SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2025

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

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

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

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

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= mandatory):

Name of your partnership*:
South Tyneside Open Collective for Good Food (STOC Good Food)
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Jonnie Halling | jonnie.halling@hospitalityandhope.org.uk
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
South Tyneside
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:

South Tyneside is a metropolitan borough on the south bank of the River Tyne in the North East of England. It comprises the towns of **South Shields, Jarrow, Hebburn** and several smaller villages. It borders the authorities of **Sunderland, Gateshead, and Newcastle/North Tyneside**. The borough combines a striking coastline along the **North Sea**, riverside settings and cultural landmarks such as **Ocean Road**, which, alongside a rich industrial heritage, make it an attractive visitor destination.

The borough's **population is 151,393** (2024 estimate), with a slight annual increase of 0.8%. Employment levels are lower than national averages: around **65% of residents aged 16-64** are in work, with an unemployment rate of **5.6%** (above the England average of 4.2%). The claimant count for December 2024 was **5.3%**, representing 4,765 working-age residents. Only around **43% of the workforce** both live and work in South Tyneside, with the remainder commuting across boundaries, reflecting its interconnected position within the wider Tyne and Wear economy.

Historically, South Tyneside's economy was built on **shipbuilding, coal and manufacturing**, with major shipyards and coal mines providing employment and identity for local communities. These industries thrived through the 19th and early 20th centuries but declined sharply in the late 20th century due to global competition, technological changes and political decisions. The area also had a modest but active **fishing industry**, with South Shields once supporting fleets that supplied local markets. Today,

this industry has almost entirely disappeared, with only nearby **North Shields Fish Quay** remaining as the last significant hub on the Tyne. The loss of these industries left a legacy of economic restructuring and deprivation. Recent statistics show, nearly **one in four residents** lived in the **most deprived 10% of areas nationally (2019)**.

The borough has also been shaped by its cultural diversity. South Shields hosts one of the earliest Yemeni communities in the UK, dating back to the 19th century, and this community's heritage remains visible in local culture, cuisine and identity. According to the 2021 Census, about **5.6%** of South Tyneside's residents are from ethnic minority backgrounds: **2.9% Asian/Asian British**, **0.5% Black or Black British**, **1.4% Mixed/Multiple ethnicities**, and **0.8% Other ethnic groups**, with **94.4% identifying as White**.

Farming and commercial agriculture is limited in South Tyneside. Most farmland is **arable**, with very few pastoral farms. Where livestock exists, it is largely restricted to horse liveries rather than commercial production. Food growing is more commonly community-led: the Council manages **23 allotment sites**, comprising approximately 1,500 plots, with strong demand and growing involvement from schools, veterans and community groups.

Health and food insecurity remain pressing issues. 2023 data show **70% of adults** are overweight or obese, compared to the England average of 64.5%. Among Year 6 pupils, **40.1%** are overweight or obese, again above the national rate (35.8%). Just **20.5% of adults** achieve recommended fruit and vegetable consumption, significantly lower than England's 31.3%. Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks is **34.2%**, compared with 52.7% nationally. Nearly **1 in 5 households** experiences food insecurity and demand for food banks has increased by over 40% in recent years.

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

ANSWER:

South Tyneside Council and STOC Good Food have considered equity, diversity and inclusion across the partnership, ensuring the voices and needs of all residents are reflected. The Council's **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) tool** has been applied to the Sustainable Food Action Plan, evaluating potential impacts on people with protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantage. The EIA highlighted positive effects on age, sex, race, maternity and households at risk of poverty, while identifying opportunities to better understand food access for older people, those living with disabilities and ways to make food education more engaging for men.

The partnership works closely with community organisations to reach diverse populations. The Food Fair project, delivered by WHiST, Apna Ghar and Hospitality & Hope, provides holistic support to women, including Bangladeshi women, and ensures access to affordable, nutritious food. Hospitality

& Hope operate emergency food provision and community shops in the borough's most deprived wards, offering services and courses accessible to clients of all ages and backgrounds. Age Concern Tyneside South contributes to partnership discussions, amplifying the voices of older residents.

The South Tyneside Youth Parliament and Bite Back actively work with South Tyneside Council, shaping campaigns on junk food advertising, healthy food access and sustainability through intergenerational debates. In 2024, the Youth Parliament hosted discussions at the Anti-Poverty Summit on key issues such as food insecurity, the threshold for free school meals and the financial impact of the two-child benefit cap on families, ensuring that the voices of children and young people were heard in conversations addressing child poverty. Educational videos and the FUEL US, DON'T FOOL US campaign were also presented in STOC group meetings, ensuring young people's perspectives influence partnership decisions.

Inclusion is also delivered through practical initiatives such as the Key Community Bus, which brings affordable, healthy food and advice to deprived areas, and research-informed projects reflecting lived experience. Evaluations by the University of Sunderland and Newcastle University demonstrate that social supermarkets and community shops provide access to nutritious food, community connection, empowerment and improved dietary outcomes.

While strong foundations have been laid to ensure inclusivity, further work is required to broaden the partnership's reach, particularly to residents with physical or learning disabilities, neurodiverse conditions and LGBTQ+ communities. Building on existing good practice, the partnership is committed to continuing engagement with these groups to ensure that sustainable food initiatives are accessible, relevant and responsive to all South Tyneside residents.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

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

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

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

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

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

Key Issue 1 Mandatory Criteria Checklist

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

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

1. **Have you submitted a current food action plan or food strategy with an action plan?**
    - **Yes** / 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

South Tyneside Open Collective for Good Food (STOC) is the borough's cross-sector food partnership, established to bring together local authority departments, community organisations and businesses to deliver a more sustainable, equitable and healthy food system. The partnership steering group includes representatives from South Tyneside Council (Public Health, Anti-Poverty Strategy Group, Environmental Sustainability/Carbon Reduction), alongside Women's Health in South Tyneside (WHiST) and Hospitality & Hope, one of the borough's leading food insecurity organisations. Hospitality & Hope host the coordinator role and chair the steering group, which meets bi-monthly. STOC operates with clear terms of reference and a shared purpose: *"to deliver a more sustainable food system in South Tyneside, enabling access to food that is equitable and healthy for residents, organisations, and the planet."*

The partnership is rooted in collaboration with communities. Alongside strategic work, STOC directly supports the **Food Fair project**, delivered by WHiST, Apna Ghar, Hospitality & Hope and South Tyneside Council. This project empowers residents to access affordable, healthy and sustainable food through community shops, cooking courses and culturally tailored food education. Importantly, it brings lived experience directly into the partnership, with women from marginalised communities and families facing food insecurity helping to shape provision and policy.

To broaden engagement and build momentum, STOC hosted a launch presentation in December 2023, attended by 28 cross-sector stakeholders. This event raised awareness of food sustainability themes and encouraged stakeholders to join themed working groups. In early 2024, STOC established four such groups; *Good Food Movement, Food Poverty & Diet-related Ill Health, Local Food Economy & Procurement* and *Food for the Planet.* These groups carried out collaborative SWOT analyses of South Tyneside's food system, recognising good practice while identifying gaps and opportunities. This approach laid the foundation for the borough's first Sustainable Food Action Plan.

STOC has consistently worked to secure endorsement and active support from the local authority. South Tyneside Council has formally endorsed the Sustainable Food Action Plan. Sustainable food is recognised in key borough strategies, including the ***Anti-Poverty Strategy (2024)***, ***Child Poverty Strategy (2025)*** *and* ***Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy (2025–2030)***. Council officers from public health, carbon reduction and anti-poverty teams actively participate in the partnership and champion sustainable food across their

work areas. The Director of Public Health opened STOC's first Food Summit in 2025, underlining the council's commitment.

The 2025 **Food Summit** marked another milestone in building a dynamic and representative partnership. Bringing together 49 attendees from; community organisations, local authority departments, businesses and residents, the summit explored four themes; *inspiring a good food movement, tackling food poverty and diet-related ill health, supporting the local food economy and promoting food for the planet.* The insights gathered were incorporated directly into the Sustainable Food Action Plan, ensuring the voices of diverse stakeholders shaped the borough's priorities. Since the summit, the action plan, alongside a **sustainable food report** has progressed through the council's governance process. It has gained formal endorsement through various council forums and is expected to be signed off by the Health & Wellbeing Board on October 23rd 2025.

Beyond South Tyneside, STOC engages actively in regional collaboration through the North East Sustainable Food Alliance (**NESFA**), contributing to initiatives such as the Dynamic Food Procurement pilot. This strengthens learning, influence and capacity while ensuring South Tyneside remains aligned with best practice across the region. STOC also coordinated South Tyneside's participation in the ***Good Food Local: North East*** benchmarking exercise, where the borough was the only local authority to demonstrate leadership in the "Food for the Planet" theme. Findings and recommendations were formally shared with the council's Chief Executive, reinforcing the importance of maintaining resource and focus on food sustainability in the context of health inequalities, cost of living and climate emergency.

Through strategic alignment, clear governance and genuine collaboration with community partners, STOC has established a strong, representative and dynamic local food partnership. It is embedded in council strategy, draws on lived experience and provides a structure for action across every part of the food system. This collaborative foundation ensures that South Tyneside is not only addressing immediate challenges of food poverty and health inequalities but is also building a resilient, sustainable food system for the long term.

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

Building on the establishment of a strong, cross-sector partnership, STOC has led the development of South Tyneside's first Sustainable Food Action Plan. Rooted in the Sustainable Food Places framework, the plan provides a comprehensive roadmap across all key issues, from tackling food poverty to supporting the local food economy and reducing the climate impact of food.

The action plan was co-produced through open consultation and wide engagement. A key milestone was the **South Tyneside Food Summit in April 2025**, which brought together businesses, community organisations, council departments and residents to explore priorities and co-design solutions. Insights and commitments from these discussions were directly incorporated into the plan, ensuring that it reflects the voices of stakeholders at every level, including those with lived experience of food insecurity.

The plan has progressed through the council's governance process, gaining endorsement from the **Public Health Leadership Team** and **Adult Safeguarding & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**. It is scheduled for sign-off by the **Health & Wellbeing Board** in October 2025, representing formal borough-wide recognition and support. This integration into council structures demonstrates the shared ambition across the partnership and the local authority to embed food as a priority in South Tyneside's social, health and environmental strategies.

STOC is ensuring the plan is not simply a static document but a living tool for change. Each action is assigned a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating to clearly track progress, supported by short, medium and long-term timescales. A live Excel tracker is being developed to strengthen accountability, enabling partners to monitor delivery, record outcomes and update progress in real time. This approach is designed to shift responsibility from the coordinator alone towards collective ownership, with delivery groups being established to take forward specific actions.

Some recommendations from the *Good Food Local North East* benchmarking exercise were also incorporated into the plan where applicable, with Sustain's feedback rooted and RAG-rated to track progress against regional standards. This not only strengthens the plan's evidence base but also positions South Tyneside to demonstrate leadership across themes such as Food for the Planet, Healthy Start and Community Food Action.

Independent evaluation and academic research are adding further depth and credibility to South Tyneside's food effort. Hospitality & Hope, one of STOC's anchor organisations, is working with the **University of Sunderland** to highlight community voices to understand the full impact of their food programmes, '**In Our Own Words'** was published in summer 2025. In addition, **Newcastle University** has conducted research into the role of **social supermarkets across South Tyneside**. This study captured the perspectives of clients, staff and volunteers and concluded that social supermarkets provide vital relief from food insecurity and financial pressures. It also highlighted the wider benefits of participation, including improved diet, social connection, community support and a sense of empowerment for individuals. These findings not only validate the importance of community-led food support but also inform the evolution of the action plan, ensuring future delivery builds on proven strengths.

To build shared ownership and visibility, STOC has also developed the South Tyneside Sustainable **Food Charter**. The Charter sets out a simple vision: a food system that is healthy, fair, sustainable, inclusive and resilient. It invites businesses, schools, community groups, health providers and residents to pledge practical action, from sourcing more local and seasonal produce to cutting food waste and promoting healthy eating.

To further unify and promote this work, STOC has created a clear **brand identity**. Developed with a local designer, the brand reflects South Tyneside's food heritage and local landmarks in a bold and modern style. It has been rolled out across communications, merchandise, public events and health forums, providing a recognisable visual umbrella that connects and amplifies good food initiatives happening across the borough.

Together, the action plan, charter and brand provide both structure and inspiration. A shared roadmap, a set of commitments and a visible identity to connect the movement. STOC's role as convener and coordinator ensures delivery is collaborative and monitored, while endorsement from the local authority embeds food within broader strategic priorities.

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

STOC. GOOD FOOD | SOUTH TYNESIDE OPEN COLLECTIVE FOR GOOD FOOD

Food Charter

Creating a Healthier, Fairer, and Greener Future Through Good Food

The South Tyneside Sustainable Food Charter invites businesses, community organisations, schools, healthcare providers, and residents to commit to building a thriving, healthy, and sustainable local food system. By signing this charter, you pledge to support actions that improve food security, promote healthy eating, and protect our environment.

Our Vision

Together, we aim to create a food system in South Tyneside that is:

- **Healthy:** Enabling everyone to access nutritious, affordable food.
- **Fair:** Supporting local food businesses and ensuring fair pay for producers.
- **Sustainable:** Reducing food waste, protecting natural resources, and cutting carbon emissions.
- **Inclusive:** Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to engage with good food, regardless of background or circumstances.
- **Resilient:** Strengthening local supply chains and empowering communities to shape their own food systems.

Who Can Sign?

- **Local businesses & Catering Teams**
- **Schools & Colleges**
- **Community organisations**
- **Food producers and growers**
- **Health and social care providers**
- **Residents passionate about good food**

Our Commitments

As a signatory, we commit to championing sustainable food practices where possible by taking action in one or more of the following areas:

1. **Inspiring a Good Food Movement** – Support events, activities, and connections that celebrate good food, sustainable eating, and community involvement.
2. **Promoting Healthy and Sustainable Food** – Encourage nutritious, seasonal food choices and raise awareness of healthier eating and food education.
3. **Tackling Food Poverty and Inequality** – Support initiatives that improve access to affordable, nutritious food and reduce food insecurity.
4. **Reducing Food Waste** – Promote efforts to cut food waste and redistribute surplus food to those in need.
5. **Supporting a Sustainable Food Economy** – Encourage local sourcing, ethical food production, and collaboration to strengthen the local food economy.
6. **Growing and Producing Food Locally** – Support community food-growing initiatives in schools, businesses, and neighbourhoods.
7. **Building Stronger Partnerships** – Work together, share knowledge, and support sustainable food initiatives across South Tyneside.

Join Us

Become a Supporter – We invite you to join this collective effort by signing the South Tyneside Sustainable Food Charter. Together, we can create a healthier, fairer, and greener food system for all.

Sign up today and become part of South Tyneside's journey towards a more sustainable food future.

Sign the Charter to pledge your support to South Tyneside's Good Food Movement!

Signed:

Name:

Organisation:

Email:

To learn more, please contact:
jonnie.halling@hospitalityandhope.org.uk
Website: hospitalityandhope.org.uk/stoc

Salt Design | STOC. Good Food - Brand Identity and Illustration

STOC. GOOD FOOD | SOUTH TYNESIDE OPEN COLLECTIVE FOR GOOD FOOD

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

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

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

South Tyneside Open Collective for Good Food (STOC) has taken a proactive approach to inspiring and engaging residents around healthy, fair and sustainable food. Through creative communications, inclusive events, hands-on opportunities and a growing public movement, STOC is building awareness and active participation across the borough.

Communications and Awareness

STOC ensures that sustainable food messages reach diverse audiences through multiple communication channels. Its **website**, hosted by Hospitality & Hope, provides residents with clear information on South Tyneside's good food vision alongside practical steps such as eating seasonally, cooking in batches and supporting food insecurity projects. STOC is

active on *Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X,* amplifying local stories and opportunities. In parallel, South Tyneside Council integrates sustainable food messaging into its own communications, including its "How You Can Help" **climate change webpage**, which provides guidance on reducing carbon footprints through eating seasonally, wasting less and cutting packaging.

To ensure opportunities are visible and accessible, STOC partnered with Inspire South Tyneside and Plinth to create the **STOC Community Map**. Inspire, the umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector, and Plinth, South Tyneside's online community platform, provide a one-stop shop where residents can discover food projects, events, volunteering opportunities and services. This collaboration ensures no initiative goes unnoticed and that residents of all backgrounds can find a way to connect with good food locally.

Engaging Large Audiences

High-footfall events have been used strategically to grow awareness of the good food movement. At the "This is South Tyneside" festival, which can attract over 10,000 visitors per event, STOC was promoted on large festival screens and by local radio hosts, spotlighting both the partnership and the reusable cup scheme that simultaneously reduced carbon impact and raised funds for food poverty projects. A **dedicated sustainable food area** featured the **STOC Demo Kitchen**, with partners like Nourish Food School and Big Local Jarrow delivering cooking and foraging demonstrations, surplus food tasters and zero-waste recipes. This hands-on approach created excitement and gave residents a chance to learn simple, affordable ways of cooking sustainably.

Cultural events have also been important vehicles for engagement. STOC has also extended its reach to different demographics through its presence at the Ocean Road Mela Festival, which celebrates South Tyneside's Bangladeshi and Indian heritage, and at South Tyneside College's Freshers' Fair, connecting with younger audiences.

STOC collaborated with South Shields Museum on part of the **SCRAN exhibition**, which celebrated the borough's rich food heritage across Yemeni, Bangladeshi, Indian and Italian communities. As part of the "SCRAN Stories" strand, videos created by local primary school students (in collaboration with the Magic Hat Café) highlighted food waste via **'The Life of a Potato'**, and visitors took part in recipe swaps and tastings with local food businesses. The event not only celebrated diversity but also highlighted how culture, sustainability and community come together through food.

Hands-On Learning and Skills Development

Practical opportunities to learn and enjoy good food are embedded across STOC's work. The Food Fair project, supported by STOC, delivers food education in community centres, women's venues, educational settings and even from a converted double-decker bus.

Activities include cooking classes, condition-specific recipe books and awareness-raising about affordable, nutritious food.

Hospitality & Hope's **Cooking on a Budget** programme offers free community classes linked to its community pantries, while Nourish delivers Jamie Oliver's **Ministry of Food** courses, equipping residents with confidence in preparing balanced meals. The **Budget Bites** programme, piloted at Harton Primary and expanding to other schools, provides sustainable, low-cost cooking skills for families. Meanwhile, **STARS (South Tyneside Adult Recovery Service)** has partnered with Nourish Food School to deliver Adult Food Coaching, helping people in recovery from addiction to build positive cooking and eating habits as part of their journey.

Community Building and Volunteering
STOC places equal importance on social connection and community participation. Hospitality & Hope's new **Food Hub** acts as a permanent venue for affordable food, cookery programmes and volunteering opportunities, with a zero-waste ethos at its core. Projects such as Men's Pie Club, Big Local Jarrow's "Jarra Tea" clinics and Hospitality & Hope's "Know Your Neighbourhood" family food events further show how food can reduce isolation and strengthen resilience.

Inspire South Tyneside and Plinth's mapping platform also ensures residents can easily identify **volunteering opportunities** in food-related projects, linking people who want to help with organisations in need of support.

From climate-focused engagement led by South Tyneside Council's Carbon Reduction Team at libraries and COP events, to multicultural festivals, grassroots cooking programmes and innovative online mapping tools, STOC is ensuring that opportunities to participate in the good food movement are visible, inclusive and inspiring. By weaving together cultural heritage, practical learning and community-building, STOC is creating a genuine local movement where residents can learn, contribute and take pride in shaping a sustainable food future.

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

South Tyneside has made significant progress in embedding food growing, food citizenship and community-led activity into its strategic vision and grassroots practice. Together, the Council, STOC partners and voluntary organisations are creating the conditions for a strong, inclusive and resilient good food movement.

Local Authority Leadership on Food and Land Use

The local authority has meaningfully incorporated food into key strategies, including the Climate and Nature Action Plan, the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, the Draft Local Plan and the Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Food growing is recognised as a way to cut emissions, build resilience and support health. The designation of allotments as protected open space in the emerging Local Plan and neighbourhood plans (e.g. East Boldon and Whitburn) provides long-term protection for community growing.

Practical support is also evident. The Carbon Reduction & Sustainability Team have delivered climate workshops and provided free fruit trees to 25 schools in 2022/23 (following an earlier scheme to 49 schools). This has sparked new gardening clubs across primary and secondary schools. The Council also supports Friends of Parks groups, several of which maintain community growing plots, and promotes allotment availability online through a dedicated officer who responds to waiting list demand by exploring smaller or shared plots.

Community Food Growing Spaces and Organisations

South Tyneside has a vibrant network of community gardens and allotments, many linked to health, wellbeing and recovery.

- **NECA Community Garden** brings people together to grow food, improve wellbeing and connect families. The project recently won the Department for Education's HAF regional award for its role in delivering food and activities during school holidays, supported by South Tyneside Council.
- **Porlock Gardens**, once derelict land, is now a thriving hub led by Bilton Hall Community Trust. It hosts gardening workshops, community growing projects and special events such as beekeeping days, helping residents learn skills and connect through food.
- **Big Local Jarrow** combines growing projects with foraging walks, seed swaps and 'Jarra Tea' blending workshops.
- **North Marine Park Community Garden** offers residents seasonal planting, workshops and a green wellbeing space.
- **Souter Lighthouse allotments**, managed with Age Concern Tyneside South and Hospitality & Hope, give residents the chance to grow vegetables, fruit and herbs in a striking coastal setting.

- **Pig Sty Avenue Allotments**, run by Harrison Field Allotment Association, includes a dementia-friendly garden with Age Concern, fully accessible raised beds and a "free table" of vegetables for the wider community.
- **WHiST (Women's Health in South Tyneside) Herb Garden** empowers women through growing, cooking and wellbeing activities.
- **West Boldon Lodge**, a Groundwork-managed eco-centre, delivers gardening workshops, seasonal planting and edible nature trails.
- **New Hope North East Allotment** provides wheelchair-accessible beds for families, with regular gardening sessions designed to build confidence and celebrate harvests.
- **Jarrow Hall Herb Garden** preserves Anglo-Saxon and medieval herb traditions, linking food growing to heritage and local enterprise through Hive Coffee Company.

These initiatives demonstrate the diversity of South Tyneside's food citizenship, from heritage-led projects to recovery-focused gardens, from intergenerational learning to biodiversity action.

Food Growing in Schools

Food citizenship is also nurtured through education. In addition to the fruit tree programme, schools such as The Beacon Centre, Boldon School, Mortimer Community College and Hebburn Comprehensive run gardening clubs and allotments. These provide pupils with hands-on experience of food production, linking to healthy eating, climate awareness and STEM learning.

Mapping and Promoting Access

STOC has worked with Inspire South Tyneside and Plinth to create the **STOC Community Food Map**, which highlights community food growing opportunities across the borough. The map helps residents discover local projects, contact details and ways to get involved, making it easier for people to step into food citizenship.

Towards a Good Food Movement

Taken together, these efforts represent more than isolated projects, they are shaping a borough-wide good food movement. Food growing is written into South Tyneside's policies, taught in schools, celebrated in parks, protected through planning and sustained by voluntary groups. Residents of all ages and backgrounds, from school children to those in recovery, from women's groups to heritage volunteers, can access land, learn skills and benefit from the community spirit and wellbeing that food citizenship brings.

The STOC partnership continues to support and connect this movement, ensuring that food growing and active citizenship remain central to South Tyneside's sustainable food future.

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

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

South Tyneside continues to feel the effects of persistently high inflation and long-standing deprivation, leaving many households struggling to meet the rising cost of food and energy. Demand on foodbanks and wider support services has reached unprecedented levels, emphasising both the urgency and complexity of tackling food poverty locally.

In response, South Tyneside has developed a joined-up approach that balances crisis support with longer-term, more sustainable solutions. The multi-agency **Anti-Poverty Strategy Group**, established in 2022, plays a central role in coordinating efforts across statutory bodies, the voluntary and community sector and local businesses. The **South Tyneside Poverty Truth Commission** further strengthens this work by ensuring those with lived experience of poverty are directly involved in shaping priorities and solutions. These structures are supported by the appointment of a dedicated Anti-Poverty Coordinator, helping to maintain focus and alignment across partners.

The Council has invested heavily in measures that support residents' access to healthy, affordable food. The **Household Support Fund** **(HSF)** has provided essential lifelines, including £850k of food vouchers for 9,000 children on free school meals during school holidays, £120k of direct support to foodbanks, £100k for school uniforms, and £20k towards the innovative **Key2Life community food bus**. These investments not only

alleviate immediate pressures but also reduce the stigma of accessing support by embedding them within wider, dignified provision.

The **Key2Life community food bus** illustrates this approach. Operating across the borough, it brings affordable food directly into neighbourhoods, reducing barriers linked to transport and accessibility. Goods are priced at suggested donations to ensure affordability, while the upper deck of the bus provides space for advice sessions, debt support, digital access and even a mini library. With its ethos of reducing food waste and promoting community resilience, the food bus represents a holistic model of mobile support that responds to both practical and social needs.

Similarly, **Hospitality & Hope's** three **community shops** have become vital hubs in South Shields' most deprived wards. Membership is free, and for a minimum donation of £5, residents can access a weekly shop of up to 11 items: fresh, frozen and dry goods, along with household essentials. Importantly, the shops are about more than food, they are also community hubs, offering weekly classes, activities and advice that help reduce isolation, build skills and provide long-term support. The model prioritises dignity and choice, ensuring people can select items that suit their needs rather than relying on pre-packed parcels. The Community shops have recently extended their opening times to include Saturdays, to provide support for residents in work.

Additional initiatives across the borough widen the safety net further. **Bede's Helping Hands Community Fridge** ensures surplus food benefits local families, while **Bilton Hall's donation table** provides fresh produce and essentials free of charge. **Six local foodbanks**, supported by the Council and partner organisations, continue to provide crisis support. Alongside these, a network of community cafés, lunch clubs and soup kitchens run by churches, voluntary organisations and local groups such as **WHiST, Apna Ghar, Living Waters** and **Action Station** ensure people of all demographics can access affordable or free meals in welcoming, social environments.

South Tyneside has implemented an extensive range of initiatives to ensure that children and young people have consistent access to nutritious meals. **The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)** programme combines healthy meals with engaging activities, while schools and families are supported through targeted communications to encourage uptake of free school meals (FSM). To simplify access, the Council has introduced an automatic enrolment system for eligible children. Plans are also underway to extend FSM to all children in households receiving Universal Credit beginning September 2026. Additionally, the Council has funded breakfast clubs, including those in partnership with the **Greggs Foundation**, and has invested in proactive school food improvement initiatives. Recognising that 23% of food-insecure children currently do not qualify for FSM, South Tyneside is exploring the potential for universal meal provision. Collectively, these efforts

aim to ensure that every child, regardless of background, can enjoy healthy meals during both term time and holidays.

The principle of dignity runs through South Tyneside's approach. A **cash-first model**, led by the Council's Welfare Support Team, secured over £11 million in financial gains for residents in the last year, reducing the need for reliance on emergency food. The **Welcoming Places network,** with over 70 community venues, some of which provide food, alongside wider wellbeing support, creating stigma-free spaces where residents can access advice and social connection. Evaluations of the network have shown strong outcomes in tackling isolation, reducing financial stress and connecting people to food support in ways that respect their circumstances.

South Tyneside Council is working within a local action group, working towards achieving **Living Wage Places** recognition internally and exploring how to work with local organisations connected to The South Tyneside Pledge to do the same.

The Council has also joined national advocacy efforts, such as the **Trussell Trust's Guarantee Our Essentials campaign**, pressing for structural changes in government policy. These steps demonstrate a commitment not only to ease the effects of food poverty now, but also to create the conditions for a fairer, healthier food system in the long term.

Together, these initiatives paint a picture of a borough responding to food poverty with compassion, creativity and determination. By investing in both emergency provision and preventative measures, prioritising dignity and building strong partnerships, South Tyneside is laying the foundations for a future where healthy, affordable food is accessible to all.

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

South Tyneside has embedded healthy eating into its whole-system approach to health and wellbeing, recognising that diet is both a driver of health inequalities and a key opportunity for preventative action. From pregnancy to later life, the borough is investing in environments, services and partnerships that make healthier choices easier, while building resilience and reducing dependency on emergency food aid.

Early Years and Family Health

South Tyneside has achieved UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation, with breastfeeding rates significantly improving in recent years. Building on this success, the Breastfeeding Friendly Venue scheme launched in 2024, ensuring parents can confidently feed their babies in Family Hubs, leisure centres and other public spaces.

The Council has also gone further than national policy by making **Healthy Start vitamins** a universal entitlement for all pregnant women, new mothers and children under four. Over 5,500 vitamin packs have been distributed in the last three years, with targeted

outreach to ethnic minority groups most at risk of deficiency. **Uptake of Healthy Start vouchers has risen to 76%,** higher than the England average, reflecting strong local promotion through midwives, health visitors, family hubs and supermarkets. These initiatives ensure children have the best possible start in life, tackling inequalities from birth.

Tackling Inequalities through Community-based Support

Community-led projects are reaching those most affected by diet-related ill health. The Food Fair project, delivered by WHiST, Apna Ghar and Hospitality & Hope, supports women from disadvantaged and ethnically diverse communities with the skills and confidence to maintain an affordable, healthy diet. Bespoke recipe books have been co-produced for people managing long-term conditions such as diabetes, cancer and chronic pain, recognising the role of food in self-care and quality of life.

STOC has worked with nutritional specialists Love Food Bible CIC to improve the nutritional offer within Hospitality & Hope community shops, reducing the availability of ultra-processed foods and HFSS products in line with the British Nutrition Foundation framework. This has led to an increased budget to prioritise fresh produce, meaning healthier options are both more available and affordable for local residents. The Key Community Bus also takes quality, fresh food into deprived neighbourhoods and schools, further reducing food waste by redistributing surplus, while saving families significantly on weekly bills.

Healthy Eating in Schools and Families

Schools are central to South Tyneside's healthy eating strategy. The borough's school catering service has received the ProVeg Silver Award, one of only two awarded nationally, recognising its leadership in offering nutritious, plant-based meals and reducing the environmental impact of catering. Every school in the borough under council control has signed up to the Healthy Schools Award, which requires evidence of healthy food provision.

Parents are supported through **Budget Bites**, a programme teaching affordable, energy-efficient cooking. Feedback shows families are reducing food costs while improving diet quality, with demand growing for the programme in more schools. During holidays, HAF providers are required to meet school food standards, with quality checks overseen by The Commercial Food Team/Environmental Health and oral health sessions delivered by Public Health.

New initiatives are also strengthening school and family support. A **Healthy Features survey** is underway to capture views from children, families and young people on what helps or hinders healthy eating and activity, with South Tyneside's Young Health Ambassadors adapting it for peers. From October 2025, the **Healthier Families programme**, delivered with Sunderland AFC's Foundation of Light, will provide weekly food education and physical activity sessions for Year 6 pupils and their families, incentivised with local leisure opportunities. The School Nursing Service continues to

deliver targeted healthy weight interventions in schools with the highest obesity rates, complementing wider preventative work.

Healthier Workplaces, Retail and Food environments

Healthy eating is being normalised across everyday settings. The Better Health at Work Award supports employers to offer nutritious food to staff, while Environmental Health teams regulate food labelling and provide training to community businesses, including Asian food operators, on allergens and healthier preparation. Campaigns like Bright Futures, Healthy Futures encourage local outlets to promote healthier menu options.

At planning policy level, the Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) restricts the approval of new HFTAs in areas where over 10% of Year 6 pupils are overweight (NCMP data). There are also 400m exclusion zones around secondary schools.

A **Healthier Advertising Policy**, nearing approval by full Council, will further reduce the visibility of junk food marketing while prioritising healthier food campaigns.

A Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight

The Public Health team is developing a **Healthy Weight Partnership**, ensuring healthy eating connects into wider work on physical activity, psychology and the built environment. At the South Tyneside Food Summit, Public Health shared the whole systems approach to obesity, highlighting the 108 contributing factors and over 300 interconnections grouped into seven domains, from food production to physiology. Embedding this understanding within STOC ensures food system change is aligned with broader action on weight, wellbeing and inequalities.

Healthy Weight training is also being refreshed for 2025/26, with an added focus on sustainable food, ensuring staff across sectors can embed consistent, practical support into their roles.

Youth Voice and Future Leadership

Young people are actively contributing to this agenda. The South Tyneside Youth Parliament and Bite Back champions are campaigning on junk food advertising and access to healthy food, with their perspectives showcased at STOC Good Food partnership meetings. Their activism ensures food system change reflects the concerns and ambitions of the next generation.

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

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

South Tyneside recognises that a strong local food economy is key not just to improving public health, but also to encouraging regeneration, creating employment opportunities and strengthening community identity. To support this, the borough has worked to weave good food enterprises into its economic development plans, making sure that small and medium-sized food businesses have the tools and support they need to innovate, grow, and contribute to a sustainable circular economy.

Embedding Food into Policy and Strategy

The importance of a resilient and healthy local food economy is reflected across key local authority strategies. Both the **Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy** and the **Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy** commit to strengthening the local food economy and widening access to healthy, sustainable food. These commitments are reinforced through the **South Tyneside Food Action Plan** and the **Food Charter**, which invite businesses to champion local sourcing, ethical food production and collaboration. Together, these frameworks ensure that food is not treated in isolation but as a cross-cutting driver of health, climate and inclusive growth.

Practical Business Support and Investment

Through the **South Tyneside Pledge**, over 200 local organisations have committed to spending, sourcing and employing locally. Businesses signing the pledge can access tailored advice, climate change resources and case studies showcasing good practice. The pledge explicitly encourages businesses to shop and eat locally, reinforcing the link between food, community identity and local prosperity.

The Council's **Invest South Tyneside team** and Business Support Hub provide targeted advice, grant information and networking opportunities for SMEs, with some focus on food enterprises. Venues such as **The Word** act as accessible spaces for one-to-one support, while the **Green Economic Recovery Plan** underlines the need for SME growth. Independents and SME's are increasingly accessing this support to adapt to changing consumer demand and sustainability standards.

Supporting Sustainable Food Businesses in Practice

The Council has actively supported local SMEs to embed healthier and more sustainable practices. For example, the **Commercial Food Team** is working with Southampton University to co-create viable models for convenience stores to meet requirements

around the placement of high fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS) products. This research is helping retailers shift their offer, balancing compliance with healthier consumer choice.

Direct support has also been provided to innovative SMEs such as **Fit Beli Deli**, which now manages Hebburn Central Leisure Centre café. By placing a business committed to whole, nutritious food at the heart of a civic space, the Council has signalled its intention to support businesses aligned with its health and sustainability goals.

Strengthening Food Infrastructure and Supply

STOC Good Food has worked with **Hospitality & Hope** to build direct relationships with the North East Fruit & Veg wholesale market. This connection has allowed community shops to access high-quality fresh produce at the best prices, bypassing national wholesalers and supermarkets. The result is a stronger local supply chain that brings affordable, fresh, and locally sourced food into the borough's most deprived wards.

The Council continues to manage, support and promote local markets, including the Hebburn Food Market in collaboration with **Food and Drink North East** (FADNE). Trading spots have been made available to attract new vendors, with a particular focus on local food SMEs. These markets provide platforms for new enterprises to reach local audiences and reinforce South Tyneside's food heritage.

Celebrating and Learning From Local Businesses

The **South Tyneside Food Summit**, hosted by STOC, gave businesses a direct role in shaping the borough's food action plan. Local entrepreneurs, including family-run businesses like **Minchella & Co.** and **Dicksons**, shared their journeys, highlighting the role of food in local identity, the importance of sourcing locally and how customer trends are driving change. Discussions covered themes such as evolving product ranges (from vegan ice creams to high-protein ready-to-eat meals), sustainable packaging and waste reduction. The summit created new opportunities for dialogue between businesses, the Council, and the VCSE sector, building a collaborative foundation for future growth.

Championing Independence and Food Culture

South Tyneside is committed to strengthening its independent food sector. Initiatives such as **Restaurant Week**, case studies published through the **Invest South Tyneside pledge platform**, and emerging ideas from the Food Summit (e.g. local food directories, awards, and loyalty schemes) all aim to increase visibility and footfall for local food enterprises. Cooking courses and public events also prioritise ingredients from smaller independent businesses, keeping money circulating in the local economy.

While challenges remain around the cost of living, changing consumer habits and retail footfall decline in town centre settings, South Tyneside is attempting to create an

enabling environment where food businesses are supported to adapt, grow and deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes.

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

South Tyneside has a proud tradition of independent food businesses, from long-established family bakers to innovative cafés and restaurants. Promoting these businesses to residents not only strengthens the local economy but also contributes to healthier, more sustainable food choices. Across the borough, coordinated action is beginning to raise the profile of independent traders and showcase the role they play in a good food system.

The Council's ***Eat Sustainably*** webpage is one example of this growing visibility. By directing residents towards climate-friendly eateries such as Sea Change Café, alongside tools like food waste apps, the platform helps link consumer choices with environmental impact. Meanwhile, the ***Invest South Tyneside*** **website** and ***South Tyneside Pledge*** have been used to spotlight case studies of SMEs and food social enterprises that are innovating in healthier, more sustainable ways. This recognition not only helps businesses reach new customers but also embeds them in a wider narrative about resilience, sustainability and community value.

Large-scale events and campaigns also play a significant role. ***South Tyneside Restaurant Week***, promoted through **Visit South Tyneside**, provides a dedicated spotlight for local eateries and generates increased footfall at quieter times of the year. Similarly, the ***Proper Food and Drink Festival*** and the monthly ***Hebburn New Town Market***, run with Food and Drink North East, showcase artisan producers from across the North East, while the long-standing *South Shields Market* continues to serve as a weekly hub for a modest portion of food vendors. These platforms give independent businesses a stage to connect with new audiences, celebrate their craft and offer residents more diverse, localised food options.

Individual businesses are also being celebrated for their sustainability credentials. ***Colmans Seafood Temple*** is a notable example, with initiatives ranging from turning waste oil into biodiesel and installing solar panels, to using biodegradable packaging and sourcing fish through MSC certification or local day boats. Promoting such good practice demonstrates how South Tyneside's businesses are leading the way nationally in making food both sustainable and community focused.

Alongside these higher-profile campaigns, targeted initiatives have shown the power of connecting consumers directly with independent food traders. The STOC **Local Food Voucher scheme**, delivered through the Household Support Fund, provided Hospitality &

Hope community shop members with £50 of vouchers for butchers, bakers and greengrocers, in addition to supermarket vouchers. This injected almost **£8,000 into local businesses** during a financially vulnerable period while ensuring families accessed fresh, healthy food. Feedback from traders was overwhelmingly positive, with businesses reporting new customer relationships, repeat visits and a stronger sense of connection to their communities. Several businesses subsequently signed the *Good Food Charter* and expressed interest in future collaborations, demonstrating the longer-term value of such schemes.

Community/business partnerships have also been central. Through Hospitality & Hope's ***Know Your Neighbourhood*** **project**, collaborations were formed with local food businesses such as Sea Change Café and Delhi 6 Indian restaurant, with cooking classes and cultural food workshops providing residents with new skills and experiences. Hospitality & Hope's **food hub** is becoming a focal point for showcasing independent businesses too, most recently hosting the launch of ***South Tyne Juicery***, the borough's first organic cold-pressed juice producer. Surplus juice is now being channelled into low-cost food services, showing how small businesses can innovate while supporting community needs.

Events continue to play a role in connecting businesses and communities. The annual ***Ocean Road Mela*** is a celebration of cultural diversity, with food businesses providing affordable, authentic dishes alongside music, arts and community activities. STOC and Council-led events such as the Food Summit, as well as functions at The Word Library, increasingly use local caterers, consciously reducing reliance on national suppliers. Even small choices, such as sourcing ***Jarra Tea*** for council events, demonstrate the borough's commitment to backing grassroots food producers.

These combined efforts show that South Tyneside is building a stronger culture of celebrating and supporting independent food businesses. Residents are being encouraged to try local, sustainable options, while traders are receiving both practical support and public recognition.

Looking ahead, there is scope to build on this foundation by making promotion more joined-up and consistent, ensuring that independent businesses remain visible and accessible to all residents. But the progress to date shows what is possible; that by directing consumer choice towards local traders, South Tyneside can deliver economic, social and environmental value while strengthening the borough's identity as a place where good food is celebrated and shared.

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

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

South Tyneside Council has made positive progress in using its direct catering and procurement responsibilities to transform the food served across schools, care settings, civic buildings and public events. By implementing standards that prioritise health, sustainability and inclusion, the Council is demonstrating how procurement can be a lever for change, influencing both dietary habits and the wider food system.

Embedding Healthier and more Sustainable Standards

The Council's catering service, which provides around **350,000 school lunches per year across 42 sites**, has adopted ambitious standards that reflect a planetary health diet. This includes:

- **Meat-free days** and ensuring at least **50% of meals are meat-free**.
- **Vegetarian and vegan options** available every day.
- **Sustainably sourced fish**.
- Menus that meet diverse dietary needs across cultural and health requirements.

These policies are supported by the Council's **Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy**, which commits to embedding sustainable procurement practices, reducing carbon emissions and cutting single-use plastics. Procurement contracts also integrate the **TOMs Social Value Framework**, rewarding suppliers who demonstrate "Good Food" practice such as ethical sourcing or waste minimisation.

Improving the Quality of School Food

South Tyneside schools are improving their offer through national accreditation. Several primary schools are engaged in the **Food for Life programme**, while the Council's school catering service has worked with **ProVeg UK** to increase plant-based menu options. In 2023-24, the service achieved the **ProVeg Silver Award** for its new school menu, one of only two silver awards nationally that year. This reflects a commitment to nutritious, child-friendly meals that reduce carbon impact while meeting government nutritional standards.

Alongside this, all council operated schools in the borough are signed up to the **Healthy Schools Award**, which requires evidence of healthy food provision, and many workplaces are encouraged to align with the **Better Health at Work Award**. Together, these schemes ensure that good food becomes the norm across education and employment settings.

Catering in Other Council-Controlled Settings

The Council also influences food provision in nurseries, adult and children's care services, public cafés, libraries, leisure centres and corporate events. A notable example is its support for **Fit Beli Deli**, a local healthy food business now managing Hebburn Central leisure centre café, demonstrating how procurement can prioritise SMEs aligned with health and sustainability.

Council-run events have increasingly modelled sustainable catering. At the **2025 Climate Summit**, the majority of food served was vegetarian, surplus was redistributed and menus highlighted foraged and preserved ingredients such as wild garlic, nettles and dehydrated fruits. These events showcase best practice and signal a shift in public expectations.

School Waste and Carbon Reduction

The Council's catering team has partnered with initiatives such as **Eat Smart**, which works with schools to reduce food waste. Four schools have been supported so far, with plans to expand to 12 more. At the same time, the Council is exploring how to measure **scope 3 emissions**, including food procurement, to strengthen its carbon reduction strategy.

Partnership and Leadership

South Tyneside has positioned food procurement as part of its broader leadership on climate and health. STOC and Public Health officers have represented the borough at regional forums such as the **Good Food Local NE procurement workshop.** Carbon Reduction and Big Local Jarrow representatives participated in **Insights North East panel discussions** on food in schools, hospitals and prisons. These platforms help share learning and position South Tyneside as an active partner in shaping regional practice.

Whilst further work is required, the borough has made progress to embed healthy and sustainable food standards across council-controlled catering, achieving national accreditations and reducing food waste. South Tyneside is showing what can be achieved if procurement policy is enhanced. The scale of meals served in schools, nurseries, care homes and public venues means these changes directly improve diets for thousands of residents while creating long-term demand for healthier, more sustainable food.

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

While policy sets the framework, South Tyneside recognises that sustainable procurement relies on strong and resilient supply chains. STOC Good Food and the Council are therefore working to connect producers, caterers and procurement officers, ensuring local businesses can access and benefit from public sector contracts.

Regional Frameworks with Local Impact

Most school, care and public sector food in South Tyneside is procured through NEPO (**North East Procurement Organisation**), which manages contracts across fresh produce, frozen goods, meat and general provisions. While these frameworks ensure compliance, they can be difficult for small producers to access. To bridge this gap, NEPO has developed a Supplier Partnership Programme, providing guidance and routes into public contracts, alongside embedding social value benefits such as food education in schools. South Tyneside Council not only advertises procurement opportunities via NEPO but also actively participates in NEPO's Supplier Support Programme to help local suppliers navigate public sector procurement successfully.

Building Local Supply Connections

On the ground, STOC has worked with Hospitality & Hope to connect their community shops to the North East Fruit & Veg Wholesale Market. This enables shops in some of the borough's most deprived wards to source high-quality, affordable produce while keeping spend within the regional economy. Similarly, STOC partners' cooking programmes and food events prioritise purchasing from small independents, reinforcing the value of shorter supply chains.

The Council also supports trading opportunities for SMEs through food markets, such as the Hebburn Food Market delivered in partnership with Food and Drink North East (FADNE). These platforms allow local food businesses to reach new audiences, build resilience and strengthen connections with residents.

Collaboration and Knowledge-Sharing

South Tyneside has created spaces for supply chain actors to come together. At the **South Tyneside Food Summit**, cross-sector stakeholders discussed how to strengthen the borough's food economy, from practical steps such as supplier directories to more systemic opportunities like sustainable procurement policies. In parallel, Council and STOC representatives have participated in the regional Good Food Local procurement workshop, which explored how planetary health diets could be embedded into local authority contracts. Building on this, South Tyneside is now considering a procurement task and finish group to map contracts and identify opportunities to strengthen sustainability standards.

The South Tyneside Climate Summit has also been an important driver for collaboration. STOC exhibited and presented as part of a panel of council representatives and businesses owners, highlighting the role of local supply chains in tackling climate change. Procurement staff attended alongside cross-sector stakeholders, opening the door for new partnerships and project ideas that link food, climate and community resilience.

Modelling Sustainable Practice

The Council demonstrates sustainable procurement through its own choices, such as partnering with Jarra Tea, a local CIC using locally grown and foraged ingredients, for conferences and civic events. While small in scale, these decisions model how public procurement can support ethical SMEs and embed local identity into civic life.

Next Steps

Looking forward, South Tyneside aims to deepen integration of local businesses into supply chain and procurement frameworks, exploring options like meet-the-supplier events and building collaborative forums. By building stronger connections across the supply chain, the borough can both strengthen the local economy and ensure that food served in schools, care settings and public venues reflects its commitment to health, sustainability and fairness.

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

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

Tackling the climate and nature emergency is one of the defining challenges of our time, and food sits at the heart of the solution. In South Tyneside, despite being a metropolitan borough with limited farmland, real progress is being made in shifting diets, food culture, and community infrastructure towards more sustainable practices. By promoting plant-based eating, embedding food into climate action plans and expanding opportunities for local growing, the borough is beginning to demonstrate how a local food system can contribute to both environmental and social resilience.

One of the most significant areas of progress has been in schools and public catering. South Tyneside's school catering service has worked with ProVeg UK to increase plant-based options, resulting in the new 2023–24 school menu receiving a **ProVeg Silver Award** , a rare achievement nationally. Catering staff report that the training not only improved their confidence in offering plant-based meals but also demonstrated that

these can be affordable, nutritious and popular with children. This shift is worth noting as it is embedding sustainable food choices into the daily lives of thousands of young people. Alongside menu changes, the ***Budget Bites*** programme has provided parents with practical advice on preparing affordable, healthy and energy-efficient meals, helping families facing the cost-of-living crisis to make choices that are both good for the environment and for their household budgets.

Beyond schools, sustainability messaging has been integrated into a wide range of public engagement activities. Events such as ***Earth Day*** at community libraries have combined recipe demonstrations with information on climate-friendly food, while leisure centre and library cafés were provided with posters on plant-based eating and resource efficiency. During COP26, special campaigns were delivered across council venues, from vegan menu options to posters on seasonal eating and packaging reduction, showing how even small, temporary interventions can spark awareness and conversation. The Council's Carbon Reduction & Sustainability Team has also developed interactive engagement activities, such as "higher or lower" games on food-related carbon footprints, to help residents better understand the climate impact of their choices.

These engagement efforts are reinforced by digital and policy commitments. The Council's ***Eat for the Planet*** **webpage** provides accessible guidance for residents on how to reduce their carbon footprint through diet, messaging such as eating seasonally to reducing packaging. STOC's own website and *Good Food Charter* reinforce these messages, offering ten practical actions that individuals and organisations can commit to. At a strategic level, the Council's *Sustainable South Tyneside Strategy and Action Plan* embeds sustainable procurement practices and is currently being updated with an enhanced focus on food, including the exploration of measuring scope 3 emissions linked to food procurement. The Council has also joined the *Planning for the Planet* initiative, which provides access to expertise on how planning policy can better support sustainable food and farming.

Despite the borough's limited agricultural base, land-based food production has not been overlooked. The Council manages 23 allotment sites with around 1,500 plots, many of which are now being used by schools, veterans' groups, Age Concern and other community organisations. Vacancy rates have been reduced to historic lows, with some sites below 1%, and since January 2025, five additional community-managed plots have been allocated. The provision of free fruit trees to schools through the *Tree-mendous Project* has further supported food growing, creating mini-orchards and embedding food production into the school environment. Plans are also being explored to redistribute surplus allotment produce through STOC and community networks, linking growing to food access in innovative ways.

This work is complemented by wider council initiatives. The *Animal Protection Charter* commits the Council to explore catering options that reduce meat consumption and increase plant-based alternatives. Carbon Literacy Training, which includes a food sustainability component, has been rolled out to staff and elected members, with some now actively seeking to improve the sustainability of catered events. **School Streets** active travel launch events have combined sustainable transport with sustainable food, offering vegan breakfasts and bike-powered smoothies to highlight the connections between diet, climate and active living.

Community partners such as Groundwork are also playing a role by promoting energy-efficient cooking methods via their **Green Doctor**. Via the HSF, the team now distribute slow cookers and air fryers alongside recipe books including affordable and nutritious meals, supporting households with practical ways to cut both bills, emissions and prepare healthy food.

Groundwork's **Community Recycle Shop**, meanwhile, extends the life of household goods, including cooking equipment, while reinvesting income into green spaces and skills development.

Taken together, these actions show how South Tyneside is finding creative ways to integrate food into climate action despite structural constraints. By focusing on what is possible; embedding sustainable diets in schools, promoting resource efficiency across catering and households, expanding community growing and aligning policies with climate goals, the borough is building momentum towards a food system that contributes positively to both people and the planet. Challenges remain, particularly around scaling production and ensuring consistency in messaging, but the progress to date highlights a strong foundation for future work.

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

South Tyneside is taking practical steps to reduce food waste, redistribute surplus and cut reliance on single-use packaging. Action spans schools, businesses, community groups and Council operations, with a focus on prevention first, supported by redistribution and recycling.

Preventing food waste in schools and public sector catering has delivered clear results. The ***Eat Smart* programme**, delivered in partnership with BIND, worked intensively with schools to measure and reduce waste. Pupils, staff and caterers co-designed action plans, introducing initiatives such as tasting clubs, food caddies in classrooms and awareness campaigns. Results included measurable reductions in waste, equivalent to savings of £10,000–£35,000 and 6–12 tonnes of CO_2e per school. These actions are being extended to additional schools this year. Bespoke food waste training for Council caterers in

schools, libraries and leisure centres has also embedded sustainability into everyday service delivery.

Redistribution of surplus food is well established across the borough. **FareShare**, **His Church** and **Neighbourly** supply surplus food to a wide range of VCSE organisations, including **Bilton Hall Community Trust**, **Roots for Change UK**, **Emmaus North East** and **Bede's Helping Hands** Community Fridge. This ensures that edible food supports local families rather than entering the waste stream. Local independent businesses also contribute, offering surplus stock to the community shop network developed with STOC. These efforts reduce environmental impact while strengthening access to affordable food in the borough's most deprived wards.

The Council is embedding **food waste reduction** within its own operations and across the local economy. In line with the Government's Simpler Recycling initiative, from March 2025 all workplaces in South Tyneside with ten or more employees are now required to separate their food waste for collection. The Council has implemented this borough-wide service for eligible businesses, helping them comply with new legislation while promoting responsible waste management. In parallel, food waste caddies have been introduced in staff kitchens at both South Shields Town Hall and Middlefields. This waste is sent for anaerobic digestion, converting food waste into biogas and fertiliser, supporting a circular economy and green energy production.

Although national requirements for household food waste collections will begin in April 2026, South Tyneside Council is exempt due to an existing long-term waste contract.

Community composting and resource recovery provide practical, localised solutions. At Porlock Gardens in Simonside, residents learn how to turn kitchen and garden waste into nutrient-rich compost, supporting growing projects and promoting environmental awareness. Other initiatives, such as the NECA Community Garden, integrate composting into their activities to build soil health and biodiversity. Alongside this, the Council provides guidance on home composting and continues to expand access to allotment plots, with 37 new tenants since January 2025 and surplus produce donation pilots now being explored.

Engagement campaigns and education have been central to shifting public awareness. The *Life of a Potato* video, co-created with primary school pupils, highlighted the hidden costs of food waste and was shared borough-wide. The *SCRAN Stories* exhibition, with contributions from Magic Hat, Food Fair and STOC, placed food waste in the context of cultural food heritage, combining education with practical solutions. At climate events, Council teams engage residents directly, using interactive tools and tasters to highlight the environmental cost of wasted food.

Reducing packaging and single-use plastics has also been a focus. Twenty-five new recycling bins have been installed along South Shields foreshore, supported by the eye-catching *Feed the Fish* installation encouraging bottle recycling. STOC's reusable cup scheme, piloted at the South Tyneside Festival, diverted thousands of cups from landfill, raised funds for South Tyneside Food Bank and promoted re-use behaviours at scale. The scheme is now being explored with South Shields FC and other event providers, offering potential for wider replication.

Digital and business-based innovation adds further reach. The Council promotes food waste apps such as *Too Good to Go* and *Olio*, enabling residents and businesses to redistribute surplus quickly. *Neighbourly* connects supermarkets and cafés to local charities, ensuring surplus food directly supports community groups. Together, these initiatives embed waste reduction practices into local supply chains and demonstrate a shared commitment to a more circular food system.

Underpinned by a clear **waste hierarchy** that prioritises prevention and reuse over recycling and disposal, South Tyneside is building a culture where food is valued, waste is minimised and surplus is redirected to strengthen community resilience. These practical, visible actions contribute to the borough's climate goals while supporting local people, showing that tackling food waste is both an environmental and social opportunity.

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