

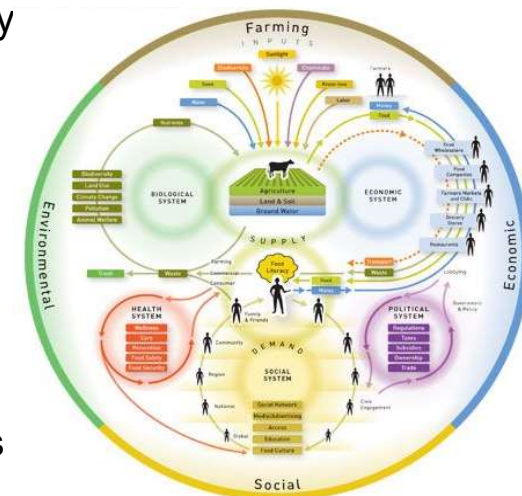
Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022



A Recipe for Healthy and Sustainable Food

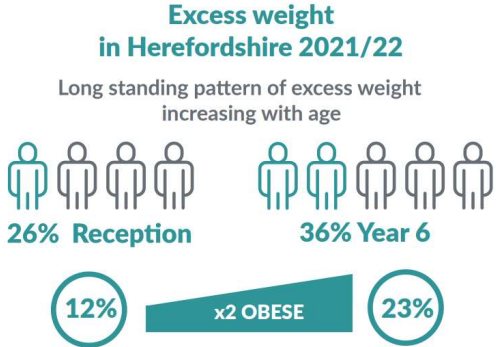
Why is healthy and sustainable food Important?

- As well as people's health, food also has significant environmental, social and economic effects, from production, through processing and transportation to preparation and consumption
- The high-tech nature of most farming systems has led to us becoming increasingly distanced from agriculture, and consequently the story behind our food.
- Our food system is complex and there are many influencing factors
- Food can be described as 'an interconnected system of everything and everybody that influences, and is influenced by, the activities involved in bringing food from farm to fork'
- Reducing food miles and promoting increased use of seasonal, good food produced locally can help address these risks while creating increased opportunity for the local economy
- The Herefordshire Food Alliance (HFA) was formed in 2020 and is a partnership of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector working together towards a thriving and sustainable local food economy which contributes to a healthy lifestyle, healthy communities and a healthy environment.



Food and health

- Poor diet is one of the leading risk factors driving the UK’s high burden of preventable ill health and premature death, contributing significantly to the population’s widening health inequalities
- Food and diet are associated with developing chronic diseases, including cancer, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke, with red and processed meats and sugar sweetened beverages associated with increased risks
- Cancer and diseases of the circulatory system (such as heart disease and stroke) are the leading causes of premature deaths in Herefordshire. Between them, they accounted for almost three-fifths (58%) of all deaths before the age of 75 in 2021
- Herefordshire has higher prevalence of child and adult obesity compared to the national average
- Poor diet is a risk factor for Type 2 Diabetes - Approximately 15,750 adults in Herefordshire are estimated to have type 2 diabetes, with a further 19,400 adults estimated to have non-diabetic hyperglycaemia (pre-diabetes).
- Children in Herefordshire have poorer oral health than reported nationally with 39% children aged 5 experience dentinal decay
- All these health consequences have a significant impact on the cost of public services



Food and the environment

- The global food system is widely recognised as the single biggest contributor to biodiversity loss, deforestation, drought, freshwater pollution and the collapse of aquatic wildlife.
- After the energy industry it is the biggest cause of climate change, responsible for 25 to 30 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions
- A shift to plant-based diets, sustainable, seasonal and locally sourced foods and a reduction of food waste can greatly reduce carbon emissions from this sector
- Farming is an essential part of rural life and of Herefordshire communities' prosperity, with 77% of Herefordshire land farmed
- A third of Herefordshire's commercial holdings are grazing livestock farms on lowland, while 18% are general crop farms and 11% are grazing livestock farms on less favourable land
- The UK is roughly 60% food secure, mostly self-sufficient in meat, dairy, eggs and grain but heavily reliant on importing vegetables and fruit. Herefordshire grows a plentiful supply of fruit and vegetables, which could support a more local food system.
- In Herefordshire, more than a third of black bin rubbish is food waste and its packaging. From 2022, local analysis found that 70% of food thrown away in Herefordshire was considered avoidable.

Food insecurity

- Multiple factors affect national food security and the resilience of food supply chains, potentially leading to disruption and rising food prices
- Price and affordability are major determinants of the food people choose to purchase, particularly for people on low incomes
- The poorest fifth of UK households would need to spend 43% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government recommended healthy diet
- An estimated 28% of all households in Herefordshire are living in fuel poverty, up from almost 17% before the energy crisis - This may mean some households may not be able to afford enough food, while others could switch to cheaper calories that are less nutritious, and thus less healthy
- Research has found that healthier foods are almost three times as expensive per calorie as less healthy foods with evidence suggesting that healthy foods have increased in price by twice as much as less healthy foods in the past year
- The cost of living is often considered higher in rural areas
- We are seeing increasing numbers of people in Herefordshire receiving support from food -100% increase in use of Food Banks over the last 12-months



Food quality and choices



- There are opportunities to promote healthy sustainable food across the life course
- Rates of breastfeeding in Herefordshire are higher than the national average for first feed and for infants being exclusively or partially breastfed by 6-8 weeks.
- As children age in Herefordshire, they are more likely to report having had nothing to eat or drink for breakfast, more chips or roast potatoes on most days, less fresh fruit on most days and more recent sugary drinks.
- Nationally, infant free school meals are provided to all state school children in years reception, 1 and 2. In addition, from year 3 onwards, free school meals are provided to children whose families are in receipt of certain benefits
- Herefordshire Council is participating in the national School Food Standards pilot with Environmental health officers are carrying out additional observations on the food offer as part of their routine food hygiene inspections and identifying any red flags against the School Food Standards.
- As people age, several issues can make it difficult to maintain a healthy diet – for example, physical conditions like arthritis affect mobility and the ability to cook meals

Policy and the food environment



- The evidence clearly shows that the environment in which we make food choices exert a powerful influence on our diets
- Commercial influences on health should not be underestimated. The sale of products high in fat, sugar and salt is a profitable business and a variety of approaches are used by the food sector to market products detrimental to health
- Eighty per cent of processed food sold in the UK is unhealthy when compared to World Health Organisation guidelines
- The proportion of adults in Herefordshire meeting the recommended 5-a-day is higher (62.7%) than rates in the West Midlands (52.6%) and England (55.4%). However, 40% of our population are still not meeting current guidelines
- Access to fast food is easier than ever, with fast food outlets representing more than 1 in 4 (26%) of places to buy food and the growth in takeaway delivery companies during the pandemic
- The portions of food or drink that people eat out or eat as takeaway meals contain twice as many calories on average as their shop-bought equivalents
- Many retailers use 'product placement' to influence purchases in food stores. Studies suggest that greater availability of healthy foods is linked to better dietary choices.

Food economy

- Herefordshire has high employment rates in the food sector, which may well contribute to the high number of households in fuel/food poverty due to low wages
- The food manufacturing and processing sector's high employment concentration in Hereford is almost four times as concentrated as the national average and accounted for 43% of all employment for this sector in the Marches area (consisting of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin)
- Despite the importance of the food system, its workers are poorly compensated, with 22% only earning the national minimum wage or below, compared to 8% of all workers, and nearly half reporting food insecurity
- Herefordshire's Big Economic Plan includes reference to supporting sustainable food, with the 2050 plan including the ambition to transform land management and farming practices to support sustainable food production



What we are already doing

- Soil from the City
 - ❖ Pedicargo collect trade food waste by cargo bike and process it into compost using a Tidy Planet rocket composter. The rocket speedily breaks down food waste into nutrient- and microbe-packed compost that can regenerate the soil in the city it came from.
- Ross community garden
 - ❖ Haygrove Community Gardens was established in 2013, where during the summer months school educational visits take place. The gardens have recently expanded to include a zero waste stall, a Talk Community hub, a growing club and cooking club.
- Kids Kitchen
 - ❖ Kids Kitchen provide food activities for families in Herefordshire. They have fun, cook from scratch, use local food and make connections through their activities.
- The Cart Shed
 - ❖ The Cart Shed supports adults and young people experiencing mental health difficulties. They provide a variety of outdoor activities including food growing and other horticulture education.
- Sheds Together Cookery Club
 - ❖ The Sheds Together Cookery Club runs from Bromyard Methodist Church, bringing people over 50 together to cook, eat and socialise. Using budget-friendly recipes and with the help of volunteers, people can learn new cooking skills and great ideas to make healthy and nutritious meals alongside new friends and enjoy the delicious food that they've cooked together.



Recommendations

1. Work in partnership

- Build on the good work of the Food Alliance to co-ordinate activity across the county and deliver a whole systems approach to healthy and sustainable food.

2. Deliver good food education

- Continue to build on the national School Food Standards project alongside environmental health officers to support better school food
- All food served in schools to be compliant with the School Food Standards
- Consideration should be given to expand access to Free School Meals, particularly for all children receiving universal credit

3. Support healthy food for all

- Provide support to families to have the skills to cook from scratch and for children to learn healthy eating habits from an early age.
- Develop a central system to capture data on the number of residents accessing emergency food aid.
- Work with food retailers and partners to increase the take-up of the Healthy Start scheme.

4. Enable local food procurement

- Continue to explore the opportunities for dynamic food procurement to support locally sourced food.

5. Consider the effect food has on the environment

- Continue to raise awareness to the public on the effect of food on the environment to encourage informed choices.

6. Access healthy food where we grow, live and work

- Workplaces to provide healthy meal choices, with seasonal, local produce the preferred option.
- Consider developing a local good food awards scheme for different settings and retailers.
- Utilise planning and environmental policy tools to consider food growing and access to healthy food in local plans.

7. Play your part



We can all play our part

Activity
Sign it... Herefordshire's Food Charter
Grow it... for zero food miles grow your own at home, at an allotment, join a community garden or a community orchard.
Source it... source fresh, local and seasonal food, from independent outlets or buy direct from farmers markets or the farm gate. Connect to your food by finding out where it comes from, who produced it and how it was produced.
Choose it... make informed, healthy food choices and choose certified foods such as Organic, Red Tractor and Fair Trade.
Cook it... prepare and cook from scratch, learn new recipes and new skills.
Eat it... avoid ultra-processed foods, eat more fruit and vegetables and less meat and dairy. Look for high quality, high welfare certification such as pasture fed, free range, organic and MSC for fish.
Share it... connect with your community through food, e.g. via markets and cook clubs and influence others to engage with where their food comes from. Use apps such as Too Good to Go and Olio to share any surplus.
Don't waste it... Waste less food by planning meals, buying only what you need and using or freezing leftovers. Compost what's left where possible.
Reduce it... minimise the amount of meat we all eat