

Luton Food Plan 2018-2022



Vision

The Luton Food Plan will raise awareness of the importance of a balanced diet and good food to improve our residents' health, the town's food sustainability and economy.

Our vision is for Luton to be a place where good quality food is available that reflects our world town, is promoted, provided and celebrated.

Context

Food is an integral part of family and community cohesion and an important part of Luton's heritage as a multi-cultural world town. Eating habits are changing with major shifts in work patterns, food production, food sales and immigration which has led to changes regarding where we eat, what we eat and how much we eat.

There are more meals eaten outside of the home, eating 'on the go', and fewer sit-down meals, especially as families; consequently, the population consumes foods which are more likely to be processed, that have higher calories, sugar, fat and salt. Food promotions, advertising, pricing and product placement has contributed to this shift and has made choosing healthier options more challenging.

This Plan aims to challenge the current eating culture taking a "systems" approach to understand and disrupt the underlying causes of poor health and wellbeing through food.

Why do we need a Luton Food Plan?

The reasons why people eat unhealthy diets are complex and associated with issues relating to food accessibility, affordability, knowledge and skills and culture.

In the UK, after tobacco, diet has the greatest overall impact on health. Risk factors include diets high in sugar and trans-fats and low in fruit and vegetables. Poor diet and food intolerances can have an impact on behaviour and affect educational performance especially children and adolescents¹. Poor diet contributes to around 50% of coronary heart disease and 30% of all cancer deaths, the two biggest causes of death in Luton.

At reception year (4-5-year olds) 75.5% of children are a healthy weight, which drops to 56% at year 6 (10-11-year olds)². Only 35% of local school pupils and 49.8% of adults³ report eating the recommended "5 a day", with Luton adults eating less fruit and vegetables per day on average compared to England (2.4 vs 2.5 respectively). Additionally, Luton has higher density of fast food outlets 88.6 per 100,000 population compared to the England average of 88.2⁴.

¹ Effects of diet on behaviour and cognition in children. [Br J Nutr.](#) 2004 Oct;92 Suppl 2:S227-32

² NCMP <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme/data#page/3/gid/8000011/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/102/are/E06000032>

³ FingerTips PHE <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/fruit#page/1/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/102/are/E06000032>

⁴ FingerTips PHE <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/fast%20food#page/3/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/102/are/E06000032/iid/92937/age/-1/sex/-1>

Good nutrition can support people in their educational attainment and learning through improved concentration having a longer-term impact on employment opportunities.

Growing food to eat and eating together with friends and family is valued by many people. Health benefits can include the benefits of eating a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, benefits through the exercise undertaken in working a garden and improved mental wellbeing. Access to green space is associated with a range of improved health outcomes and income-related differences in wellbeing are reduced where people have access to green space. An associated Health Needs Assessment can be seen in Appendix A. A JSNA chapter based on this Health Needs Assessment will be developed in 2018.

What our residents and stakeholders have said

We undertook an online consultation followed by a range of focus groups to provide further insight into the issues of food locally. Residents said that they intended to eat healthily however the unhealthy food environment was too tempting to resist, although there was a request to provide healthier options. There was a clear passion for greening the borough and more 'growing your own' as a practical and desirable way of getting residents to eat more fruit and vegetables with the request for guidance on how to do this. There was also a strong push for reducing fast food outlets around schools, and that schools should do more on healthy eating. Residents preferred method of communication was through Social Media, especially YouTube.

Stakeholders agreed with the feedback from residents and felt the development of an alliance was the best approach to delivering the Food Plan; all pledging their organisational and individual support. Additionally, there was a strong appetite that Luton should engage with the national Sustainable Food Cities programme.

Three Priority areas

Our challenge is to work together to make the healthy food choice the easiest choice. We will work together to agree innovative approaches through the framework of the 'Luton Food Plan' 2017-2022.

Getting our house in order

As a large employer and commissioner of local services, Luton Council and its partners will be role model organisations for healthier food options in what we procure and offer our own staff as well as what we procure through our purchasing power.

We will:

- Work with LBC catering to provide healthier school meals in schools
- Work with schools including a commitment to encourage schools not to allow children to leave school at lunch time without the express permission of their parents for lunch to be provided at home
- Ensure Children Centres deliver a consistent healthy eating message including a focus on improving oral health
- Deliver a communications campaign on healthy eating in Luton

- Use our spending power to influence local businesses to improve healthier food options, for example adding Social Value through contracts.
- Work with colleagues in departments such as Waste Management to ensure coordinated approach to messages on healthy eating and food waste.
- Remove unhealthy vending machines from council premises
- Adopt food procurement guidance when purchasing food on behalf of the council (Appendix B), including the use of Fair Trade products where possible

Access to healthier food options

A key element from our analysis and feedback from residents was to provide healthier food options to reduce the “temptation” to eat unhealthily. The council has a key role in influencing local businesses in the town, and this plan will state the council’s position on Food retail (particularly Fast Food) provision in Luton and be a material consideration in the determination of new planning/premises applications.

We will:

- Work with local food outlets on a ‘healthier options’ as partners to reduce sugar, fat and salt content as well as offering healthier food options.
- Use planning and licensing as the function to manage food retail located near to sensitive uses (Appendix C), particularly around schools and colleges and deliver breastfeeding welcome scheme.

Greening the Borough / growing your own

This priority seeks to increase access to green space and empower residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables as well as improving the visual impact of Luton.

We will:

- Create a network across the borough to connect the pockets of great work already happening to drive forward change
- Increase the number of community food hubs (including using left over food) and connect residents to available allotments
- Work in partnership with housing to increase the amount of maintained greenspace for our housed residents
- Develop food growing and greening activities as part of the Cultural strategy
- Encourage the increase in edible green infrastructure as part of new and regeneration developments
- Support the work of the Luton Food Poverty Network and connect grown produce with the Food Bank

Governance

This Plan will be overseen by the Luton Food Plan working group and will report into the Health Inequalities Delivery Board. Whilst all agencies, working in partnership, have a role to play, effective leadership and coordination of effort is needed. Each partner will take the lead on the action they have committed to as part of the development of the action plan.

A stakeholder group will be convened annually, to bring partners together to review progress and facilitate joint working. Our action plan will be a dynamic document refreshed annually as we learn from our implementation and will need to be flexible to take into account any change in resources, both financial and staff capacity.

Ways of working

The following principles describe the way in which we will take forward the Luton Food Plan:

Innovation: We will seek to be innovative in our approach to action and ensure the programme meets the diverse needs of our town.

Enabling: We want to become an 'enabler' to make it as easy as possible for local groups, organisations and businesses to undertake activities which help contribute to the ambitions set out in this Luton Food Plan

Fairness: We will seek to reduce health inequalities and ensure that various groups have a voice in the development of priorities through our focus groups.

Collaboration: We recognise that the food agenda is complex and will involve many stakeholders from all sectors to work together. We will make every effort to support and collaborate with individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors to work together to achieve our ambition for Luton.

Flexible: We know that priorities can change; new issues can emerge, and circumstances can shift. The plan is intended to be developmental, so we maximise new opportunities and meet our resident's needs. In addition, a review process with stakeholders will be conducted annually to measure the impact of against our priorities.

Positive: To contribute towards the creation of a healthy, prosperous Luton that the Luton Investment Framework presents and support the local population enjoying healthy, prosperous lives we will therefore have a strong focus on positive messages and celebration of success.

Performance

A more detailed annual action plan will be co-produced with partners to implement, monitor and evaluate the strategy and deliver the strategic healthy eating aims for Luton. In turn these actions will have their own project plan as required.

Many of the desired changes are complex and long term and so it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved in the shorter term. However, by 2022 there are some Performance Outcomes that the plan can contribute to and demonstrate impact:

Short term output

- Develop a multi-agency Luton Food Plan steering group
- Join the sustainable food cities national programme
- Enable all council early years' settings to implement a healthy food policy, to improve the quality of food consumed in those premises.

- Increase the number of Breast feeding settings in Luton, specifically the Mall, through partnership working
- Develop an effective work program with Luton food outlets to improve food quality offer to the public.
- Create green borough projects in the community with residents, using local skills and increasing the availability of local produce.

Longer-term outcomes are to increase:

- Proportion of healthy weight children in year R and 6
- Proportion of children with no dental decay
- Number of fruit and vegetables eaten per day for children and adults
- Number of healthier food outlets

Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Food Plan Needs Assessment

Appendix B – Luton Council Food Guidance

Appendix C – The Councils position of new food retail development