reducing waste, but also building a sense of partnership working and knowledge of other groups. A lot more than food now gets shared through this WhatsApp group, which is open to all to join.

Website: Food System Improvement | Gateshead food partnership | Gateshead
Facebook: Gateshead Food Partnership
Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/company/gateshead-food-partnership/
Introductory video of Food Partnership on Youtube: Gateshead Food Partnership

Networking events

This has been bolstered by a regular series of networking meetings with different themes relating to food in Gateshead, hosted and catered by VCSE partner organisations. These include:

1. Food Redistribution, Feb 2024. 35 attendees from organisations across Gateshead, including some private sector businesses who have previously been harder to engage with. Positive outcomes include organisations agreeing to share food and resources via a WhatsApp group (which has proved very effective, active every week); organisations being connected with a large food retailer who is willing to donate surplus and cost-price stock; and initial conversations to develop a food waste-saving schools project in Gateshead.
2. Cooking activities, March 2024. 20 organisations involved with teaching cooking skills. Well received, organisations sharing tips and ideas to equip them to run more activities, more effectively.
3. Food insecurity, May 2024: reimagining our response. 50 attendees, with speakers coming from a variety of backgrounds. This event marked the launch of our funding for community food projects, and the proposal of a 'food hub' to harness collective purchasing power.
4. Food growing, June 2024. 22 attendees, 10 who hadn't been to previous events. Facilitated excellently by Sheinaz Stansfield, some concrete outcomes and commitments to take actions from those who attended, including development of a food growing working group which will look towards organising a festival of food growing in 2025.
5. September 2024: Large food businesses (Team Valley)
6. November 2024: Food Summit
7. January 2025: Food provision for Refugee and Asylum Seeking communities (Gateshead Warm Welcome meeting). Around 25 attendees, this plus a survey was then compiled into a report on food insecurity amongst RAS communities.
8. February 2025: Food for People and Planet (funding opportunity)
9. March 2025: Networking meeting for organisations who received funding 2024-25. Those who received funding last year shared their progress, challenges; and those who were applying for funding gained insights, resources, and ideas. 25 attendees.
10. April 2025: Community food growing: a busy and engaging morning at the Comfrey Project. Groups identified training needs around community food growing; and identified what skills and expertise that had to share, to look for opportunities for more partnership working.

Gateshead Council Food Policy

The Coordinator has also worked internally within Gateshead Council teams: part of the Climate Emergency response team, the Healthy Weight Alliance, and has met with staff in Planning, Public Health, Procurement, Business, and Education teams, as well as working with colleagues coordinating Holiday Activities with Food and Warm Spaces projects. A 'Good Food Local' project, led by Sustain, was a useful exercise of food policy mapping within the council, benchmarking against other local authorities in the region. This has helped develop an understanding of how multiple council services can each contribute to food system change: this will take time.

UKSPF Grant funding to 'Community Food Projects' across Gateshead:

£79,731 grant funding was awarded to 21 projects 2025-26; £64,676 to 20 projects in 2024-25. They were also offered funds from the council's climate team in February 2025 so gave out a further £21,820 of grants entitled "Food for People and Planet".

The funding criteria included this description:

"We're looking to fund new activities, partnerships, new ways of doing things, which could provide insight into and pave the way for long term sustainable food system change in Gateshead. They encourage organisations to think strategically, think 'outside of the box', using it as an opportunity to pilot new creative approaches. They want to use this opportunity to share learning with others in the food partnership network and build a joined-up approach to tacking food insecurity. Gateshead Food Partnership will work collaboratively with organisations to maximise the impact of this funding, for a sustainable, long-term approach to community food resilience"

Many of the activities from partner projects described in this document and the Action Plan are thanks to these funding opportunities: the funds have been a very valuable way to build momentum and brand of the Food Partnership, and unite partners behind a shared vision around tackling food insecurity through capacity building.

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

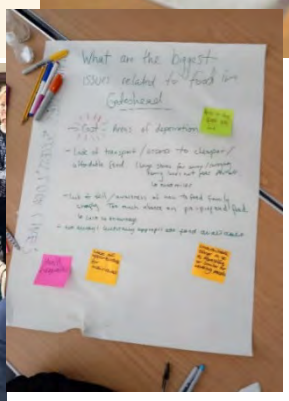
The networking meetings mentioned above have been well attended with a range of different people; we've aimed to host them across Gateshead geographically so that they engage a breadth of perspectives. At every meeting, the question is asked, "what are the biggest issues relating to food in Gateshead?", and, "what are the biggest opportunities?". I have collated some of the responses in the graphics overleaf

Following these workshops, desk-based research as to the issues facing Gateshead, and informal discussions, a Food Charter was drafted and workshopped by the Food Partnership Steering Group: see next page. This was officially 'launched' at the Gateshead Food Summit, and will form the framework for the Strategy and Action plan.

They applied to become a member of Sustainable Food Places in 2024: the initial action plan from this membership application has been delivered.

The action plan attached to this application is, in general, repeat of work done over the past year, with some development over the next year of projects and momentum built so far. This action plan was approved by the Food Partnership Steering Group on 20th September 2025.

Please see illustrations on the next two pages that show the journey of developing a food strategy so far. A three-year food strategy is currently in very draft form, the next steps are to engage further with public consultations, research, and discussions with partnership members. One of the actions within this year action plan is the want to form working groups around each food charter theme so that accountability and ownership can be shared.



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

Regional and National Networks

The Food Partnership Coordinator is actively involved in regional and national networks that support idea sharing, collaboration, and impact. These include:

- North East Sustainable Food Alliance – network of food partnerships in the north east
- Feeding Britain Network – network of organisations and food partnerships supporting projects that take us from food banks to food clubs
- Sustainable Food Places coordinator network. Coordinator has spoken at Sustain's National conference about Good Food Local; and attended SFP's celebration event in Westminster.
- Good Food Local steering group

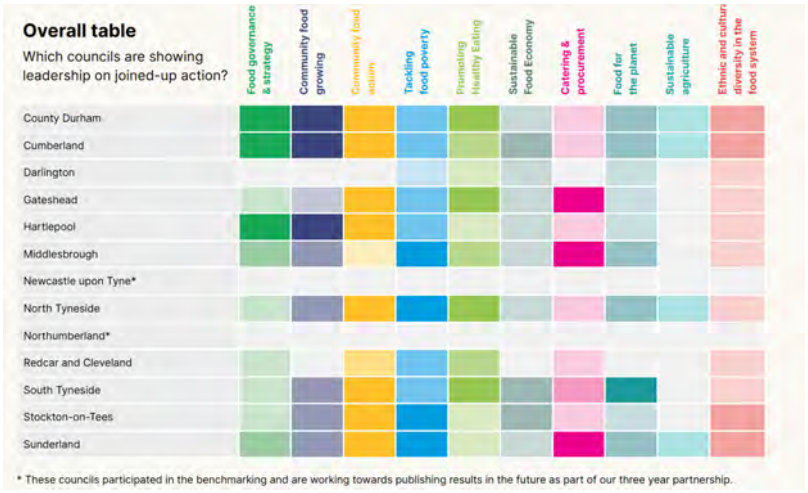
Good Food Local

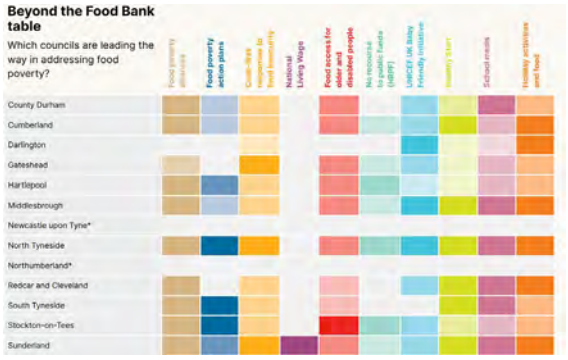
Led by Sustain and funded by Impact on Urban Health, Good Food Local selected the North East in September 2023 to pilot a regional Good Food framework and benchmarking programme. The aim is to encourage local authority commitments to healthy, sustainable, and affordable food. The programme is backed by the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), all 12 North East councils (plus Cumberland), and local food partnerships.

The benchmarking helps councils understand how the North East compares to other regions, supporting efforts to reduce health inequalities and improve access to good food. Sustain defines "good food" as food that benefits communities, supports local economies, and promotes secure livelihoods.

The regional aims align closely with work in Gateshead led by the Gateshead Food Partnership and Public Health team. Outcomes include a baseline overview, regional table of practice, case studies, and a RAG-rated action plan. More info on ADPH and Sustain websites:

- baseline results from the Good Food Benchmarking exercise for the first year of the pilot
- results from the second, more 'paired back' round of benchmarking questions
- case studies of best practice across the North East region





Timeline so far…

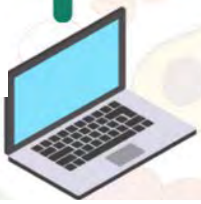
Diverse representation: across geography, expertise (whole food system), size of organisation or project, age, ethnicity, gender

1:1 Meetings with Key Individuals

Funding to groups, themed networking meetings

Food Summit November 2024: official 'launch' of food partnership, food charter singed

Steering group established March



Target existing meetings and networks

Food Charter published June 2024

Member of Sustainable Food Places May 2024

Website and branding for Food Partnership

Evaluation so far, funding secured, political backing, national and regional networks, steering group

Partnership-wide activities and new projects e.g. Food Hub; food redistribution

Broaden public engagement: 'Gardens to Gatherings' event, Saltwell Park, September 2025

Working Groups formed to take on strategy forming and accountability for areas of action plan

Further funding to groups, targeted support and facilitated networking

Agree Ownership and Metrics

1-year Food Action Plan agreed with steering group
Sustainable Food Places Bronze application
3-Year Food Strategy drafted: to be worked on by working groups and further public consultation

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

NB at Silver *they 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

From Gardens to Gatherings Event September 2025

At a Food Partnership networking meeting around community food growing in June 2024, the group of 22 people from around 15 different organisations came up with ideas for what we could do as a partnership, then voted for the top three. One of those top three was to put on some sort of festival or event that celebrates local food production and growing activities in Gateshead, potentially around harvest time so that produce could be shared. In around February 2025 we started to think about this idea, and a few things coincided: Christine Wright from RHS, on the food partnership steering group, was given £800 funding from the RHS to put on a community event; Gateshead College approached the council to say they wanted to put on some events to celebrate their 80th birthday; and the council was offered some funds from the mayor, the North East Combined Authority, to put on public events. These, combined with UKSPF funding for the food partnership, meant that a small harvest festival event very quickly ballooned into a large-scale event in the largest park in central Gateshead – Saltwell Park.

We called the event "From Gardens to Gatherings, a Celebration of Community Food in Gateshead". We held workshops with food partnership steering group members, Gateshead College, and the council's events team, to build a 'theory of change' for what we wanted the event to be about.

The event comprised of:

- Stretch tent filled with stalls showcasing 20 different voluntary sector organisations and projects based around food growing, creativity, and community food activities. Some had the chance to sell their produce e.g. honey, jams and chutneys, fruit and veg, drinks made from herbs, smoothie bike with surplus fruit, samosas from a refugee women-led social enterprise.
- Gazebo area for practical workshops: from tricks for reducing food waste to storytelling about Gateshead's food heritage, from how to grow veg in small urban spaces to what you can eat just by walking around Saltwell Park
- Food Theatre Tipi– hosted by Chef Anthony O'Shaughnessy, with guests from 5 different Gateshead-based restaurants and organisations
- Hot food offer serving locally produced and organic food cooked by Gateshead College students; a local Punjabi restaurant; and an Ethiopian family business.

- Area to eat together – banquet-style communal tables, dressed with wildflowers
- A small stage for entertainment, musical performances
- An area for children and young people: art workshops, story telling and songs; face painting and hair braiding; rice cracker decorating

Outcomes

- Total estimated attendees**:** 1,650 (The event was open-access to all in the park, not set entrances and no tickets, so difficult to know the numbers, but we did a rough headcount every hour)
- Gateshead College involved over 70 students from 9 different curriculum areas – e.g. Film & photography; Art & Design; Uniformed Public Services; Construction; Marketing & Business; Children & Early Years; Catering; Performing Arts: 900 + hours work experience logged. Lisa Crow, Gateshead College CoLab Manager, said, "…there was a real buzz … This is exactly what we're trying to do – give students exposure to real projects with employers – is there any better way to learn and develop skills?!"
- 100% of attendees who were surveyed expressed interest in more events like this – two different surveys were done, 45 people surveyed in total.
- 27 out of 29 people said they feel more aware of and connected to community food projects. 25 said they met or connect to new people, 23 said they learnt something new.
- **Participants reported being inspired to: (mentions out of 29 surveyed)**
    - **Grow your own food** – 20 mentions

- **Reduce food waste** – 17 mentions
- **Cook more at home** – 15 mentions
- **Get involved with a local group** – 10 mentions
- **Volunteer** – 4 mentions
- **Eat more vegetarian food** – 2 mentions

Comments from surveys:

- *I go to a lot of events like this and people are sick of seeing the same food trucks and businesses attending them. Having something local that includes only Gateshead businesses is amazing! There should be way more of these. And the diversity of attendees and stall holders was amazing, well done.*
- *Well done to the organisers who put on some amazing workshops and help crafted a beautiful community feel good event. Well done!*
- *Loved having local restaurants there, would love to see more events with stalls from small local businesses in Gateshead, and keep up the amazing diversity you had at this event!*

Comments from event contributors:

- *I really enjoyed running my workshop. It was a great opportunity to test a new idea. I was pleased with how it went - and the enthusiasm for which it seemed to be received.*
- *It was such an amazing day! We had lots of chats with people from all over the region. Lots of people had heard about the event through social media, but a fair few I think where just around the park and wanted to stop by. It was incredibly valuable to be able to be able to talk to the public about our charity*
- *Thank you for inviting us to such a well organised event. We pedalled up over 70 smoothies and had some great engagement with a very receptive crowd. Really enjoyed the food theatre, and getting to try the food encouraged conversations with strangers sat next to you sharing the same tasters.*
- *We worked with at least 150 families! It was great to see the fantastic work going on across Gateshead, most of them I had no idea about.*


BOSS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Food Partnership organisations and projects which were funded by UKSFP 'Community Food Project' funding: examples of projects which are about 'good food movement'

(n.b. inevitably there is lots of crossover with other Key Issues and Action areas)

- **Brighten The Day/ HAF** In 2023 the #BrightentheDay team (Brighten the Day is the brand name for HAF in Gateshead) - created several pop-up cooking kits. The intention was be able to create mini cooking schools in community buildings to facilitate hands-on food workshops and classes for Free School Meal qualified children in the holidays. The kits have been designed with children in mind. There are safe knives and peelers, and induction hobs are a core component, as they have little residual heat when switched off. Aprons are wipe-clean PVC, and spatulas and spoons are brightly coloured. The pop-up kitchen kit is designed to allow 16 children to cook in one session, working in pairs, and there are five pop-up kitchen kits. They are needed during the school holidays but are available to careful community-based borrowers during term time, along with suggested recipes and workshop plans. These have been very well used and engaged hundreds of children and young people with cooking skills.
- **Skills4work** "Healthy food, my choice": Skills4Life identified in a survey of their current young adults that 90% felt they had no choice in their meals and many had at least 3 take-away meals per week: "not only a huge cost but also the unhealthy fast food diet is not a treat but a way of life". Their project included producing videos, cooking skills sessions, and working with young families to develop links with a community garden. They are now developing the Community Garden at The Mount to be a learning space for local families to understand how easy it is to grow their own food with only a small space. They have produced literature that can be found in the garden to take away, which will be stored in weather resistant boxes on healthy cooking using simple ingredients. It will encourage families to continue the cooking at home via the use of the videos and recipe leaflets which will be uploaded to the WhatsApp group and printed in an Easy Read layout.
- **Men's Pie Club (MPC)** uses food as a means of bringing communities together; to embrace diversity and the uniqueness each individual brings to the table; to create something that celebrates its strengths; and to look for ways to improve the situations of our members and the wider society. MPC is free-of-charge, accessible, informal and provides a warm welcome and warm food to everyone.
- **REfUSE Pay as You Feel Café**, though technically in County Durham and part of Food Durham partnership, have been actively involved in Gateshead Food Partnership activities as they are just over the border. They have been facilitating a series of skills and ideas sharing with Gateshead organisations, including offering free tours and lunches to Gateshead groups, cooking and teaching sessions to young people from Skills4Work, and going to Gateshead to do fermenting, dehydrating, and apple pressing workshops.
- **Shah Jalal Community Centre and Mosque** Started a new Sadaqah-based meal project for community. They identified many people in their area, especially asylum seekers and refugees, who struggle with food. Weekly cooking sessions and monthly big community lunches where people can come together, eat halal food, talk, feel they are not alone. *"Food is not just eating, it is about Ummah and togetherness. In our faith, sharing food brings barakah, so we follow this Sunnah. This project gives food and makes people feel welcome and happy. Cooking and dining helps people feel less lonely. Many asylum seekers feel*

isolated, but now they come, eat, talk, and feel like family. Some say they make new friends. People from different cultures come together. They share traditional foods, tell stories, and learn about cooking. Some brothers and sisters never cooked with others before, but now they enjoy it. They feel proud of their food and culture. Food is more than eating—it connects hearts"

- **Chopwell Regeneration CIO** have conducted a piece of research and written a very comprehensive report entitled "Can Chopwell Feed Itself?". This is explained more in Key Issue 6, and attached. The group are now recruiting for someone to help run a number of projects to help 'Chopwell feed itself' including growing more edible plants, encouraging children to get interested in growing, setting up a gardening tool lending service, developing a recipe booklet and running family learning sessions around healthy eating.
- **Hope beyond borders** run plant-based cooking workshops where migrant chefs share recipes from their home countries. These events aren't just about food they're about sharing stories, learning from each other, and building community. They also grow fresh produce in their community allotments and collect surplus food to make sure nothing goes to waste. The meals prepared often go to families facing hardship, and the workshops help people learn how to cook healthy meals on a budget. This is all done with a focus on sustainability, inclusion, and empowerment, supporting people to build skills, connect with others, and be part of a more fair and climate-friendly food system.

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

Pledges and engagement at the Food Summit and Gardens to Gatherings Event

At the Food Summit, we asked all attendees to write a 'pledge' for something they would do either individually, or on behalf of their organisation, to work toward 'good food'. They wrote these on paper people which were hung on a line. We then repeated this at the Gardens to Gatherings festival, and got more sign-ups to the Food Charter.

At the Food Summit event, guests were asked "What does Good Food mean to you?" – we made a vox pop video of the answers: GFP Good food is master on Vimeo This video was shared on social media and will continue to be used in future publicity to engage the public with the same question.

At the Saltwell Park event, we asked people to share their favourite foods, share recipes, and also answer 'what does good food mean to you'. We captured these on post-it notes and big pieces of paper in the main stretch-tent: a good way to get people thinking and talking about good food.

Partnerships

Food partnership networking opportunities, the Food Summit, and the UKSPF Community Food Project funding, have led to some impactful partnerships between individuals and organisations formed over the past two years. A comment at the 'Gardens to Gatherings' event from one of the stallholders was, "its funny, all the people in this stretch tent, it feels very incestuous…" – reflecting that, the 20 or so organisations in the tent now are used to working so much together in partnership. This, I felt, is a great testament to the food partnership's work so far, reflecting on the contrast between this and our first few networking meetings, where partners didn't know about each other's organisations or projects even if they were in close geographic proximity.

Example projects working in partnership over the last year because of the Food Partnership:

- **Hope Beyond Borders** have had lots of help to get their allotments started through connection with Nourish the Wild – see Key Issue 6 action area 2.
- **Skills 4 Work** have connected with **REfUSE** and **Embells** to learn from each other, share food, and make referrals for their young people
- **Bensham Bites** is a collaboration of around 5 different growing projects in central Gateshead, both existing and new, into one network to explore creative ways to engage community food growing, waste, rescue, presevation, branding and distribution for health and wellbeing. Through the creation of a series of creative, food and nature themed workshops and activities, Bensham Bites develops collaborations across different organisaions, shares knowledge, training opportunities, and resources for the benefit of the community. Bensham Bites - Dingy Butterflies | Dingy Butterflies - Creativity | Community | Collaboration
- **RHS + Bensham Court** The high-rise flats of Bensham Court are supported accommodation flats with some vulnerable residents. They have a food bank which is used by residents weekly. Christine from RHS connected with them to start an allotment

on land outsie the flats: the first thing the residents asker to grow was salad, because they identified that there was nowhere in walking distance that they could access fresh vegetables.

- **Gateshead Community Bridgebuilder, Fozie,** met chef and food educator **Anthony O'Shuaghnessy** at the Food Summit. They formed a collaboration with Teakisi and Gateshead Community Bridgebuilders on a cooking project. Held in Felling—one of Gateshead's most deprived areas—the initiative supports ethnic minority women who face higher risks of social isolation and diet-related illnesses. The project provides a welcoming space to build friendships, reduce loneliness, and improve mental wellbeing through shared cooking. Anthony has taught global healthy cooking skills, including foraging and inclusive techniques for those with physical disabilities. By exploring cultural traditions around food, the group fosters emotional connection and mutual respect, aiming to build bridges and be a safe space for women of all backgrounds.


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

NB at Silver *they 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: Tackle food poverty

There is lots of collaborative working, sharing of resources and mutual support across public, private, voluntary and faith organisations in Gateshead in response to poverty and food insecurity. Following the 'Food Ladders' approach, we want to find encourage models which give larger choice, more dignity, and a more sustainable, less emergency response which are focussed on 'capacity building' to encourage longer-term community resilience. One of our aims in our Gateshead Food Charter is*: "We want Gateshead to be a place where everyone has access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food, moving from reliance on food aid to food justice and resilience."*

Beyond the Foodbank

There has been a 213% increase in demand at Gateshead Food Bank over the last decade, with over 4,500 food parcels distributed in 2024, feeding over 12,000 people, a third of which are children. However, and encouragingly, demand reduced last year in 2024/25 with 563 fewer emergency food parcels issued, reflecting the ongoing efforts to combat food insecurity across Gateshead and Gateshead Foodbank's efforts to provide comprehensive, wrap-around support to make use of the foodbank the last port of call. 60% of clients at Gateshead Foodbank accessed the service only once during the year.

In addition to the Trussell Trust foodbank, which operates over three sites Central, Blaydon and Birtley, there around 30 voluntary, charity, social enterprise, and faith-based organisations across the Gateshead geography that offer a form of free or affordable food support to local people. These include large charities and grassroots organisations, from pop-up food banks, food cooperatives, and social supermarkets, to lunch clubs and 'pay what you can' cafes.

Across the UK, the use of social supermarkets increased for the third year in a row, highlighting that citizens are happy to purchase food where affordable, and where choice and dignity are at the core. In Gateshead, two new social supermarkets/food clubs have opening over the past two years: **Hope House, Alive Church** on Durham Road, and **St Chad's Community Market**. These run on a cooperative-style model, with a minimal membership fee of £1 per week, items priced with coloured stickers, and a selection of both fresh and store-cupboard ingredients on sale at a fraction of retail price.

St Chad's Community Market

Opened on 15th September 2025. A beautiful space, full of a great variety of food, including fresh and multi-cultural foods to meet all the needs of the community in BenshamThe market is open 5 days a week and runs on a co-operative membership model with producer priced by stickers. The market is connected in with all the brilliant things St Chads Community Project has going on for local families. It was funded by our UKSPF Community Food Project funding alongside other funding from Gateshead Council and the Lottery.

The Bread and Butter Thing have recently launched in Deckham, providing weekly groceries at a low price. Since opening they have been in high demand and received lots of positive feedback, with around 80 families benefitting from the grocery bags. The affordable food club is based in a family hub next to a school with the highest rates of free school meal eligibility (60%), in an area which did not have another charitable food offer. There is no eligibility criteria for the food club, and the family hub is able to offer lots of other support services for families accessing TBBT bags. Listen to podcast about this here: Community Catalyst: How Food Creates Transformation — The Bread and Butter Thing — The Bread and Butter Thing

Other examples of 'capacity building' projects which have received funding from the Gateshead Food Partnership UKSPF Community Food Project funding include:

- **Alive Church Pop up Pantry** Every Monday. Pop Up Pantry is a Food project that is about drawing communities together around affordable food while empowering individuals to have choice around the food they consume. The pantry provides the local community with access to a broad range of high quality food and household goods at low cost. Everyone can join and benefit from the pantry, pay a £2 membership fee and access fresh and ambient goods all costing 50% less than the retail price. Alongside this, they offer a warm welcome along with space to meet up, speak to others and grab a cuppa. Pop Up Pantry is part of Gateshead Council's Warm Welcome network.
- **Embells** weekly food pantry supports people to access free or low-cost nutritional food. They see over 100 people access their pantry every week. They work very hard to make sure the food pantry has a great selection of fresh fruit, vegetables, proteins and more. Embells also run a community lunch, and cooking demonstration workshops with

participants encouraged to take ingredients home and post onto a Facebook group to show they've learnt and tried new recipes.

- **Teams Life Centre** "Cook together, Eat together" project is aimed at empowering participants to come together in a safe warm and welcoming environment for any asylum seekers and refugees but particularly for anyone residing in temporary accommodation without access to cooking facilities. Each week participants cook a healthy culturally appropriate meal that can be shared with the rest of the group. While food is being prepared there will be opportunities to take part in mindful crafts, high energy games using our sports hall and confidential 1-1 or small group sessions for mental health support. Also, external agencies have agreed to come along to deliver talks around Oral health, Fire safety, sun safe, hate crime and health eating.
- **Barmoor Hub** will put on 10 cooking sessions and prepare meals to be frozen and offered to local people at a low cost. It will fight local food insecurity by increasing our capacity to provide free or low-cost meals to families, older people, and individuals on low incomes, promoting wellbeing and connection through shared meals and food-based activities and enhance skills and knowledge via cooking workshops and healthy eating support.
- **High Spen Social Action** transformed an old football changing room into a welcoming and accessible space where families can access food without stigma. They have become a Fareshare community partner and collect surplus food from local supermarkets. While it may look like just a few tables, kitchen units, and new flooring, this upgrade has been vital in creating a supportive environment where parents and carers can collect food while their children attend our Holiday Hunger Kid's Clubs. By equipping the space with essentials like a fridge and air fryer, we've been able to meet the local council's hot meal criteria for holiday action groups. This has helped improve the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged families by ensuring consistent access to nutritious, hot meals in a dignified and community-focused setting.
- **Age UK Gateshead** Teach families cooking skills, through our friendship groups who have generational knowledge of "making a meal out of nothing" (war time generation of make do and mend attitude) They have based their idea on the "Family Meal Model" a time when families bond, connect and come together over food, sharing stories about their day, something which is often lost in everyday life. This encourages positive nutritional habits, trust building and connecting not only through cooking but through conversation, helping to break down social barriers and allowing those to become more integrated into the community. AgeUK have just received funding from the Food Partnership 'Community Food Projects' fund 2025 to establish a Community Café and Food Hub in a centrally located space on Jackson Street, Gateshead. This innovative, volunteer-run project aims to reduce food insecurity and social isolation by providing a welcoming warm space offering nutritious, culturally appropriate meals and access to food bank services
- **Churches Together in Blaydon** Provided 'meal bags' throughout the school summer holidays which would contain the recipe and ingredients for a nutritious and balanced meal for a family or individual. The project helped them form partnerships with local grocers and shops who have continued to donate produce. Each week in the summer was themed around a different country so people had the opportunity to try different foods and recipes that they may not have tried before. In the winter session they also had the ingredients for an apple crumble as well as the chicken casserole that week to encourage more cooking

skills. The local Salvation Army team offer a cooking and budgeting course which was promoted to people at the Health and Wellbeing Fair so people could access this for more support and skills. This course has continued to run with new people attending after the promotion. They had comments from some users of the Larder about how much they appreciated the meal bag and how having the recipes encouraged them to cook and value their food rather than just 'consume food'. People living on their own especially appreciated it.

- **Bensham Food Coop** run a food pantry in a church in Bensham which serves over 100 people every week. They have recently benefitted from regular use of the Food Hub bulk purchasing and delivery scheme, and received funding for a project which aimed to build capacity in their volunteers, many of who have lived experience of seeking asylum. Volunteers discussed uses of different foods, gained confidence to speak in school assemblies, and discussed 'what we do well' and what we do better' including adding other food to the pantry like eggs, honey and as much fresh fruit and vegetables as possible. The health and wellbeing of local residents, who attend the Food Co-op, will be positively improved by having access to an increased amount and range of nutritious, fresh food.
- **Peace of Mind CIO** supports marginalised RAS communities in Gateshead by improving access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, while tackling food insecurity and financial exclusion. The charity is based in a Methodist Church, right in the middle of the orthodox Jewish community of Bensham, and led by volunteers with Muslim faith who have experienced the refugee and asylum-seeking system: a wonderful example of diversity in central Gateshead. Peace of Mind provides tailored advice, advocacy, and practical support, helping people navigate complex systems and build confidence. They offer money management workshops, emergency food parcels, and welfare advice to boost household income and resilience. Their trusted, community-led approach ensures people feel safe, supported, and empowered to make lasting, positive changes in their lives. They are also a powerful advocate for refugees and asylum-seeking communities. "*Our charity does not just hand out food. We build trust, restore dignity, and create pathways out of poverty. When a mother leaves our building with a full bag and a lighter heart, we know we have done more than feed a family. We have sparked hope.*"

Borough-wide actions from Gateshead Food Partnership

Below is a summary of borough-wide actions specifically related to food insecurity.

- **Support community food provision through grant funding**. £79,731 UKSPF funding distributed to 21 projects in 2024; £64,676 in 2025 to 20 projects; to support 'capacity building' projects that work to prevent the need for emergency food aid. E.g. food growing, cooking skills, school projects, community kitchens, social supermarkets/pantries. The funding round in 2025 was aligned in time with the final round of Household Support Funding, which meant that VCSE partners could apply for HSF for emergency and poverty crisis support, and UKSPF for 'preventative' support. This sets up for the emphasis on prevention coming from national government for their 'Crisis and Resilience Funding' in 2026.

- **Bulk purchasing of food products to harness the collective purchasing power of community food providers.** Partnership with Green Heart NE CIC to run a year trial, ending October-December 2025: "Gateshead Food Hub". The hub offers delivery of food at wholesale prices (with no charges for delivery) to support projects in making their funding and donations go further. The hub can also deliver surplus food items for free. Bulk purchasing of food products to food banks, community larders, social cafes and other food-oriented projects across Gateshead. They are currently reviewing the results and feedback from the year trial, and considering options for merging this project with others, including working in partnership regionally, to give more economy of scale.

- **Directory of free and affordable food in Gateshead**. Word document produced and shared; updated every quarter and uploaded to Gateshead Food Partnership Website; working with Connected Voice to develop and broaden impact and reach. "Don't Eat Alone at Christmas" poster produced in 2024 and will be 2025 again. Community Food Provision | Gateshead food partnership | Gateshead

- **Support for food surplus redistribution**. Supporting partners to connect and share any surplus food they have between themselves. Whatsapp group "Food Redistribution Gateshead",

currently 55 members, has facilitated over 40 food sharing occasions since January 2025; over 6 tonnes food redistributed.

- **Targeted support for refugee and asylum-seeking communities.** Following a meeting held in June 2024 with organisations involved with food support for refugee and asylum seeking (RAS) communities, they commissioned Julian Prior who coordinates the Welcome Hub network in Gateshead, to take on a piece of research work. The resulting report came from several interviews, a survey, and a Welcome Hub networking meeting centred around food support. Recommendations include, raising awareness of culturally appropriate food needs among VCSE sector food providers, cooking activities to help RAS communities learn how to cook with 'western' ingredients, support with bulk-buying of cultural foods e.g. basmati rice, chapatti flour, chickpeas , filling a gap in food provision over weekends, the need for more cooking facilities. Many of these recommendations are taken up in our good food action plan and the council's poverty strategy.

- **'Crop drop' from allotments and local farms**. Encouraging food producers on small farms and allotments to share any surplus food they have, or even 'grow a row' to share with food provision projects local to them. So far informal advice has been given to allotment holders, and few links have been made with community allotments and local schools, food pantries and charities: for example, the Hop Garden and High Spen primary school. The action plan includes plans to extend this scheme.

- **Good use of qualitative and qualitative research** to inform future anti-poverty work and funding priorities. So far, we have worked with HDRC researcher, who sits on our food partnership steering group, doing a piece of research at the Trussell Trust food bank about the experience of refugees and asylum seekers at food banks. This research should be published soon and will inform action. We also did a mapping exercise at one of our food partnership networking events in May 2024, where 55 attendees marked their projects on a map to colour code projects against rungs of the food ladder. Next is research on the Household Support Funding: it's impact, how it has been received, whether it has reached the most marginalised communities. The Action Plan includes mapping of 'free and affordable food' provision against Priority Places Food Insecurity by LSOA and LiON data to identify gaps in provision, and 'food ladders' approach across the borough. Share this data with partners and public to inform wider regional and national priorities and policy. If 'Crisis and Resilience Fund' allows for any continuation of something akin to Household Support Funding, next steps will be informed by data and research, including feedback and working together with VCSE partners.

- **A Food Justice Action/ Food Power initiative** is to be developed alongside Gateshead Council's upcoming Poverty Strategy: connecting voices of lived experience, people affected by food insecurity, people managing charitable food provision, and Council services, to address underlying drivers of poverty and low income and push forward on moving 'beyond food banks', from food aid to food justice. So far, some funding has been identified by the council's Health, Community and Wellbeing team, and they are progressing on a secondment/MOU with a partner organisation to take the lead on this.

We recognise that food insecurity cannot be tackled in isolation: interventions need to be included and overlapped to address the overall experience of poverty, for example tackling issues around health inequalities, education, employment, housing, and transport. Gateshead Council is currently developing a partnership driven Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan to tackling poverty and inequality, which will be completed by July 2026. Representatives from Gateshead Food Partnership will be involved in discussions, firstly by attending a Poverty Summit on 6th November, bringing together a cross sector audience to hear about and contribute to an approach to tackle poverty and reduce financial hardship in Gateshead, whilst capturing and using the views of those with lived experience to shape this approach.

Other Council actions, and how the Food Partnership is included

Warm Welcome Spaces and Fuel Poverty

The Council has a ringfenced Fuel Poverty fund which is used to fund local community groups offering Energy Roadshows, Winter Warmer Packs and a network of 85 Warm Welcome Spaces, many of which provide food.

In 2024 the HDRC research into Gateshead's Warm Spaces recommended, "To tackle food insecurity more effectively, the programme should consider a more unified approach to food provision, particularly in high-poverty areas where the need is greatest. Consistent quality and availability of meals across all Warm Spaces could ensure that every attendee receives the nourishment they need".

With a similar approach to HSF, Crisis and Resilience Funding will contribute to the funding of food offers across Warm Welcome Spaces. Future Warm Welcome Spaces network meetings will discuss how they can connect with Gateshead Food Partnership and how they can work together to support an offer of more nutritious food provision.

Support for wrap-around services including financial and money advice services for residents experiencing food insecurity

Citizen's Advice Gateshead (CAG) has received significant funding from the Council and in the past 18 months has increased this funding further (from Public Health) which as allowed CAG to expand its outreach into Family Hubs, Locality Hubs, VCSE drop-ins, and Foodbanks, with the introduction of weekend availability to better support working households.

The new Crisis and Resilience Funding's added preventative focus provides a unique opportunity to implement and embed a two-way referral into wider wrap-around support services, with food providers referring into CAG or Age UK Gateshead and vice-versa, for those partners to refer into local food provision.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

Gateshead has a well-established and extensive HAF programme, providing enrichment activities and high-quality food provision that includes healthy eating to FSM eligible children across Gateshead during the main school holidays; Easter, Summer and Christmas.

The Council's provision supports primary aged school children and recently developed a programme targeting teenage children, named HAF plus. This has been a huge success and has allowed hundreds of older children in school years 8-11 with eligibility to FSM's to access age-

appropriate activities and food choices across Gateshead, encompassing free travel and the use of a mobile phone app to manage their activities and share with their friends.

In August this year the Government announced an extension to funding with a further three year commitment to ensure the HAF programme will be delivered through to 2029. Gateshead Food Partnership's Coordinator sits on the Steering Committee of HAF, and aims to support increased access to nutritious food through this project.

Benefits take-up campaigns

In 2024/25 Age UK Gateshead were awarded £40K from HSF and have been funded a further £40K from the latest 2025/26 allocation to deliver for Advice, Information and guidance in relation to benefits take-up with older people aged 50 and over, focusing on Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payments. Council Benefits and Housing Support services have targeted potentially eligible residents to encourage Pension Credit applications.

Gateshead already operates automatic enrolment for Free School Meals (FSM). However, the Council has recently used data to identify areas of disconnect between levels of FSM criteria, such as child benefit and low income households with levels of FSM registrations. Ten areas were identified for targeted work and work is ongoing to identify and auto-enrol further families onto FSM. A working group has been developed, and a communications plan and wider campaign are being planned.

Research by Policy in Practice suggests that tens of millions of pounds of benefits and social tariffs go unclaimed in Gateshead each year. A wider benefits take-up campaign is being developed in partnership with Citizens Advice Gateshead and Age UK Gateshead in a bid to encourage more residents to claim the benefits and tariffs they are eligible for and increase their household incomes. A communications campaign around this will be released in the coming weeks.

Voices of Lived Experience

The Council recognises the importance of amplifying the voices of individuals facing financial hardship in marginalised communities and is actively engaging with them. Building on the work of the Gateshead Poverty Truth Commission, residents with lived experience of poverty are telling their stories, which allows the Council and its partners to guide local strategies that affect them, including food poverty as they speak into the development of a new Poverty Strategy for Gateshead.

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

The Food Partnership coordinator works within the Public Health team of Gateshead Council, and the steering group includes Public Health colleagues who are working on a number of policy levers aimed at healthier food environments, for example:

- **Hot food takeaways:** Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document: planning permission not given if: high levels of obesity, near CYP areas, over-proliferation of HFTs or negative impacts on the local area. Great success, with no new HFTs opened since 2015. The SPD has been supported by a nutritional analysis of takeaways to support the evidence base for the SPD, this nutritional work is being once again carried as a refresh. Street trading policy, junk food advertising, fast food takeaways A collaboration with Lancaster University on childhood obesity and Gateshead's SPD takeaway policies. The

research compared the trends in childhood obesity rates in Gateshead to neighbouring areas in the North East, without similar policies between 2012 and 2020 In the most deprived areas in Gateshead (2nd decile of deprivation), where there was the highest concentration of take aways pre-policy, childhood obesity rates fell by 4.8% compared to similar areas without the policy.

- **The Council Street trading policy**: supports applications for street trading licenses that promote health; give feedback around meeting health and wellbeing objectives and menu improvements.
- **Local Plan:** As the government is keen to bring forward partnership working between local planning authorities and combined authorities, Gateshead Council and Newcastle City Council are working together to prepare a joint local plan. The joint local plan will be a strategic planning framework to meet our joint ambitions including for sustainable growth and healthy communities. This will include policy around healthy food environments, junk food advertising, access to green space, biodiversity protection.

Food Safety and Hygiene

The Food Partnership coordinator has met with Environmental health officers at the council. An officer attended the food partnership networking event themed around food waste and redistribution, to answer any questions and provide guidance for community groups. The team are very responsive to help any new food groups starting up, for example as groups prepared to sell food at the Gardens to Gathering event, they provided guidance and support. An allergen safety training sheet has been translated into over 15 languages by the Environmental Health team: this has shared with the food partnership network and anyone who asks for it, including St Chad's market, St Chad's Community Kitchen, and Alive Church. Enquiries have been made about putting on funded in-person level 2 food safety and hygiene for volunteers of food partnership organisations. We have also had discussions with the ESOL course leaders about putting basic food hygiene training into the curriculum.

Other networks working on diet-related health inequalities that the Food Partnership is connected to

- **Healthy Weight Alliance:** chaired by a Councillor leading on health and wellbeing, with representation from education, VCS, NHS, planning, school meals, active travel, community sport, mental health, and more. This is supported by the Healthy Weight Declaration which is in its early stages and is part of the work with Food Active. This work supports the whole food system approach signed up to by the Local Authority and also a 'health in all policies approach' for Gateshead council. A mapping exercise with OHID helped identify opportunities and gaps. The Food Partnership coordinator attends these network meetings to identify opportunities for partnership working.
- **Gateshead Making Every Contact Count (MECC):** Gateshead Making Every Contact Count (MECC) aims to give individuals and organisations the skills you need to engage more effectively with the people you meet. They know that simply 'telling' people what to do is not the best way to get them to change their habits and improve their wellbeing. It's how you interact with them – that's what MECC is all about. Gateshead MECC meetings happen monthly, with the aim to provide an opportunity for peer support, sharing of practice, update training and meeting space to each of the MECC partners organisations,

services, businesses, VCS, NHS Trusts, and individuals across Gateshead. Guest speakers and collaborative campaigns have included Diabetes UK and British Liver Trust talking about health risks of dietary patterns; Healthy Heart activity booklets distributed to all primary schools in Gateshead; organising the Melissa Bus to engage the public with Public Health initiatives including blood pressure monitoring; development of recipe cards for food banks.

- **Better Health Gateshead** Better Health Gateshead is the brand name for Public Health communications campaigns. They work with the MECC network on things like leaflets, recipe cards, booklets about healthy hearts which went to all primary schools, and they have their own social media pages which run a series of campaign messages around health. Food Partnership coordinator has worked with the comms team this year on a new social media campaign/series of posts which nudge ideas about healthy lifestyles, in a fun and non-judgemental way.

Food Partnership Member Actions

Examples of projects across Gateshead Food Partnership working towards Healthy Food and reducing health inequalities include:

- **Peace of Mind** are in the early stages of delivering a pioneering project supporting refugee and asylum-seeking mothers raising autistic or sensory-sensitive children with severely restricted diets. With over 212,000 children awaiting autism assessment in the UK and a rise in sensory-based food aversions, many rely on “safe foods” high in sugar and salt but low in nutrients. These mothers face added challenges—language barriers, unfamiliar food systems, and limited culturally appropriate advice—often leading to food insecurity and isolation. The project offers practical, culturally sensitive workshops and peer-led sessions to help mothers introduce healthier, sensory-friendly foods, reduce reliance on processed snacks, and improve nutrition. Co-designed with participants and supported by local health professionals, the sessions will also build a supportive community where mothers can share experiences and strategies in their own languages.
- **The Comfrey Project** Ran a Food Champions programme supporting people—especially migrants and culturally diverse communities—to gain skills and confidence in sourcing, preparing, and enjoying nutritious, budget-friendly, and sustainable food. The programme included 8 core sessions, a sharing activity, and an elective module (e.g. growing, cooking, or advocacy), plus materials in multiple languages. Participants received a certificate and incentive. A follow-on Champion PLUS programme offered further training and volunteering opportunities. The programme was co-designed with 12 volunteers, delivered 16 sessions total, reaching at least 60 more people through community activities.

- **Strathmore Road Methodist Church** are running a series of cooking classes with recipes based around foods that are available from their food market offering. The classes aim to enable those attending the courses to produce simple, affordable, nourishing and healthy meals. For those unable to attend the classes they will make the recipes used available to all attending the market and beyond. The project will bulk purchase some store cupboard items such as herbs and spices and offer some smaller packs to help get people started and encouraged to try out a recipe.
- **Barmoor hub** is also running cooking sessions to prepare meals to be frozen and offered to local people at a low cost. It will fight local food insecurity by increasing our capacity to provide free or low-cost meals to families, older people, and individuals on low incomes, promoting wellbeing and connection through shared meals and food-based activities and enhance skills and knowledge via cooking workshops and healthy eating support.
- **Buzz Dance Company CIC** aims to improve access to fresh fruit and vegetables for young dancers and their families, while educating them on the benefits of nutritious food for energy, recovery, and overall health. Many dancers come straight from school or other activities, making good nutrition essential—but barriers like cost and access can get in the way. The project takes a three-pronged approach: Access—partnering with local suppliers to offer grab-and-go snacks and produce bundles; Education—fun, movement-based workshops and materials to teach the role of nutrition in performance and wellbeing; and Engagement—interactive sessions for families to explore how fresh food supports growth and activity.
- **Embells** runs a monthly community cooking demonstration where people cook nutritious meals and then received a bag of the ingredients to take home and cook together with their families. The Leam Lane family hub 0-19 team have been recording these sessions to share on their app so families can cook low cost nutritional meals. Embells also works with the recovery charity Recovery Connections who's beneficiaries who are in recovery are also able to join. There is also an online Embells community cooking group, where people attending the cooking sessions or weekly community market share tips, techniques and receipts using ingredients collected from Embells project.
- **North East Diversity Education and Solidarity (NEDES)** bring together young people from refugee, migrant and local communities in Gateshead to plan, cook and serve nutritious, affordable and culturally diverse meals through monthly pop-up food events. The project will help increase access to healthy and culturally appropriate food, build skills, and create connections between communities. It will start with a series of cooking and food education workshops, where young people will learn about nutrition, budgeting, food hygiene and how to prepare meals from different cultures. These sessions will give

participants the confidence and knowledge to make healthier food choices and reduce reliance on unhealthy ready meals.

- **The Pickle Palace** are planning to extend their provision and delivery of food education with cookery classes in two community settings. These classes will help build skills and improve confidence around how to prepare nutritious healthy meals on a low budget, introduce people to new ideas and approaches to food. The aim is to offer these classes to people who may not normally have access to this type of support, help shift attitudes towards food and motivate them to buy, cook and enjoy food that supports better diet and healthier choices.

  The project will be targeting those living in Chopwell, West Gateshead which is within the top 15% of economically deprived areas on the IMD Index where 1 in 4 children are living in poverty and diet-related health inequality. The project will provide cookery classes to adults with special educational needs based in West Gateshead, giving them the skills and confidence to cook for themselves and support independent living. It will also fund The Pickle Palace education manager to provide training for a school cook, based in Chopwell, empowering her to deliver cookery classes in the community as part of and beyond this project.
- **Edberts House and the HOPE network, NHS Community Mental Health Support** Received funding to breathe new life into disused community allotment spaces through creating a community development programme of empowering residents to learn about growing food, cooking and networking with other community allotments in the east of gateshead. Connect existing allotments together so that they can create a series of mini community markets so that they can provide low cost produce to places in greatest needs. Engage with the local schools so that they can become part of the process. Aim to create a number of independent allotment groups so that the project will last beyond the lifetime of the project.
- **Blaydon youth & Community centre** is running Cook & Connect, is a 12-week youth-led food education project at Blaydon Youth and Community Centre, empowering 11–18-year-olds to plan, cook, and share healthy, affordable meals. Each session blends hands-on cooking with learning about nutrition, budgeting, sustainability, and cultural food traditions. Young participants co-create seasonal menus that reflect their identities, building confidence and lifelong food skills—especially for those with limited access to food education. The project culminates in a sit-down community meal, offering a free, nutritious experience for residents facing hardship or isolation. Local support organisations are invited to connect informally, helping strengthen community ties and access to wider support.
- **Gateshead Community Organisation** are running a course over the winter 2025-26 to create recipes and facilitate batch cooking workshops to explore alternatives to ultra processed foods for families to enjoy together. The recipes will utilise culinary and medicinal herbs to enhance the flavour and maximise the nutritional and medicinal benefits of the food. The project will encourage residents to meet the recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

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

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

NB at Silver *they 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: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

Though the Food Partnership is yet to act in this area as much as in other areas, some good relationships have been formed which give a lot of potential to take on our ideas in the Action Plan.

Economic Policy Advisors

Two economic policy advisors in the council are now on the food partnership steering group: Steve Legget and Lucy Cowie. Lucy has expressed interest in taking the lead on a 'good food economy' working group. Steve is focussed on the Visitor Economy and a Local Centres project, looking to regenerate town/village centres around Gateshead. Steve was the co-lead on organising the From Gardens to Gatherings event in Saltwell Park so he is well placed to make sure good food enterprise is at the heart of local centres development. Steve also attended a regional gathering about the potential the north east bid to become a European Region of Gastronomy: he has helped pull regional food partnerships into these discussions, and it might be a new partnership project taken on by NESFA.

Initial discussions with Gateshead Town Centre Development Manager:

- Gateshead Railway Quarter has been invested in as a regeneration project by Gateshead council over the past few years: it is now a trendy area with a good selection of bars and a pub; however there is not a consistent food offer here yet. So, the Town Centre manager has interest in working with Food Partnership members to support local enterprises, offer space and funding for pop-up food events.
- The food partnership coordinator has also been able to connect to the food procurement maps made by Hartlepool food partnerships, to identify any potential local food producers. There are initial discussions about a food market, but one that serves on locally produced food and small enterprises are subsidised for their time to be there.
- Empty shops within the high street area of Gateshead have been identified as potential spaces for new food projects. The first to come into fruition is AgeUK who have received funding from the food partnership to set up a community café. This is sorely needed in a tired town centre with many empty shops.
- We have also discussed the potential to use an empty shop as a sort of 'incubator' space for new budding food enterprises to have a test kitchen space they can use to make products, hygienic storage, and a small shop front/café where they can sell their products. This is so far only an idea, but the town centre manager agrees that they could identify an empty shops space suitable.

Confidence-building for local food enterprises

Informal surveys have been conducted between food partnership members who either are social enterprises, or want to do something enterprising as part of their other charitable work. Many of them have huge potential to build a brand and a product that could sell, but they lack the

confidence and capacity to build a business. Initial conversations with the council's learning and development team, business support team, Gateshead College, and the Town Centre Manager, to try and support these small enterprises through a training, mentoring, and group coaching course which might help businesses develop.

Food Partnership member actions

Green Heart Collective is a small charity shop on Gateshead High Street. They have been very active in promoting Gateshead High Street's regeneration. UKSPF Food Partnership funding was able to go towards creating a plant-based community café space within their High Street shop to explore further how to make more sustainable, healthy and delicious food choices together, alongside the opportunity to browse preloved clothing, second-hand books and household refills. They have also set up a small food pantry. Green Heart are on the Food Partnership steering group, representing the cause for supporting food enterprises and small sustainable businesses in Gateshead.

UKSPF Community Food Project Funded projects that include increasing skills, volunteering, employment, and enterprise around food

- **Men's pie club** aims to empower and develop their members and volunteers through their clubs and in their Xtra Ingredients Programme. This may be through food-preparation skills, leadership and confidence, or other training opportunities, such as food safety or First Aid. Many of the members go on to become volunteers and others have been supported into paid employment.
- **Teams life centre** have been working with Food cycle to provide a free 3 course meal for anyone living in Gateshead. They work with the participants of the group who wish to go into catering with the opportunity to train as a volunteer then as team member with Food cycle. Training can be provided by food cycle or another other partner agencies such as Learning Skills which may include Food Hygiene and First Aid
- **Handcrafted** will run an accredited entry Level 3 Catering course provides practical, hands-on training in our community kitchen for eight adults facing multiple and complex disadvantages — including long-term unemployment, poor health, social isolation, and lack of qualifications. Over sixteen weeks, participants learn essential cooking skills, food hygiene, health & safety, and how to prepare balanced, nutritious meals on a budget. Each session not only teaches practical techniques like using seasonal produce, reducing food waste, safe storage, and batch cooking, but also empowers learners to connect with and value food as a means to better health and self-reliance. Running the course strengthens the wider food project by creating a pipeline: learners can move from being recipients of free meals to playing an active role in the café, volunteering, or moving on to further training or supported employment placements. It builds efficiency and sustainability into the existing café model by developing local skills, bringing new volunteers into the team, and supporting people to move towards independence rather than ongoing crisis support.
- **St Chad's Community Project** offers volunteering opportunities through an accredited scheme, helping residents gain confidence, work experience, and pathways into employment.

- **Hope beyond borders** works with minority individuals from different charities and organisations to empower them and develop a professional career. For the chefs, the day marks not just an event but a meaningful opportunity. They are paid for their work and gradually build portfolios of experience that can lead to jobs in local hospitality, self-employment through social enterprises, or future roles as educators. Through mentorship from experienced professionals, they may begin catering for schools or businesses, providing sustainable, culturally relevant meals while transitioning from volunteer roles to formal employment.
- **NEDES** introduces basic enterprise skills. Young people learn how to plan, cost and promote events, and gain practical experience in hospitality and teamwork – building their confidence and future employability. Workshops will teach participants how to plan and cook healthy, affordable meals. These sessions will also cover food hygiene, budgeting, and how to run events. Then, the young people will co-design and lead monthly "pop-up food nights" in local venues. Each night will celebrate a different culture or theme, helping to break down barriers and reduce isolation, while encouraging healthier food choices in fun and engaging ways. The longer-term aim is to develop this into a small-scale social enterprise or a regular programme for NEDES.
- **Age UK's** community café project will Support 10 catering apprenticeships in partnership with Gateshead College
- **BY&CC** runs a Cook & Connect project which has the potential to develop into a youth-led social enterprise model. Young people gain key skills - teamwork, leadership, planning, and service - offering pathways into catering, hospitality, or community work. Funds raised through future community meals will be reinvested to support further sessions, creating a sustainable cycle of learning and giving back
- **City Church** run The Catering Course, three days a week at City Church Newcastle, training up to six participants per session – who will be Gateshead residents. It teaches:
  - UK Food Hygiene and Commercial Kitchen Regulations
  - Workplace rights, responsibilities, and fair pay
  - English kitchen terminology
  - Cooking skills through interactive sessions such as "I cook, you cook, we cook together"

  This builds a supportive and empowering pathway for refugees and asylum seekers, helping them to become active contributors in their new communities, while offering dignity, hope, and the tools they need to thrive.

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

'**From Gardens to Gatherings' event** had 18 voluntary sector organisations and 6 small local businesses showcase their work. Including a family-run Ethiopian food business, a local Indian restaurant, a social enterprise run by refugee women called Samosa Sisters, and a new start-up canned water company based in Newcastle, WATA.

Catering All of the food partnership networking events we host include catering, and effort is made to support local organisations through this. We have had catering from 5 different social enterprises so far. The Food Summit event also showcased local catering and a diversity of tastes, with 5 different groups providing different food options. These events have led to further work for

all of the small businesses: the food partnership coordinator has passed on their details on multiple occasions to colleagues at the council looking to cater events.

Partnership with Gateshead College 'From Gardens to Gatherings' event in Saltwell Park was a large piece of collaborative work which included over 70 students. The organisers visited the college two weeks before the event and did a presentation to a room of over 100 students. The college estimates over 900 hours of work experience was clocked through involvement in this project. The project has led to a good relationship with the college, lots of potential to do more collaborative work with them, particularly their catering students.

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

Tyne Derwent Way partnered with 'The World is Storytelling' podcast to run 3 different 'Food Story Circles' along 2 different locations across the Tyne Derwent Way. They focussed on the past, present and future of food systems in Gateshead. Each session involved eating together, and they recorded stories which will be made into something that the Food Partnership can share to promote Gateshead's food heritage and citizen's hopes for the future of Gateshead's food system.

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

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

The food partnership coordinator has been heavily involved with the Good Food Local project, as described in Key Issue 1.C. This has included benchmarking and aiming to influence policy and practice at the council that will improve local food systems.

Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document **Hot food takeaway Supplementary Planning Document - Gateshead Council**

A ground-breaking piece of planning legislation was put in place in 2015, with the ambition to reduce the number of obese children in year six to less than 10% by 2025. The SPD sets out that planning permission for a new hot food takeaway will not be given if in an area with high levels of obesity, near schools or nurseries or where children and young people congregate, areas where there is already over-proliferation of hot food takwaways, or where a new hot food takeaway would have negative impacts on the local area. This has been a great success: there are currently no locations where opening a new hot food takeaway would be suitable in Gateshead, and since the planning document was adopted, no new planning applications for hot food takeaways have been approved. For the 5 years preceding the SPD there was approx 50 applications for HFT and approx 30 were approved. In the 5 years after there were approx. 20 and none approved. There have been 8 appeals and all were dismissed with 6/8 of the appeals citing obesity as the main reason for dismissal. The number of HFT establishments are decreasing with 11 of the wards in Gateshead having below the UK average numbers.

Scientist at Lancaster University Scientists at Lancaster University analysed the impact of Gateshead Council's move and found that, compared to other parts of north-east England which did not make the policy change, some parts of Gateshead saw a 4.8% drop in childhood obesity. Planning policies to restrict fast food and inequalities in child weight in England: a quasi-experimental analysis - Xiang - 2024 - Obesity - Wiley Online Library

Gateshead Council's Street Trading Policy

Street_trading_and_Markets_policy_and_guidance_2025_to_2026.pdf

includes guidance on promoting health and wellbeing: "An applicant should ensure that the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors is considered including the healthiness of the products sold" It also notes the Council "seeks to create a street trading and market environment that complements premises-based trading and improves the local environment. In accordance with Vision 2030 and reducing obesity levels, the Council will favour applications from traders who sell food and produce which promote healthy living."

Better Health at Work Award

Businesses and organisations in Gateshead can sign up to the BHAWA ran by the Northern TUC and supported by Gatehsead Council. Companies and individuals benefit from increased access to

health information and interventions - in more than one instance, workplace activity generated by the Award has potentially saved lives - identifying dangerously high cholesterol levels and early stage cancers. Good affordable nutrition for health and wellbeing is a key part of the award. Earlier in 2025 the Food Partnership Coordinator worked with a clinical dietician on a presentation to businesses that are part of the BHAWA to suggest ideas for how business leaders can support better nutrition within their workplaces. This is a presentation that could be repeated in future, and to future businesses or organisations.

Destination North East England https://destinationnortheastengland.co.uk/ , run by external organisation but our council CEO is on the board, run a Green Tourism accreditation scheme for hospitality business which will include cafes and restaurants. We are developing a comprehensive Anchor Institution Network to be led and chaired by Strategic Director, ensuring collaboration with local organisations, businesses, and public sector partners. The network will help drive and deliver a Gateshead Community Wellbeing action plan. 4 Co-ordinated workshops per year focused on procurement, employment and investment, to discuss common objectives and share best practice. Aim of increased local procurement spend; local job creation; retained wealth within the local economy.

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

Meeting with Food Businesses on Team Valley In September 2024 the food partnership coordinator attended a meeting with a small number of leaders of large food businesses on the Team Valley, a large industrial estate in Gateshead. Large companies such as Biscuit International, Freeman's butchers, and JR Holland, attended. The main impact was the connection, it helped us to understand the challenges they face as large food manufacturers. The main challenge they talked of was barriers to employment, particularly language barriers: this led to more of a discussion about including allergen and food hygiene training within the ESOL curriculum from the council's learning and skills service. There may be potential for future work; they were all given information about the food partnership and encouraged to become members.

Gibside Community Farm are a community supported agriculture project, growing organic local produce. They provided fresh organically grown vegetables to a local primary school for their Christmas dinner. This had to be additional to the food sourced by procurement contract, but was a good start: engaging children in fresh grown food e.g. sprouts on the stalks, muddy potatoes, and promoting Gibside produce. This was initiated by council's school catering business manager after attending Gateshead Food Summit.

Schools
Gateshead's Primary School catering services are all run in-house by the council, not contracted out. The Council's School Catering Service provides around 11,000 meals daily. All menus meet national school meals food standards, includes at least 2 portions of veg/pulses in each meal. There are vegan, vegetarian, halal and meat free days, and they use verified sustainable fish. All produce purchased via corporate procurement pathways includes environmental aspects, and contract support/ maintain school food standards - providers contracted to provide catering concessions via food trucks (on sites owned by LA) to have a minimum food hygiene 'Scores on

the Doors' rating of 4/5. Also require products/design menus that comply to Public Health Healthy Catering Guidance. This information also shared with our vending machine providers who supply civic offices etc.
Early work has started in terms of school pack lunch guidance. This guidance has been requested by schools to support an 'good food' whole school setting.

Local Authority procurement
We work within North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) Food Framework - which provides food products to schools, commercial kitchens, social care facilities across Gateshead. At all these places, we ask that a wide variety of food is available, support healthier options, and design of menus in line with Healthier Catering Guidance. Procurement use scoring within tenders to assess providers ability to assist the Council in minimising environmental impacts e.g single use plastics, ways of operating to encourage lower emissions etc. They use local produce where possible within the north east.

The Food Partnership Coordinator has worked with the café manager and business managers within the Civic Centre café to understand the business challenges and restraints of procurement frameworks and meeting customer demands. The conversation is ongoing: though has led to the café having a few schemes such as signing up to Too Good To Go; serving more salad boxes through the summer; serving jugs of water with fruit wedges in instead of needing to buy bottled water; and having a plant swap and used coffee groups available for anyone to partake in.

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

The Good Food Local regional partnership is working on a joint project to help influence standards and requirements in the next round of NEPO framework: NEPO are starting their 'engagement phase' for the next round, so now if the time to engage and express what we want as a region.

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

Gateshead Council projects

In February 2021, Gateshead Council published a Climate Emergency Action Plan that will deliver on the council's commitment to make its own activities carbon neutral by 2030. The Food Partnership Coordinator is part of 'Climate Change Key Players' bi-monthly meetings at the council, holding each other to account and updating each other on progress towards this goal. The chair of this group is also on the food partnership steering group.

The new joint Local Plan with Newcastle will include policy around access to green spaces, biodiversity protection. The Council's health and wellbeing strategy has recently adopted two new areas based on the update Marmot principles, one of them is "Pursue environmental Sustainability and Health Equity Together". It was recognised in the development of this new strategic goal that food is an important part of this aim.

Food Partnership partner projects

Bensham Bites
Bensham Bites project: partnership or groups in Bensham working on growing, preserving, fermenting and composting. They have held a series of workshops on things like Food hygiene training; clever ways to dehydrate food to prevent waste, small scale food growing in back yards, and how to grow and preserve herbs that are good for your health. They have supported small community groups like the Chev, a Jewish girls group in Bensham, to start and allotment and learn some of these food preservation skills.

The Hop Garden and Community Orchard in High Spen is a community garden based on permaculture principles who run courses and activities related to nature-friendly growing and gardening. They work with a local primary school and pup to take their scraps for compost. Over 80 people took part in workshops in 2024 centred around food, from family fun days learning how to grow their own mini salads on a window sill, to learning how to use hedgerow plants such as hogweed in cakes. Everyone who took part in the foraging sessions said they had been inspired, learnt things they hadn't previously known and it had given them new confidence to use more foraged foods in their own cooking. It was lovely to have people sending me photos of food they had foraged since and their mushrooms growing in the boxes! They had several participants with mental health issues who reported feeling more positive as a result of spending time in nature exploring new foods.

Chopwell Regeneration Group CIO have recently acquired use of a large allotment space in the village, and formed the group Chopwell Community Food Growers. They have received funding

from the 'Food for People and Planet' and 'Community Food Projects' funding to do the following initiatives:

- Development of a local food strategy for Chopwell including a scoping review of public and private spaces which can be used for community food production and viability of building partnerships with growers, farmers and other food businesses to enable locally produced food to be distributed to those experiencing food insecurity. The "Can Chopwell Feed Itself" report brought residents and local organisations together to develop a vision of a local food system for Chopwell, one that has community-led responses at its heart. This has started conversations about food insecurity in Chopwell and localised responses to this that may otherwise not have happened. Whereas previous projects have focussed on community food provision e.g. through meals or food parcels, this project shone a spotlight on the root causes of food insecurity in the village in order to start conversations and encourage residents and local organisations to vision a different future for local food and food growing in the village. Part of the report focussed on strategies to reduce food waste, with recommendations for how organisations working in the village can build on existing projects to help to address this for the future.
- Purchase of additional materials and resources to increase efficiency of food production in the resident-led Chopwell Community Allotment, alongside equipment to make the space more accessible to those with additional physical needs
- A 'growing in your backyard' project teaching people in Chopwell how to grow food in small spaces
- Planting of a new community orchard which engaged around 10 local volunteers and families, improving connections with food grown locally through engaging in the planting and care of fruit trees.

Birtley East Community Primary School received funding to build a new polytunnel and potting tables for their school community allotment. They are engaging children in a new food waste programme, by providing composting bins for each class, and engaging with organisations such as neighbourly and Fareshare to distribute surplus food from local supermarkets. Their after-school Cooking Club uses some of our food surplus to make healthy meals with the children. They have also piloted community cooking kits which can be used during cooking club to make healthy meals using site-grown produce; and are piloting a composting initiative alongside our growing, so that they encourage children to add any food waste to our new compost bins.

Dunston Heritage and Craft Centre Piloted a new idea to grow food in an urban environment. They focused on easy to grow plants, during two weekly sessions. These were open sessions and were attended by people who attended regularly on both days as well as people who wanted to just drop in without any commitment, but were curious. They had approx. 40 people in total to weekly drop in activities in addition to 2 open events. As well as generating interest in gardening and growing they opened up conversations about a future project idea to of establish a market garden in Dunston, and asked they think it could offer. This information will inform plans for a longer term project to buy and develop some land and buildings as a community hub. Being connected with the Food Partnership and attending the Food Summit they were more aware of what is happening on the region, and helped them identify and broaden thinking about what they

could develop in the future if our plans to buy and develop land and buildings for a Heritage and Craft Centre and Community Hub go ahead.

Chopwell Trinity Methodist Church Planted 6 to 8 fruit trees (apple and plum) and up to 12 gooseberry, black and red currant bushes in the land adjacent to and owned by Chopwell Methodist church. The project will also be used to assess the feasibility of using the larger piece of land owned by the church for further food growing opportunities.

Nourish the Wild CIC Took on a series of training sessions and the development of a starter resource pack for local organisations and community groups to equip individuals, community groups and organisations in Gateshead with the knowledge and confidence to grow food in a way that reduces carbon emissions; make local food growing more resilient and less susceptible to a changing climate; and to promote locally grown, plant-based food choices which are lower in carbon emissions.

Gibside Community Farm are a community supported agriculture project which produced organic fruit and vegetables through a food box scheme. Funding from the Food Partnership 'Food for People and Planet' fund went towards website and social media development to increase customers, find more volunteers, and engage wider audiences around organic food growing.

Shipley Art Gallery Have developed a space outside the art gallery to be a community garden, with raised beds full of herbs. They have developed volunteer opportunities, partnerships with RHS and HerbHub, and run workshops around herb growing and creative activities.

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

At least 15 VCSE food organisations in Gateshead are involved with food surplus redistribution. A Food Partnership meeting in February 2024 was themed around surplus food redistribution and food waste reduction: lots of useful sharing of knowledge and partnerships established. Messaging at this event, shared with over 40 attendees and 100 by email since, was clear about food waste not being the answer to food poverty, the importance of a 'whole food system' approach. Examples were given of organisations and projects engaging in food waste reduction with dehydration, preservation, education projects in schools, and adding to surplus food offer with locally grown food. Work ongoing to establish a working group to better support for food redistribution, with funding put aside for food partnership coordinator to develop.

Green Heart NE CIC have use of Council's electric van, an industrial unit as a central food 'hub', as part of a whole system approach to addressing food insecurity. There is a WhatsApp group "Food Redistribution Gateshead" which is used to share any food surplus between organisations. I have supported this group through raising awareness of it, adding people to the group, and distributing and delivering food when needed. So far they have directly redistributed around 2,600 Kg of surplus food in 2024, which amounts to 6,368 meals, a saving of around 5 Tonnes CO2e and 7 Tonnes water prevented from going to waste.

Organisations and projects across Gateshead are taking a 'whole food system' approach to food waste by engaging their communities in food waste reduction activities like dehydration and

preservation workshops; education projects in schools; and adding to their surplus food provision with locally grown food.

Food Waste and Redistribution Projects in Gateshead

- **The Big Local Gateshead** Have a community shop which gives out surplus food once a week. They have recently received funding to purchase an E-Cargo Trailer to allow us to minimise the carbon cost of our end of day food pickups, with volunteers from their cycling club, who will collect food from supermarkets to deliver to our community shop.
- **The Pickle Palace CIC** Working in partnership with BIND to provide training and support for a new Pickle Palace education officer who will deliver the EatSmart programme in two Gateshead primary schools initially. Eat Smart is a BIND UK flagship project designed for primary school pupils to learn about the UK food waste challenge and how they can tackle it right in their school.
- **NEDES** Saturday School students, their families, and volunteers have been working to distribute leaflets to local shops, restaurants, and neighbours, raising awareness about food waste and encouraging the donation of surplus food. They also put on community meals using surplus ingredients.
- **Hope Beyond Borders** are an organisation focussed on supporting Spanish-speaking migrant families. They have set up three allotment spaces across Gateshead. Funding from the UKSPF Food Project fund meant they were about to equip their allotment spaces with equipment, put on educational workshops around vegetarian cooking, environmental education, and hands-on learning experiences.
- **The Comfrey Project** The Comfrey Project is a place where refugees and people who are seeking asylum can come to learn new skills, share what they know with others, and start to build a better life. Based in the building and groun of an old primary school, they work together to grow crops across a community garden and use nature-based activities to improve people's wellbeing. The Comfrey Project have become Enrich the Earth/Garden Organic Master Composters, with multiple different composting methods on display at their site, and experts training to give training to others. They have already done sessions for a food partnership meeting and a Bensham Bites workshop.
- **The Winlaton Centre** Have a community market which is stocked with produce from supermarkets and other food providers that would otherwise have been discarded. Anyone is welcome to shop for a donation of money. They also are a Fareshare community partner.
- **Strathmore Road Methodist Church** Have a pop-up pantry once a week: the Reclaimed Food Weekly Market. This initiative helps reduce food waste by offering a variety of surplus groceries from local supermarkets and Fareshare. For a small donation, visitors can receive a large bag of groceries, which typically includes fresh fruit and vegetables, bakery items, canned goods, and frozen food. It's a fantastic way to support the community, save money, and contribute to environmental sustainability.
- **Foodcycle** serve three-course vegetarian meals, cooked by volunteers, at two locations in Gateshead: Felling Community Centre, and Teams Life Centre. The meals use Fareshare ingredients.

- **Gateshead Community Organisation** have a weekly shop with produces from Fareshare, run by young people with SEN.
- **High Spen Community Action** have a weekly shop with produces from Fareshare and surplus food from local supermarkets. This is currently run from a converted old football changing rooms.
- **The Bank Chopwell** a warm and friendly space in the heart of Chopwell where there is always lots going on. The Bank Cafe is open four days a week, serving delicious, yet affordable, hot & cold food and refreshments, using ingredients that would otherwise have been wasted. The café runs on a pay as you feel, pay it forward, basis. Their Community Market is open Thursday to Saturday every week and stocks affordable produce and pre-prepared meals.
- **Teams Life Centre** have a weekly shop with produces from Fareshare and surplus food from local supermarkets
- **Edberts House** have a weekly shop with produces from Fareshare and surplus food from local supermarkets
- **St Chad's Community Market – see 3.A.** The market uses Fareshare produce and some surplus form local shops.
- **Birtley Community Centre** have a community café and community fridge, which is stocked with surplus ingredients from local bakeries and shops
- **The Bread and Butter Thing** have recently launched in Deckham, providing weekly groceries at a low price. Since opening they have been in high demand and received lots of positive feedback, with around 80 families benefitting from the grocery bags.
- **Fareshare NE** currently deliver surplus food to 17 different projects in Gateshead: many of whom are mentioned in this report.

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

Appendix 1. Food Partnership Members

Members

Anyone on our mailing list is considered a member of Gateshead Food Partnership: they have 'signed' the Food Charter either at one of our events or through our website.

There are currently 175 individuals on the mailing list; of which there are 25 individuals/members of the public, and 150 people representing voluntary and faith organisations, public sector services, or private businesses.

Age UK Gateshead	HerbHub Gateashead
Alive Church Gateshead	Hertfordshire House Community Centre
Bensham Food Coop /SoulFood Spaces	and Gardens CIO
Big Local Gateshead	hope beyond borders
Birtley Community Centre	Jewish Community Council of Gateshead
Blaydon Youth & Community Centre	Life Vineyard Church (LVC)
Buzz Dance Company CIC	NE Youth
Chopwell Community Associatio	Northeast Diversity Education and Solidarity
Citizen's Advice Gateshead	Nourish Food School
City Church, Newcastle	Oasis Community Housing
City Refugee Welcome-City Church Newcastle	Out North East
Comfrey Project	Peace Of Mind CIO
Deals on Meals, Gateshead Community Organisation	REfUSE CIC
Dingy Butterflies CIC	Salvation Army
Dunston Heritage and Craft Centre	Sandown Allotment Association
Everyturn Mental Health	Satisfy my soul
Fareshare North East	Shipley Art Gallery
Feeding Britain	Soul Food Spaces
Feeding Families	St Andrew's Church, Leam Lane, Welcome Ground Cafe
Food Nation/Men's Pie Club	St Chad's Community Project
FoodCycle	Strathmore Road Methodist Church Community Hub
Friends of Saltwell Park	Sustrans
Gateshead Children and Young People's Primary Care Mental Health Service	Teams Life Centre
Gateshead College	The Bank Chopwell, Chopwell Regeneration Group
Gateshead Community Bridgebuilders	The Comfrey Project
Gateshead Family Hubs	The Felling Food Network
Gateshead Family Hubs, Gateshead Council	The Hop Garden, High Spen
Gateshead Food Bank	The Orchard Project
Gateshead Refugee Welcome Hub	The Pickle Palace CIO
GemArts	Transition West Gateshead (TWiG)
Gibside community farm	Tyne Derwent Way
Gibside Community Farm CIC	Welcome to Badminton
Green Heart NE CIC	Young Women's Outreach Project
Handcrafted Projects	Youth Focus North East

Appendix 2. Steering Group Terms of Reference

Gateshead Food Partnership – Steering Group

Terms of Reference: Orignially Agreed March 2024; Updated August 2025.

Purpose

The purpose of the steering group is to co-create and deliver a Food strategy for Gateshead, that is community led and informed by Gateshead residents.

Aims

Gateshead Food Partnership is a collaboration of local people and organisations looking at a joined up, whole system approach towards equitable access to nutritious, culturally appropriate, and environmentally sustainable food for all.

Our key priorities

We seek to:

- Tackle food insecurity in Gateshead. Ensure everyone has access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food, moving from food aid to food justice and resilience
- Tackle issues around diet-related health inequality, especially in relation to food insecurity
- Build community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects aimed at re-connecting with and valuing our food
- Promote a vibrant and diverse local food economy that provides sustainable, healthy and affordable choices for consumers, creates good quality employment and makes the best use of local resources
- Increase healthy and sustainable catering and procurement to help create a resilient, fair, food system

O**bjectives**

The objectives of the Steering Group are to:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of a Gateshead Food Strategy
- Ensure voices and priorities of Gateshead residents are heard, particularly those with lived experience of food insecurity and inequality.
- Alongside Food Partnership Coordinator, support the development of working groups, focus groups, partnership events, or other ways to gather momentum, mutual support and amplify voices
- Discuss potential solutions to topics and proposals brought about the work of the Partnership Coordinator and working groups. Support the development and delivery of projects and initiatives which contribute to the delivery of the Food Strategy.
- Leverage opportunities for cross organisational and partnership working across the Borough.
- Work to engender political, strategic, and public support for the strategy through publicity, and helping to embed ‘Gateshead Food System Strategy’ objectives into plans and strategies across organisations and partnership which they are part of.

- Oversee the development and publication promotion/distribution of an annual report to summarise the work and impact of the Partnership, celebrate successes and learning.

4. **Membership**

The steering group will comprise of representatives from across the key stakeholder groups of the Partnership's work, including representatives from local businesses, community groups, experts, public sector partners and voluntary organisations.

Individuals from outside the membership may be invited to attend meetings on relevant topics. The group will be chaired by the Food Partnership Coordinator. Minutes will be recorded on a rotating rota between steering group members. A co-chair may also be agreed by the group, if requested.

The current Food Partnership Coordinator is employed by Gateshead Council until March 2025. The steering group will agree to work on finding funding and recruitment to ensure the coordinator role is continued.

A minimum of four members must be present to be quorate. Members will be expected to attend every meeting. Exceptions are made to meetings with agenda topics which are not felt relevant to a particular member or stakeholder group. In this case, the member should contact the Chair to discuss attendance.

Current Steering Group Members are:

- Andy Redfern, Green Heart Collective
- Anthony O'Shaughnessy, chef and food educator
- Christine Wright, Royal Horticultural Society
- Eleni Venaki / Nicola Bushell, Comfrey Project
- Emma Bell, Embells
- Emma Gibson / Sophie Colebourne, Public Health & Wellbeing at Gateshead Council
- Helen Bell / Chrissy Milburn, Edbert's House Health Equity team
- Lesleyann Watson, Gateshead Foodbank
- Louis Goffe / Kate Haddow, NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration
- Mick Marston, Local Sustainable Food and Farming Adviser
- Lucy Greenfield, Climate Change, Compliance, Planning and Transport at Gateshead Council
- Lucy Cowie / Steven Legget, Economic Policy Advisors at Gateshead Council
- Nikki Dravers, Food Partnership Coordinator
- Rachel Leech, Gateshead College Sustainability Officer
- Regina Blachford, food grower, Chopwell Community Food Grower
- Sheinaz Stansfield, food grower, retired Practice Manager

5. **Meetings and agenda**

The board will be coordinated by the Food Partnership Coordinator, who is currently employed by Gateshead Council.

Meetings will be called by the Chair. Each agenda will be proposed by the Chair with support from the Coordinating Group. Agenda points can be proposed by any Steering Group member; the

coordinator; and the broader Partnership, through their own regular meetings. Proposed agenda points will be sent to the group a week in advance so that members can add in anything, then they will be discussed and accepted or not accepted at the beginning of each meeting.

Meeting locations, times and agendas will be proposed on a regular schedule at the beginning of each year. Alternates may be proposed and agreed to no later than two weeks before the meeting. Supporting papers will be sent one week before any meeting.

Each meeting will be minuted on a rotating basis by steering group members, and meetings will be circulated to the steering group following the meeting.

A meeting summary will be drafted and circulated to the broader Partnership. Members will be given 10 working days to request edits to circulated meeting summaries before being shared across the Partnership.

6. **Frequency of meetings**

Meetings shall be held every two months. Additional meetings may be called by the membership to address topics of particular urgency, where requested by a member and seconded by another member.

7. **Information Sharing**

All attendees agree to share local intelligence, practice and knowledge and to support the delivery of actions in order to meet the aims of the steering group and facilitate collaboration.

8. **Accountability:**

The group will provide updates in terms of progress to:

- Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board
- Gateshead Council Localities, Communities, Volunteering Portfolio

9. **Declaration of interests:**

The general principle is that all potential or perceived conflicts of interest should be declared.

10. **Review**

The board will be reviewed annually to ensure it is delivering its outcomes. This will include a review of the Terms of Reference (ToR).

The ToR may be subject to review more frequently if requested by a member of the group and seconded by another member.