

Middlesbrough Food Partnership

Food Action Plan

2024 - 2028

Introduction

In 2019 Middlesbrough became the first location to progress from a bronze to a silver award. Joining an exclusive group across the UK that are setting an example by driving change and transforming the food system in their areas, the partnership is now going for the gold. This unique award builds upon the achievements and continued hard work that is ongoing in and around the area.

This Food Action Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving the local food system in Middlesbrough. By using a collaborative effort, involving key stakeholders such as local authorities, community groups, educational institutions and businesses, the aim is to address issues such as food insecurity, health disparities and environmental sustainability. The Food Action Plan is designed to be dynamic and responsive to the unique needs and resources of the area, encompassing a variety of initiatives including the support for local food production, enhancing food surplus redistribution and promoting nutrition education.

During the development and evaluation of the new Food Action Plan, the need to tackle the growing issues around food insecurity and access to healthful, nutritious and affordable food was one of our main priorities. Food insecurity is a significant challenge for the foreseeable future and will remain a top priority for the Middlesbrough Food Partnership.

Introduction

The Middlesbrough Food Partnership works with key stakeholders to review the town-wide approach to food through its action plan and has identified a number of shared priorities and actions that can be taken to make sure Middlesbrough has a more sustainable and secure future. The actions set out in this plan cover all aspects of food issues that are important to the needs of Middlesbrough: health and nutrition; local and sustainable food; reducing food related waste; fairness in the food chain and tackling food poverty; education and skills; and a strong local food economy. Furthermore, the plan offers support for organisations, businesses and individuals to make better food choices and how others can get involved.

The Partnership are working hard to prioritise the needs of the local area, including the continuation of the Green Strategy set out by Middlesbrough Council. The Green Strategy comprises of a 14-point plan aiming to make Middlesbrough greener across all essential environmental issues. As well as the introduction of the Healthy Weight Declaration, amongst many other initiatives.

We hope the Food Action Plan will inspire more to support food initiatives, get involved and make positive changes surrounding food.

- Alexandra Young, Food Partnership Lead

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Business

Support local businesses and settings to procure and provide healthy and sustainable food to boost local prosperity, encourage healthy eating and protect the environment.



Section 1

Middlesbrough Council, along with public sector bodies and private businesses, acknowledges and incorporates principles of healthy, sustainable, local, and ethical food, as well as the food waste hierarchy, in their policies, strategies, and plans.

1. Create a vibrant and diverse healthy and sustainable food economy.
 - 1.1 Develop and promote a Local Food brand and accompanying criteria.
 - 1.2 Promote locally sourced, healthy and sustainable produce and suppliers.
 - 1.3 Promote alternative retail models and other local, sustainable distribution services and platforms e.g. food markets, food hubs, distribution networks and pantry models.
 - 1.4 Engage with the Good Food Local North East Programme and embed Sustain recommendations to improve the local food system

Section 2

2. Create local procurement networks which link into local production and suppliers and encourage participation of larger mainstream organisations and institutions.

2.1 Develop opportunities locally and regionally for small scale local and sustainable food and drink producers, such as local purchasing networks and cooperatives.

2.2 Work with regional partners to develop procurement opportunities for suppliers and producers of local and sustainable food and drink.

2.3 Support and promote healthy and sustainable food entrepreneurs and independent businesses through business training and wider support.

2.4 Support food and drink businesses to improve sustainability across all aspects of their business through training, networks and wider support initiatives.

2.5 MBC Social Value charter – [Middlesbrough Council Social Value Charter](#)

Section 3

3. Encourage local businesses to provide safe, healthy and sustainable food and food growing opportunities to promote the health and wellbeing of their employees, customers, clients and residents.

3.1 Continue to deliver the Eat Well South Tees work programme with links into early years settings, schools, workplaces, Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) providers and settings to promote nutrition standards, healthy options and sustainable and ethical food.

3.2 Make more affordable and healthy food available across the town in supermarkets, convenience stores, takeaways and vending machines, and through pop-up food retail.

3.3 Work to prevent the development of food deserts (limited access to healthy food) and food swamps (high density of fast-food outlets), including support through policies and strategies.

Section 3 Continued

3.4 Work with planners, developers and businesses to include growing sites (allotments, roof top gardens etc) and edible landscaping into existing and new business and industrial developments.

3.5 Increase the number of 5-Star rated food premises in the town.

3.6 Work with food retailers in supermarkets and convenience stores to promote the purchasing of healthy food, utilising the Healthy Start Card for eligible families.

3.7 Work with businesses to sign up to the 'Welcome to Breastfeed' scheme.

3.8 Deliver the MUST service in Middlesbrough, working towards a bronze, silver or gold nutritional standards for all care homes. Continue to deliver nutritional screening and nutrition and hydration training to ensure care homes are promoting high standards of nutrition and health and wellbeing within settings and ensure that care homes are supported to implement balanced menus and mealtimes that meet CQC standards.



Section 3 Continued

3.9 Work with HAF providers to become registered food businesses and ensure food meets school food standards.

3.10 Work with partners to develop catering guidance for businesses and events to increase the offer of healthier and more sustainable food.

3.11 Engage with the local food and drink sector (manufacturers, caterers, out of home settings) where appropriate to consider responsible retailing such as, offering and promoting healthier food and drink options, and reformulating and reducing the portion sizes of takeaway food.



Section 4

4. Promote and deliver activities that support the development and long-term success of the healthy and sustainable food and drink industry and a circular food economy.

4.1 Ensure healthy and sustainable food businesses are supported by planning and economic development strategies, policies and training.

4.2 Investigate and promote quality, healthy, sustainable and ethical food accreditations.



People

Inspire and enable a good food movement in Middlesbrough so that all residents have the opportunity to become more active food citizens and have access to buy, grow, produce and cook affordable, healthy and sustainable food.



Section 5

5. Ensure that Middlesbrough's approach to sustainable food gives priority to supporting the delivery of the Middlesbrough Food Power Action Plan and tackling food insecurity.

5.1 Produce guidance and training on access to affordable and healthful food, shopping on a budget, use of sell-by dates, promotion of the Healthy Start Card for eligible families.

5.2 Coordinated through Middlesbrough Food Power Alliance, continue work to ensure as many people as possible facing financial crisis can access essential and healthful food.

5.3 Enhance the referral pathway of wider and holistic support available to all people accessing emergency food via free and low-cost food initiatives.

5.4 Offer education to those experiencing financial hardship in healthy eating and cooking skills on a budget, healthy weight support and social prescribing.

5.5 Provide support for people to access lower cost healthy food, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Including the promotion of the Healthy Start Card for eligible families.

Section 5 Continued

5.6 Provide support to and promote charities, social enterprises and organisations who collect and redistribute surplus food.

5.7 Deliver training to frontline staff in food poverty issues so they can direct clients to hardship funds, low cost or emergency food aid and food budgeting and cooking skills training and resources.

5.8 Provide training/referral information for families accessing formula milk – safe preparation of bottles.
[A Guide for Local Authorities and Health Boards](#)



Section 6

6. Promote Middlesbrough's Fairtrade programme to ensure producers in developing countries are treated fairly with fair pay and working conditions.

6.1 Continue the town's Fairtrade programme under the direction of the Middlesbrough Fairtrade Group with an annual programme of events and campaigns.

6.2 Work with Middlesbrough Council and wider partners to continue with their commitment to serve Fairtrade products in official meetings and provide Fairtrade products in vending machines and associated catering outlets.



Section 7

7. Give everyone the opportunity to learn about healthy eating, sustainable food production and how to grow and cook healthily.

7.1 Increase public understanding of food, health and sustainability through campaigns using a variety of communication tools and increase participation and consumption of sustainable food through an increase in opportunities.

7.2 Develop opportunities for local students through placements and internships to support local food sector to improve food safety, public nutrition, food accessibility, and overall sustainability of the food chain.

7.3 Provide training for residents, schools and community groups on a range of food topics, such as horticulture, food budgeting, healthy and affordable cooking skills, nutrition and food hygiene and safety.

7.4 Utilise mapping to increase awareness, opportunities and access to sustainable food for the town, including further developing the Middlesbrough Food Map.

7.5 Increase health literacy of local people to make informed healthier choices ensuring clear and comprehensive healthy eating and physical activity messages are consistent with government guidelines

Environment

Support residents and businesses to increase the sustainability of food and reduce its impact on the environment and to utilise underused land for food growing and production.



Section 8

8. Promote and deliver activities that support residents to minimise, recycle and compost food related waste.

8.1 Raise public awareness of food waste and how to reduce it by delivering campaigns, roadshows, school visits and other events.

8.2 Promote and encourage home composting to residents across Middlesbrough by delivering roadshows, school visits and other events and providing resources to communities.

8.3 Encourage residents to buy food with minimal packaging and promote the recycling of food containers using the Council's Blue Bin scheme.



Section 9

9. Encourage and support businesses to reduce the amount of food related waste they generate and recycle more of the waste that is created.

9.1 Provide resources for businesses providing advice on waste reduction to promote zero waste.

9.2 Incorporate the Food Waste Hierarchy into relevant policies, strategies and services to reduce and/or divert food waste.

9.3 Increase uptake of Middlesbrough's food waste collection scheme in schools and businesses. Food waste collections for residents will be introduced in 2026.

9.4 Develop a strategy for a fat, oil, grease collection service and promote to schools and businesses.

Section 10

10. Promote and deliver activities that support residents and businesses to grow and produce more sustainable local food.

10.1 Promote and encourage community involvement in grass roots and urban/ peri-urban food related activities through improved access to networks, resources, training, land or buildings through promotion of assets and allotments for community use.

10.2 Promote the benefits of self-managed allotment sites and provide support for sites through the process.

10.3 Utilise underused, post-industrial, derelict and backland greenspaces for food related production such as community allotments, forest gardens and pollinator planting.

10.4 Create edible landscapes in targeted areas of Middlesbrough including community gardens and edible planting.

10.5 Provide training, advice and support on how growers can adopt low ecological impact production and management techniques.

Middlesbrough Food Charter

This Food Charter is for you to pledge support for the continuation of building a healthier and more sustainable Middlesbrough. As a Food Partnership we strive to make our town a place where local people can eat good quality, healthy and affordable food. Wherever possible, we pledge to source food that has been grown locally and is environmentally friendly, aiming to reduce and recycle food waste and packaging.

The choices that we all make about food have far reaching consequences on health, the environment and the prosperity of Middlesbrough. Good food is essential to enable a better quality of life and the long-term wellbeing of the Middlesbrough Food Partnership to help local people and businesses make good choices about food. Please join us and others like you by showing your support and adding your organisations logo to this Food Charter. By signing this Food Charter, you pledge to:

- acquire more sustainable, local and responsibly sourced food
- supply healthy, seasonal and responsibly sourced food
- reduce and recycle food waste (or dispose of it responsibly)
- aim to buy food that does not have excessive packaging and aim to recycle any packaging that you can
- support community food initiatives
- where possible, provide growing opportunities for staff and your local community

Middlesbrough Food Charter

In addition, you will try to encourage and support your customers, volunteers and employees to do as many of the following:

- eat a healthier diet that is low in salt, sugar and fat
- eat more plant-based meals, fresh fruit and vegetables
- cook what you need and re-use leftover food
- buy food that is produced locally to Middlesbrough and its surrounding areas
- use local independent shops
- grow some of your own food

There is a range of support available to help individuals and businesses to achieve these pledges. Visit goodfoodmbro.org.uk to find out more or email the Food Partnership lead at alex.young@menvcity.org.uk

Members of the Middlesbrough Food Partnership are invited to sign the Food Action Plan to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system for Middlesbrough. Your support is crucial in delivering impactful change and fostering a resilient future for all.



Want to add your organisation?

Contact the Alex Young
at
alex.young@mencity.org.uk



Visit our website for more information

www.goodfoodmbro.org.uk

