

## **Developing a Healthy Food Environment in Nottinghamshire**

### **A Briefing for the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board**

Authors: John Wilcox, Kathy Holmes, Dawn Jenkin, Public Health, Nottinghamshire.

#### **1. Introduction**

Food is integrally linked to the way we live and our health and wellbeing. Improving the local food environment for health & wellbeing is one of the key priorities to address as part of the Healthy and Sustainable Places ambition of the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2022.

When we talk about the local food environment we mean all our opportunities to obtain food where we live. For most people this means food for home consumption such as from supermarkets and convenience stores; and readymade food for home and out-of-home consumption from restaurants and takeaways<sup>i</sup>. It can also include food grown locally for our consumption.

Research indicates that place-based approaches that seek to address the many factors in the food environment that influence people's health have a strong potential to have a local impact on health & wellbeing<sup>ii</sup>.

The Health & Wellbeing Board is well positioned as a partnership to play a leadership role in improving the local food environment for health and wellbeing. The recently approved approach for taking forward the Board's Healthy and Sustainable Places ambition provides a mechanism for local positive action to influence the local food system and food environment.

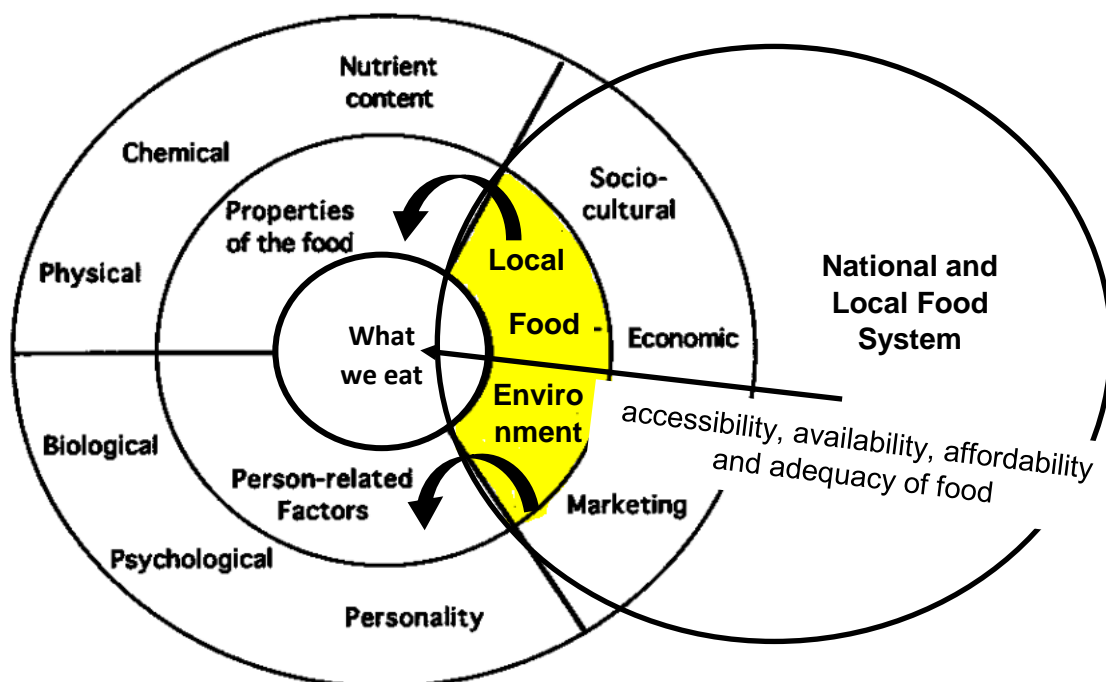
This briefing paper describes what we mean by the local food environment as part of a local food system and the relationship with our health and wellbeing. It then sets out a proposal for the role of the Health & Wellbeing Board in improving the food environment as part of a local food system in Nottinghamshire and as part of developing healthy and sustainable places.

#### **2. The food environment and its influence on what we eat**

Figure 1 shows that what we eat, is influenced by a wide range of interrelated factors including, the makeup of the food itself; and biological, psychological and personality factors. Importantly, over the past decade it has become increasingly recognized that our local food environment, has a big influence on our health<sup>iii</sup>. Figure 1 indicates that the food environment can influence the other factors which affect what we eat.

The local food environment is part of local food system which together affect what we buy and eat through influencing the accessibility, availability, affordability and adequacy of food in our local places<sup>iv</sup>. These factors are shaped by a range of physical, social, economic, cultural, and political factors<sup>v</sup>.

**Figure 1** How the food environment and other factors influence what we eat (adapted from Jan-Benedict, Food Consumption Behaviour)<sup>vi</sup>



### 3. The Impact of the food Environment on our Health & Wellbeing

#### 3.1. Diet related disease

The evidence set out in the JSNA tells us that improving the local food environment can help us enable and support residents to reduce their risk of obesity and diet related diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers<sup>xi</sup>. Dietary risk factors, are the second greatest contributor (after tobacco) to years of life living with ill health and years of life lost due to early deaths in the country<sup>1</sup> in the East Midlands<sup>vii</sup>. The fact that Britain eats the most “ultra-processed” diet in Europe is a significant factor in this<sup>viii</sup>.

#### 3.2. Food vulnerability and poverty

The JSNA recommends that we undertake work to support individuals in relation to how to make healthy diet choices within a limited budget<sup>ix</sup>. Improving access to healthy and affordable food can help prevent people who are most vulnerable to food poverty<sup>x</sup>. Emergency food aid to prevent hunger has increased significantly in the UK in recent years<sup>xii</sup>. The number of three-day emergency food supplies given by Trussel Trust Foodbanks<sup>2</sup> increased by 45% between 2013-14 to 2017/18 from over 900,000 to over 1.3 million.

<sup>1</sup> Measured in disability adjusted life year (DALY). Main causes of ill health and premature death are cardiovascular diseases, cancers and diabetes.

<sup>2</sup> Research suggests that Trussell Trust foodbank centres account for roughly two-thirds of all emergency food aid provision facilities in the UK: you can read more about this [here](#)

### **3.3. Out of Home Food**

The increasing consumption of out-of-home meals is an important aspect of the food environment which impacts on health. More than one quarter (27.1%) of adults and one fifth of children eat food from out-of-home food outlets at least once a week. These meals tend to be associated with higher energy intake; higher levels of fat, saturated fats, sugar, and salt, and lower levels of micronutrients<sup>i</sup>. The number of fast food outlets in the county has increased from 670 in 2014 to 743 in 2017<sup>xiii</sup>. This increasing proliferation of fast food outlets is part of what has been characterised as our “toxic high streets”, reflecting the unprecedented growth of high street outlets which are potentially harmful for health<sup>xiv</sup>. The JSNA recommends close working relationships between planners and public health professionals to ensure that planning supports and encourages physical activity and access to affordable healthy food<sup>xv</sup>.

### **3.4. Food Waste**

It was estimated in 2015 that as a nation we throw away 4 million tonnes of food from home that could have been eaten, estimated to cost £13 billion a year. This avoidable household food waste was associated with 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to the emissions generated by 1 in 4 cars on UK roads<sup>xvi</sup>. The 2015 estimate is equivalent to £470 a year for the average household, £700 a year for the average family or £200 a year for the average person in the UK. This is therefore an important aspect of the local food system, which impacts on our collective health & wellbeing.

### **3.5. Local Economy**

Sustainable and healthy food can contribute positively to the local economy, which can be positive to in terms of local jobs and economic growth. Food and drink in the county was a focus of a recent County Council Chairman’s event, and the role of the local Universities in sustainable food and agri-tech is growing and has a large reach. Food and Drink is likely to feature in the County Councils emerging Visitor Economy Strategy, and the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership identifies food and drink manufacturing as a key sector.

#### **4. Developing a Food Charter to improve the local Food Environment for Health & Wellbeing**

From reviewing evidence and good practice from across the county, Public Health have found that at the heart of successful local partnership action to improve the food environment is a strong vision that all stakeholders can buy into. Many areas of the country have found it useful to present their vision in the form of a *Food Charter*. The advantage of having a Food Charter is that all stakeholders have a shared vision and set of outcomes to work towards. Food Charters can be characterised as being:

- Broad in scope to allow for changing priorities further down the line.
- Reflect the range of key issues identified locally
- Short and easy to communicate

Public Health proposes that the Health & Wellbeing Board develop a Food Charter which will set out a shared set of principles which can be actioned in multiple innovative ways through the Sustainable and Healthy Places Groups across the county.

Rather than starting from scratch, we propose learning from the Sustainable Food [Places] Cities (SFC) programme for Food Charter ideas. The SFC programme was established in 2013 by the Soil Association, in partnership with Food Matters and Sustain. The programme aims to support food culture and food system transformation and to build a multi-stakeholder 'good food' movement at a local level. <sup>xvii</sup>

There are six areas/principles that structure the SFC approach, which were developed from a review of existing UK food strategies and action plans:

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

We suggest that it would be beneficial to see how we can use these principles to inform our thinking for a Nottinghamshire Food Charter.

## 5. Addressing the Food Environment through Place-based Health and Wellbeing Groups

If the Health and Wellbeing Board were to lead on a Food Charter for Nottinghamshire the local actions for each part of the county could be agreed, coordinated and implemented as part of plans via the new Healthy and Sustainable Places Groups (figure 2). This can be done under the leadership of the Board Ambition leads and Champions.

**Figure 2 Nottinghamshire Health & Wellbeing Board Healthy and Sustainable Places structure**



Each Healthy and Sustainable Places Group would be best placed to understand its local food environment, and related issues and assets.

In reviewing the evidence of good practice in other areas we have found examples of how Board Members and other local stakeholders could potentially make a difference to their local food environment. Figure 3 shows some examples of these mapped against the SFC area/principles. These are described in more detail in appendix 1.

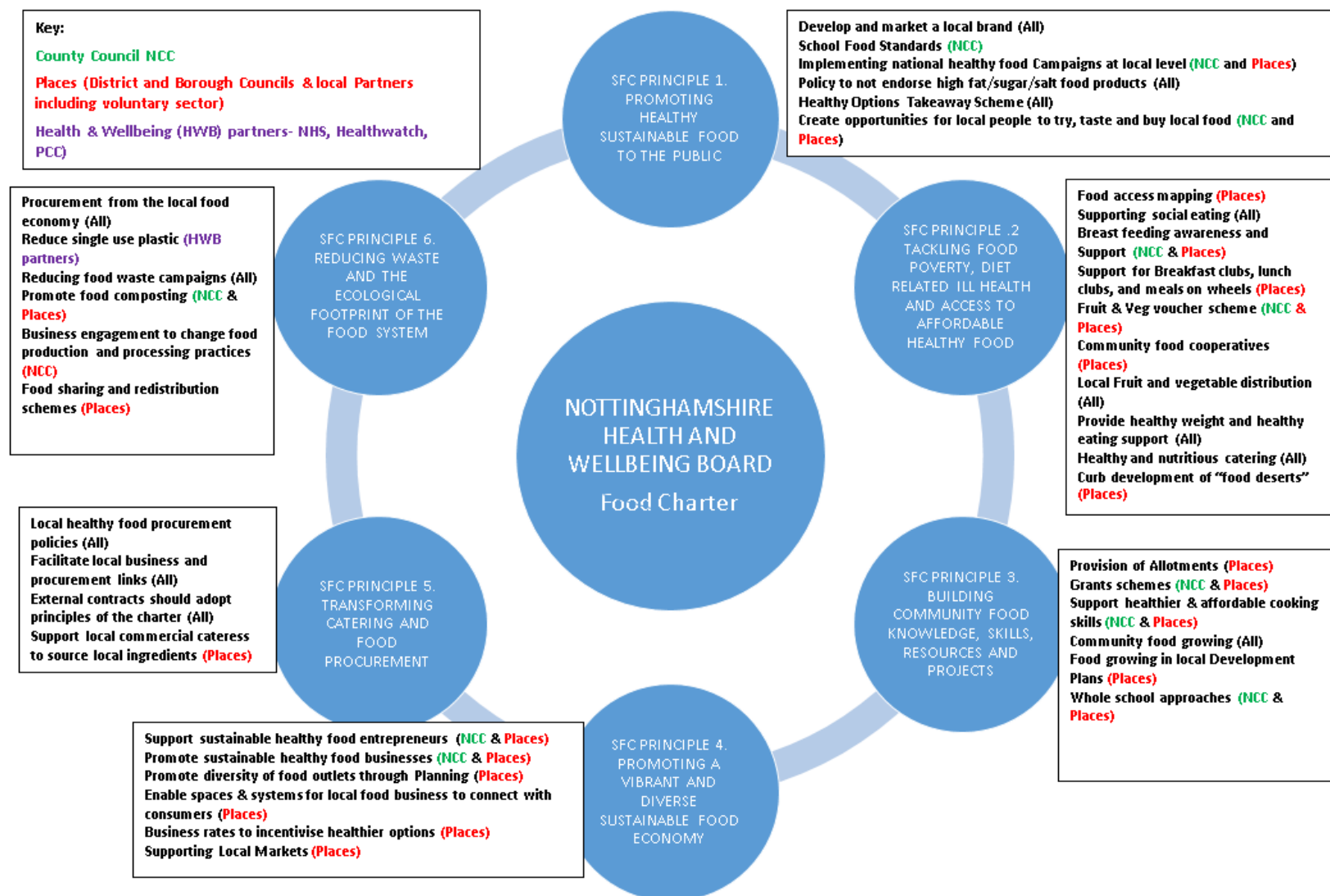
## 6. Conclusion

There is a broad set of health and wellbeing issues that are influenced by the food environment in Nottinghamshire. The Health & Wellbeing Board is well positioned to lead action to address these through its Food Environment priority. A Food Charter for Nottinghamshire would set out a clear vision for the outcomes which we want to improve, aligned with the SFC principles which act as an evidence based framework to guide this work. The agreed place based working for the Health & Wellbeing Strategy provides the governance structure to enable each Healthy and Sustainable Places Group to address its local issues with partners and local assets and partners.

## 7. Opportunities for consideration

- The development of a Nottinghamshire Food Charter to set out the vision and principles for improving the food environment in the county.
- To learn from the Sustainable Food Cities programme to inform a Food Charter.
- For actions to improve the local food environment to be developed and coordinated agreed, as part of plans via the Healthy and Sustainable Places Groups.
- For each board member to drive delivery of the Food Charter within their own organisation.

Figure 3 Examples of Stakeholder Interventions Mapped onto Sustainable Food City (SFC) Areas/Principles in a Food Charter



**Appendix 1: Examples of Stakeholder Interventions Mapped onto Sustainable Food City (SFC) Areas/Principles in a Food Charter**

<u>SFC / Food Charter Principle/Area</u>	<u>Health &amp; Wellbeing Board partners (inc. NHS, PCC, Healthwatch)</u>	<u>Nottinghamshire County Council</u>	<u>District &amp; Borough councils, community &amp; voluntary sector</u>
Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public	Supporting marketing of a local brand Implementing national healthy food Campaigns at local level Develop a policy to not endorse or accept sponsorship from companies whose main business is high fat/sugar/salt food products All food outlets to be part of the Healthy Options Takeaway Scheme	Develop and market a local brand Support schools to adopt food Standards Implementing national healthy food Campaigns at local level Develop a policy to not endorse or accept sponsorship from companies whose main business is high fat/sugar/salt food products All food outlets to be part of the Healthy Options Takeaway Scheme	Develop and market a local brand Implementing national healthy food Campaigns at local level Develop a policy to not endorse or accept sponsorship from companies whose main business is high fat/sugar/salt food products All food outlets to be part of the Healthy Options Takeaway Scheme Create opportunities for local people to try, taste and buy local food
Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill health and access to affordable healthy food	Supporting social eating which bring together people in local communities and or people from vulnerable groups to grown eat and prepare food together Provide healthy weight and healthy eating support	Supporting social eating which bring together people in local communities and or people from vulnerable groups to grown eat and prepare food together Provide healthy weight and healthy eating support	Conduct food access mapping Supporting social eating which bring together people in local communities and or people from vulnerable groups to grown eat and prepare food together Support or establish f, community food cooperatives, local fruit and vegetable distribution Provide healthy weight and healthy eating support Develop targeted fruit and vegetable schemes for scheme for at risk groups
Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects	Provide land for Community food growing	Prioritise healthy & sustainable food in community grant schemes Provide land for Community food growing Develop schemes that support & enable healthier & affordable cooking skills	Provide sufficient allotments to meet demand Prioritise healthy & sustainable food in community grant schemes Healthier & affordable cooking skills Provide land for Community food growing Incorporate local food growing in local Development Plans

			Develop schemes that support & enable healthier & affordable cooking skills Support and enable schools to develop Whole school approaches to food & nutrition
Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy		Support sustainable healthy food entrepreneurs Promote sustainable healthy food businesses	Support sustainable healthy food entrepreneurs Promote sustainable healthy food businesses Promote diversity of food outlets through Planning Policies to reduce the density of fast food outlets Use Business rates to incentivise businesses the sell healthier food options Incentivise and support local markets that use the local food system
Transforming catering and food procurement	Ensure that local healthy food procurement in a prioritised policy Facilitate local business and procurement links to develop the local food supply system Incorporate the principles of a food charter within contracts with external contractors that supply food contracts	Ensure that local healthy food procurement in a prioritised policy Facilitate local business and procurement links to develop the local food supply system Incorporate the principles of a food charter within contracts with external contractors that supply food contracts Support local commercial caterers to source local ingredients	Ensure that local healthy food procurement in a prioritised policy Facilitate local business and procurement links to develop the local food supply system Incorporate the principles of a food charter within contracts with external contractors that supply food contracts Support local commercial caterers to source local ingredients
Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system	Procurement from the local food economy to reduce transportation emissions & costs Reduce single use plastic Reducing food waste campaigns	Procurement from the local food economy to reduce transportation emissions & costs Reduce single use plastic Reducing food waste campaigns Promote food composting Business engagement to change food production and processing practices	Procurement from the local food economy to reduce transportation emissions & costs Reduce single use plastic Reducing food waste campaigns Promote food composting Food sharing and redistribution schemes



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