

TOWER HAMLETS FOOD

Action Plan 2019-2022



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WHAT IS THE TOWER HAMLETS FOOD PARTNERSHIP?

We are a network of organisations and individuals taking action for good food for everyone in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

By good, we mean that food in Tower Hamlets is:

Celebrated – we recognise that nutritious food can make healthier neighbourhoods and happier people, and celebrate diverse food traditions.

Fair – we want everyone – including our vulnerable and low-income communities – to be able to access nutritious, tasty, culturally-appropriate food with dignity.

Community-led – our communities are empowered to develop and share good food knowledge, resources and projects, and be part of a thriving local food economy.

Healthier for people and planet – our food system nurtures human health, supports the welfare of animals, plants and soil, avoids waste and reduces the emissions contributing to climate change.

The partnership comprises multiple organisations and individuals concerned with food, including housing providers, food charities, small businesses, schools, social enterprises, community gardeners and the council.

We are hosted by Women's Environmental Network (Wen), a charity supporting women, and their communities, to take action for a healthier planet. Women are at the forefront of food, both domestically and as activists for change. Our innovative perspective helps women to establish healthy and socially just food systems.

We are part of Sustainable Food Cities, a network of places across the UK working on local food systems around six themes:

1. Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public
2. Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill health and access to affordable healthy food
3. Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects
4. Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy
5. Transforming catering and food procurement
6. Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system

"Food is not only at the heart of some of our greatest problems but is also a vital part of the solution."

Sustainable Food Cities

What we know about food in Tower Hamlets

Our inner-London borough continues to be one of the fastest growing, youngest, and most diverse populations in the UK.

Key Strengths

- A vibrant **community sector**...
- A **diverse population** with varied culinary traditions...
- Above-average amounts of **social housing**...
- Celebrated **food markets**, and other opportunities to buy affordable produce, often within walking distance...
- Abundant opportunities to eat **multicultural, multifaith** food, such as **street food** stalls and pop-ups...
- Multiple community **food-growing** projects...
- Healthy, ethical and environmentally friendly food served in many **schools**...
- **Cafes, restaurants** and **takeaway businesses** encouraged to use healthier cooking processes.

Key Challenges

- High levels of adult and child **food insecurity**
- High levels of **child poverty**
- High proportion of children eligible for **free school meals**
- High reliance on emergency food, such as **food banks**
- High density of **fast food** outlets
- High levels of **childhood obesity**
- High levels of **air pollution**
- High levels of **food waste**

Our evidence

To develop this Action Plan, we gathered evidence on the food system in Tower Hamlets in a number of ways:

- **Know your food system** - our academic partner guided 6 postgraduate students through a detailed assessment of the current food situation
- **Community research** - community researchers investigated how communities respond to food insecurity.
- **Focus groups** - our academic partner discussed opportunities and challenges related to food with communities across the borough.
- **Member survey** - our members contributed their perspectives on local opportunities and challenges, and developing THF priorities.
- **Food Poverty Action Plan and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** - we engaged communities and Partnership members to co-develop these LB Tower Hamlets policy documents.

Know Your Food System:

- *1 academic*
- *6 researchers*
- *12 months*
- *50 partnerships and 100 papers and studies analysed*

OUR VISION FOR FOOD IN TOWER HAMLETS

CELEBRATED

Nutritious food is a leading element of our streets, estates and neighbourhoods. People feel happier, healthier and proud of their communities.



FAIR FOR ALL

Everyone – including our vulnerable and low-income communities – can access nutritious, tasty, culturally-appropriate food with dignity.



COMMUNITY-LED

Our communities are empowered to develop and share diverse food knowledge, resources and projects, and be part of a thriving local food economy.



HEALTHIER FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

Our food system nurtures human health, supports the welfare of animals, plants and soil, avoids waste and reduces the emissions contributing to climate change.



WHAT WE PLAN TO DO



CELEBRATED

SUMMARY

One third of the 300,000 residents of Tower Hamlets are Bangladeshi. Around one third of residents principally use one of 90 languages other than English.

This diversity creates a multitude of cooking and eating cultures which should be shared and celebrated. Many people throughout our community have incredible food and health knowledge and skills, and others are keen to learn more about making good food on low budgets.

But unhealthy food is never far away: 97% residents live within ten minutes of a fast-food outlet, and retailers of all sizes promote products high in fat, sugar and salt.

We want to promote and celebrate the businesses that champion nutrition and affordability, and spread knowledge and skills about eating for health and well-being amongst our communities.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

- Council
- Faith groups
- Housing providers
- City farms
- Schools
- Community centres
- Small businesses
- Markets
- Restaurants
- Developers

WHERE WE CAN HAVE MOST IMPACT

- Promoting the importance of eating for health and well-being
- Helping small businesses to offer more nutritious food
- Celebrating community diversity and resilience



SHARED MEAL AT LIVE WELL HOLIDAY CLUB,
LIMBOROUGH GREEN HUB POPLAR

CELEBRATED - actions to promote nutritious, sustainable food and celebrate diversity

Goal	Action	When	Measures of success
Our vision for good food is widely recognised and understood	Create Partnership identity, including a logo, website and social media presence	January 2020	THF members use logo, website hits and downloads
	Share summary action plan	January 2020	Downloads of action plan; community awareness of good food
There are abundant opportunities for people to see, taste and learn about local food culture	Organise/support organisation of community meals and organise one-day food celebration	June 2020, then annually	Numbers and demographics of participants at events
Tower Hamlets neighbourhoods become recognised as good food places.	Create Tower Hamlets' first community food hub, connecting skills, growing, cooking, sharing and eating	September 2020	Users of hub, cross-sector partners involved in development and use
	Map good food projects and potential spaces across the borough	2021	Connections between projects and spaces; more food projects in TH
Good food businesses are supported and promoted	Develop good food retail plan	2021	Plan agreed by council; project funding from Sustain
	Increase number of Food for Health awardees	2021/22	More awardees
More opportunities for people to buy affordable healthy and sustainable food through markets and mobile pop-up shops and restaurants.	Increase number of good food traders in TH and links with good food traders in London and South East	2021	Local food traders, links with food traders in region
	Increase veg boxes and food coops in borough.	2021/22	New veg box schemes and food coops

FAIR FOOD FOR ALL

SUMMARY

Poverty affects millions of people in the UK. Low-paying employment and an inefficient benefits system are common causes, while hunger is a likely consequence.

Greater London Authority research has found that one in five adults and 400,000 children in London struggle to get enough to eat for themselves and their families. The people most likely to be affected are those on low incomes, 16-24-year-olds, single parents and those with disabilities.

As a partnership, we will focus on the areas of the borough where people are most vulnerable to hunger. In those areas, we will increase access to food that is both healthy and affordable in a range of settings.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

- Council
- Food banks
- Surplus food charities
- Housing providers
- Community centres
- Small businesses
- Markets
- Youth services
- Advice centres
- Health services e.g. midwives
- Schools and children's centres

WHERE WE CAN HAVE MOST IMPACT

- Listening to and sharing the voices of our communities
- Helping people buy, cook and share affordable food
- Directing surplus food when and where it is needed



**VOLUNTEERS FROM THE ZACCHEUS PROJECT,
BETHNAL GREEN**

FAIR FOOD FOR ALL - actions to ensure all people can access nutritious, culturally-appropriate and affordable food with dignity

Goal	Action	When	Short term success
Tower Hamlets has a joined-up, multi-agency group, including experts by experience, tackling food poverty and insecurity	Establish a multi-agency partnership focused on fair food	May 2019	Group is cross-sector, proactive and well-governed. Group has clearly delivered a range of actions.
	Support/empower people with experience of food poverty to make their voice heard, e.g. joining action group, lobbying for change	April 2020	Group includes experts by experience
Food insecurity amongst Tower Hamlets communities is reduced	Develop and deliver plan to tackle holiday hunger with broad range of partners	July 2020; ongoing	Partners, activities and users of holiday hunger activities
	Develop and deliver multi-faceted plan to increase Healthy Start vouchers	July 2020; ongoing	Healthy Start action plan
	Map and promote low-cost food activities in TH, e.g. food banks, coops, retail that accepts vouchers	June 2020	Increased awareness of useful activities/services
Support/help to support innovative projects	Develop food pantry with partners and link with other projects e.g. breakfast clubs, HS vouchers, cookery courses, holiday hunger activities	May 2020, ongoing	Users of pantry, community opinion of pantry
	Support development of older people's food services, including intergenerational approaches	Sep 2020, ongoing	Older people's food plan, new projects
Community responses to food insecurity disseminated	Share case studies of communities experiencing and mitigating the effects of food insecurity	2021	Web hits/downloads, broad range of voices

COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

SUMMARY

- Over 200,000 Londoners are involved in food growing.
- There are over 100 growing spaces in Tower Hamlets.
- Hundreds of community organisations and charities work in tower hamlets

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

- Tower Hamlets council
- Community growers
- Social enterprises
- Residents
- Housing providers
- Community centres
- Markets
- Surplus food charities
- Schools and children's centres

WHERE WE CAN HAVE MOST IMPACT

- Protect and support growing spaces across the borough
- Build the capacity of food social enterprises e.g. growers, trainers, cooks etc
- Demonstrate the value of food growers and food social enterprises to the local economy



COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS - actions to develop and share good food knowledge, resources and projects, and nurture a thriving local food economy.

Goal	Action	When	Short term success
Community food network thrives	Establish cross-sector community growing network linking grassroots growers with policy-influencers and landlords.	February 2020	Number of/sector diversity of participants
Communities are supported to locate, protect and take control of assets for food-growing	Map potential food project assets, such as green and brownfield sites, meanwhile spaces, redundant retail and other buildings that can be used for community food projects and allotments.	2021	Food project spaces increased
Capacity of local food sector increases, particularly cookery skills and shared meals providers	Explore funding opportunities and spaces for growing and cooking classes	September 2020; ongoing	Increased availability of cooking classes and shared meals; joint funding bid
Projects strengthened through sharable resources	Explore feasibility of a tool library and other resource-sharing projects	2021	Delivery of tool library and other projects
Opportunities for people to make a living from producing and selling food at markets, pop-ups and other events created	Connect growers with retail opportunities e.g. markets, pop-ups	2021	More food in Tower Hamlets produced locally; more employees of local food sector

GOOD FOOD FOR HEALTHIER PEOPLE AND PLANET

SUMMARY

We are facing a climate emergency, a fact that Tower Hamlets council recognised in March 2019. At the same time, there is growing evidence of the effect of poor diet on our nation's health.

While food can nurture human health and support environmental sustainability, our current system threatens both.

Personal consumption is key: eating more fruit and veg, nuts, seeds and grains, and fewer animal fats could improve health AND lead to a 30 per cent reduction in consumption-related greenhouse gases.

We also want to drastically reduce the amount of food waste that goes to landfill in a way that benefits businesses, residents, growers and the council.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

- Tower Hamlets council
- Community growers
- Developers
- Housing providers
- Community centres
- Markets

WHERE WE CAN HAVE MOST IMPACT

- Encourage public institutions to move to more sustainable catering
- Designing a collaborative system for tackling food waste



**SEED SAVING AT LIVE WELL COURSES,
LIMBOROUGH GREEN HUB POPLAR**

GOOD FOOD FOR HEALTHIER PEOPLE AND PLANET - actions to nurture human health, support environmental sustainability and design out food waste

Goal	Action	When	Short term success
Carbon emissions of the food system reduced	Establish a food procurement working group	Sep 2020	Group meets regularly and develops action plan
	Adopt a borough-wide Sustainable Food Procurement policy with commitments on sustainability/ethics issues, such as decreasing meat consumption and buying more local produce.	2021	Policy in place
	Convince and enable individual organisations to be exemplars on agreed objectives.	2021	One major organisation signs up to new policy (Other local organisations e.g. schools/nurseries follow suit.)
Tower Hamlets landfill waste reduced	Support council's waste reduction strategy	2021	Increase in use of green bins
	Work with communities to Increase take up of council compost collection	2021	Increase in composting activity
Home/community composting increased	Disseminate advice on composting / produce own toolkit	2021	Number of toolkits give out/downloaded Increase in composting; producers report less need to buy compost
	Map compost activities in the borough and share best practice	2021	Waste reduction; greater awareness; growers report less need to buy compost
Food waste through collecting and redistributing consumable surplus food reduced	Support the work of Fareshare, Food Cycle and other food waste reuse organisations/projects	2021	Organisations stay involved in THF, helping orgs develop more Tower Hamlets-based initiatives e.g. social supermarkets, pantries, community cafes etc.
	Work with partners to raise the nutritional standards of the food being offered	2021	Beneficiaries report higher quality food.
	Link community organisations with surplus food schemes	2021	New partnerships established



**FOOD IS A VITAL PART OF
THE SOLUTION**

Wen.

THANK YOU TO OUR TOWER HAMLETS FOOD PARTNERSHIP PARTNERS!

Akshaya Patra Foundation
Bags of Taste
Bow Health Network
Bromley by Bow Centre
Café Spice Namaste
City Gateway
City Harvest
Cook Social
Clarion Futures
Cost Price Café
Cranbrook Community Food Garden
Darul Umah Hub
Eastend Homes
Eat Club
FareShare
The Felix Project
First Love Foundation
Food Academy
Food Cycle
Food Matters
Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
Healthy London Partnership
Kings College London
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Luminary Bakery
Morgan Stanley
Muslim Women's Collective

Osmani Trust
Poplar HARCA
Positive East
Queen Mary Uni
Rice Marketing
R-URBAN
Save the Children
Seeds of Growth
Shoreditch Trust
Soil Association
St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary School
Stepney City Farm
Sunday Assembly
Sunnyjar Ecohub
Sustain
Tiffinwalli
Tower Hamlets CVS
Tower Hamlets Food Bank
Tower Hamlets Volunteer Centre
Toynbee Hall
University of Sussex
Wakefield & Tetley Trust
Whitechapel Mission

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