



# Oxfordshire Food Strategy

May 2022



Part 1



www.oxford.gov.uk



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# Contents



<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Oxfordshire's food challenge</b>	<b>6</b>
a. The local picture	8
b. Voices from Oxfordshire	10
<b>3. Vision and strategic priorities</b>	<b>14</b>
a. Ambitions to deliver a collective vision	15
b. Priority areas for action	16
<b>4. Delivering the strategy</b>	<b>15</b>
a. Integration within existing policy and programmes	16
b. Existing programmes and campaigns	18
c. Building new foundations	20
d. Examples of excellence	23
e. Calls to action	24



# 1.

## Introduction

Building a healthy, fair and sustainable food system for Oxfordshire.



**Food is both the source of, and solution to, many of the problems we face today.**



**To tackle the challenges of health and wellbeing, climate change and biodiversity loss, and fair incomes and employment, Oxfordshire must have a vibrant and sustainable food system. This is integral to our organisations, community, and culture.**

Alongside environmental and health drivers, the stresses placed on local communities and businesses through global events - COVID, Brexit, the war in Ukraine, rising fuel, food, and other living costs - have highlighted the need to re-evaluate the entire food system and take action. This was recognised in the 2021 National Food Strategy, which also noted the need for local areas to develop their own food strategies.

The Oxfordshire local food strategy was developed by a multi-stakeholder partnership including county and district councils, community groups, local food producers, retail and hospitality businesses, and major institutions. It is a first step towards drawing together the many strands of work that are already happening across the county and seeing them as a coherent whole.

Part 1 of this strategy, presented here, identifies priority areas of action, links to existing initiatives and policy, and showcases some examples of excellence that we can learn from and build on. Part 2 will embed the strategy in existing programmes and plans, develop Food Action Plans for each District, initiate pilot projects, and monitor and evaluate progress.

COP26 highlighted that 1.5 is still alive but we must act swiftly. Whilst much emphasis is placed on fossil fuels and

alternative energy sources, food systems currently account for roughly 40% of total greenhouse gases and contribute to biodiversity loss (IPCC, 2022). Furthermore, food poverty in Oxfordshire is real, and whilst COVID exacerbated the problem, it is not a new phenomenon. Between 9-14% of all households in Oxfordshire experience food insecurity. This equates to 62,000-96,000 people (Moretti et al 2021).

Removing barriers and ensuring that everyone in Oxfordshire can access affordable, healthy food in ways that promote dignity, recognise diversity, and celebrate our rich cultural heritage are fundamental to this strategy. Alongside building vibrant, thriving communities, supporting the local food economy can be part of the solution. It is fundamental to providing local jobs that serve local communities' needs. Oxfordshire's food economy accounts for 10% of jobs, and in 2020 generated turnover of £2.2 billion or 10% of the local economy. We also know that "pound-for-pound, money spent in the local food web supports three times the number of jobs as the equivalent spent in national grocery chains" (Willis, 2012).

The challenges of food poverty, the climate emergency, food supply, and our diet-related health crisis cannot be addressed without redefining our food systems. The time for action is now.





## Part 1: Developing Oxfordshire's food strategy

Understanding the strategic challenges of food in Oxfordshire, in consultation with the Good Food Oxfordshire (GFO) network.



Defining the vision and strategic priorities. Identifying the influencing factors and priority areas for action.



Building on what is currently being done. How the strategy supports, evaluates, and strengthens existing initiatives, and builds the foundations for new initiatives.



## Part 2: Implementing Oxfordshire's food strategy

Support and strengthen existing programmes and campaigns



Embed actions to deliver strategic priorities in existing policies and plans



Develop detailed Food Action Plans with each key stakeholder



Initiate foundation projects to build our knowledge base and inform detailed implementation plans for new initiatives



## Good Food Oxfordshire is a network of over 150 local organisations committed to a better food system for Oxfordshire.

Throughout this document we refer to "good food". To us, this means food that provides health and social benefits, contributes to thriving local economies and communities, enhances our natural resources, and tackles climate change.

In other words: food that is good for people, good for communities, and good for the planet.



# 2.

## Oxfordshire's food challenge



## Oxfordshire's food challenge was real, and now it's far worse.

Fair access to good quality, sustainably produced food is problematic across Oxfordshire, and has been made worse by pressures over the last few years.

Alongside environmental and health drivers, the stresses placed on local communities and businesses through global events - COVID, Brexit, war in Ukraine, rising fuel, food, and other living costs - have highlighted the need to

re-evaluate the entire food system and take action. This was recognised in the 2021 National Food Strategy, which also stressed the need for local areas to develop their own food strategies to increase food security and improve good food access.



# The local picture

Localised, sustainable food systems can provide an opportunity to improve food security for vulnerable groups, meet Oxfordshire's climate and sustainability targets, and improve food supply resilience.



## Food poverty

9-14% of Oxfordshire's residents experience food insecurity. This is **62,000–96,000 people** (Moretti et al 2021)



In 2022, the **rise in living costs** mean households face an average loss of **£1,200 to their annual incomes** forcing people into a 'heat or eat' dilemma (Harari et al. 2022)

Cost of living rises disproportionately impact lower income households. There are fewer good-quality 'value' ranges and **prices increase up to 350%** for basic items (Monroe, 2022)

## Health crisis



**1 in 4 children in Year 6 are obese.** Children living in the most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to be obese than those living in least deprived areas.

Obesity rates in both Reception-age and Year 6 children **increased by around 4.5% between 2019-20 and 2020-21.** These are the highest annual rises since the measurement programme began in 2006/7 (NCMP, 2021)

**55% of adults** in Oxfordshire are classified as overweight or obese (JSNA, 2021)

People limited by health problems and disability are **5x more likely** to experience food insecurity (Food Foundation, 2021)

## Climate emergency

Food systems contribute **40% of greenhouse gas emissions** (IPCC, 2022)

Biodiversity of priority species **has fallen more than 70%** in the UK since 1970 (NFS, 2021)

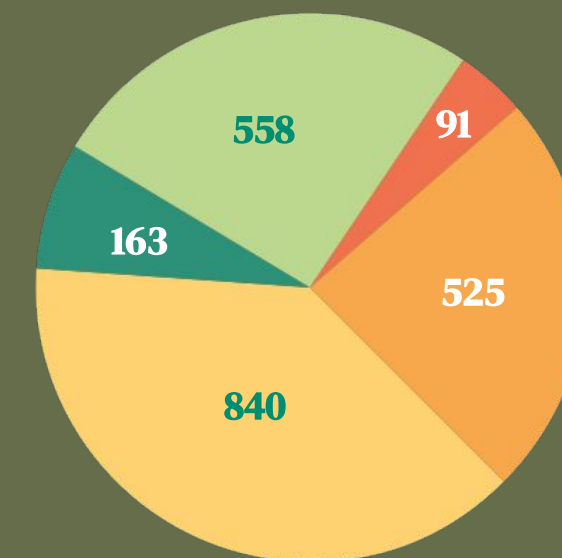


Research by GFO (2020) reported **the valuable contribution of small-scale and community food production** to sustainable land management, food security, and physical and mental health.

## Food supply

**Oxfordshire's food economy** turnover (£millions) by subsector (ONS, 2022)

- Agriculture
- Manufacture
- Wholesale
- Food retail
- Services



In 2013, half of Oxford's food came from the UK, a third came from the EU, and 15% was imported from further afield. Less than **1% was sourced directly from the region** (Curtis, 2013).

**74% of Oxfordshire's land area is agricultural,** mostly cereals, followed by livestock grazing for meat and dairy

In 2020, Oxfordshire's local food economy contributed **£2.2 billion in turnover, supporting 19,500 jobs and 2,970 enterprises** (ONS, 2022)





# Voices from Oxfordshire

We have listened to local people, groups, and enterprises.



Through our Oxfordshire Community Insights Programme and through workshops, questionnaires, and interviews with local residents, groups, and businesses we have heard what matters to people about food and their current experiences.



## Snapshots and learnings



### Childhood Malnutrition: From Grassroots to Policy Action

Roundtable Event November 2021

#### Key learnings:

"Taking a whole systems approach to address the double burden of both underweight and overweight childhood malnutrition involves recognition of the important overlap between the food system, education system and health system"

"breaking down artificial silos between sectors"

"need to trust their [grassroots organisations'] ability to understand the needs and priorities of the community"

(Nagraj et al 2022)

### Interviews / survey of growers and producers

"Turnover [of workers] is very high....we need skills and mentoring programmes for apprentice growers... places to live affordably in rural areas."

"Food margins being driven down every year... we need to value doing good and sustainability."

"Every person in the food chain doubles the price."

"Local markets build strong relationships and loyal customers."

### School food surveys and workshop

May 2021

March 2022

"We need to listen to children's voices - understanding why they sometimes avoid the food is powerful and can help with small changes."

Parents on school meals: "They try things they wouldn't at home then come back asking for it, it's fantastic."

"Too many chips according to my daughter."

"nobody needs meat every day, and for the price it can't be from sustainable and high welfare sources. It just destroys our planet and is irresponsible."

**Caterers** need to keep their businesses viable and struggle to balance children's preferences for unhealthy food with their ambitions to provide nutritious meals.

**Schools** have the ambition to improve school food, but they lack the time, capacity, and resources necessary to make a significant change.



## Key Events

September 2021  
**Good Food Procurement Webinar**  
20 attendees OSEP and GFO

November 2021  
**Childhood Malnutrition Roundtable Event**  
33 attendees, representing community groups, schools, housing associations, councillors, council officers, academics, and researchers\*

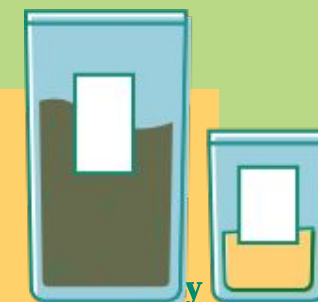
March 2022  
**Oxfordshire Schools Food Workshop**  
40+ attendees representing schools, councils, communities, and caterers

April 2021 - ongoing  
**Healthy Weight Insights Programme**

To date... engaged 28 community partners in Banbury Ruscote/Grimsbury, Blackbird Leys, Abingdon, Witney, and Berinsfield  
Conversations with children at target sites  
Listened to wider stakeholders at three workshops (146 people, 50 + organisations)

September 2021 - January 2022  
**GFO Research**

11 locations, 100+ members of public interviewed  
50+ individual stakeholder meetings held  
75+ stakeholders engaged at eight GFO events and network meetings



## Voices from Oxfordshire

### Chippy Larder

Visiting a local farm, engaging with growers, and learning new skills, having your own chick and farm fresh eggs at an affordable price, makes the 'aspirational' accessible.

### Cherwell Collective

We need to return to a more symbiotic relationship between food systems and communities. By connecting people to their food, through growing and cooking, people learn the value of food and not just the price. This in turn helps to reduce food waste and improves health and wellbeing through a stronger sense of community and engagement with nature.

### Orange Bakery

We love having a good relationship with our mill, our milk and our eggs... it makes all the difference

### Community insights

**Life is complex and chaotic:** "Many families tell us they have bigger issues to deal with than their child being a bit overweight"

Many people lack the **skills, capacity, or resources** to cook and to change routines & habits: "We don't plan, we live day to day"

Professionals can lack resources or skills to have **difficult conversations** about weight, food, and wellbeing to **help people to achieve a healthy weight:** "It is easier to talk about death than to talk about their child being overweight"

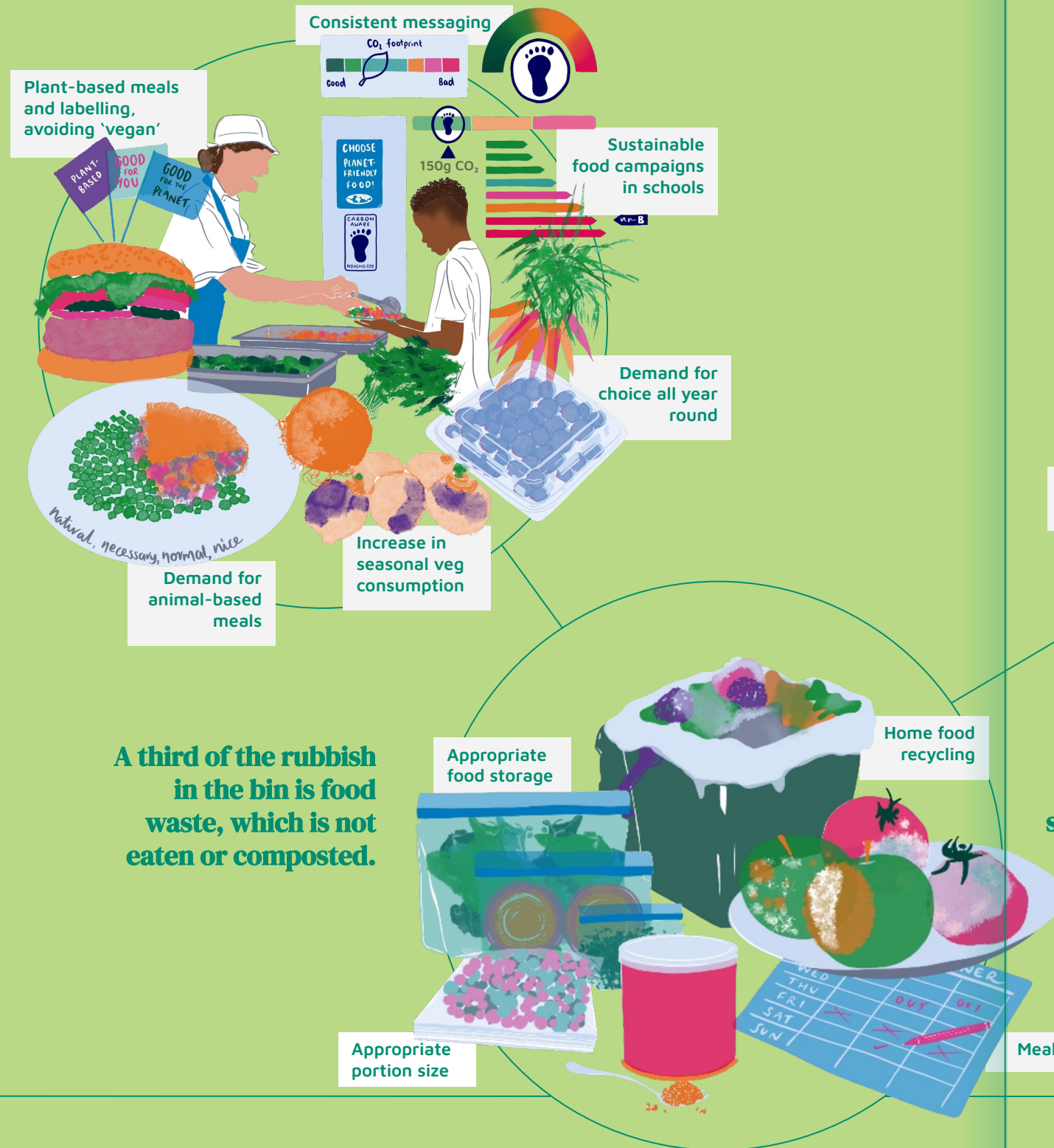
### GFO community research

Over 90% of respondents (members of the public) emphasised the importance of buying local food: to support the local economy, reduce food miles, and care for the environment.





# Workshops on food and climate identified common themes and links across health, supply, waste, and poverty.



Much of the UK's fruit and vegetable supply comes from a small number of growing areas in Europe. Access to land for food production in Oxfordshire is difficult.





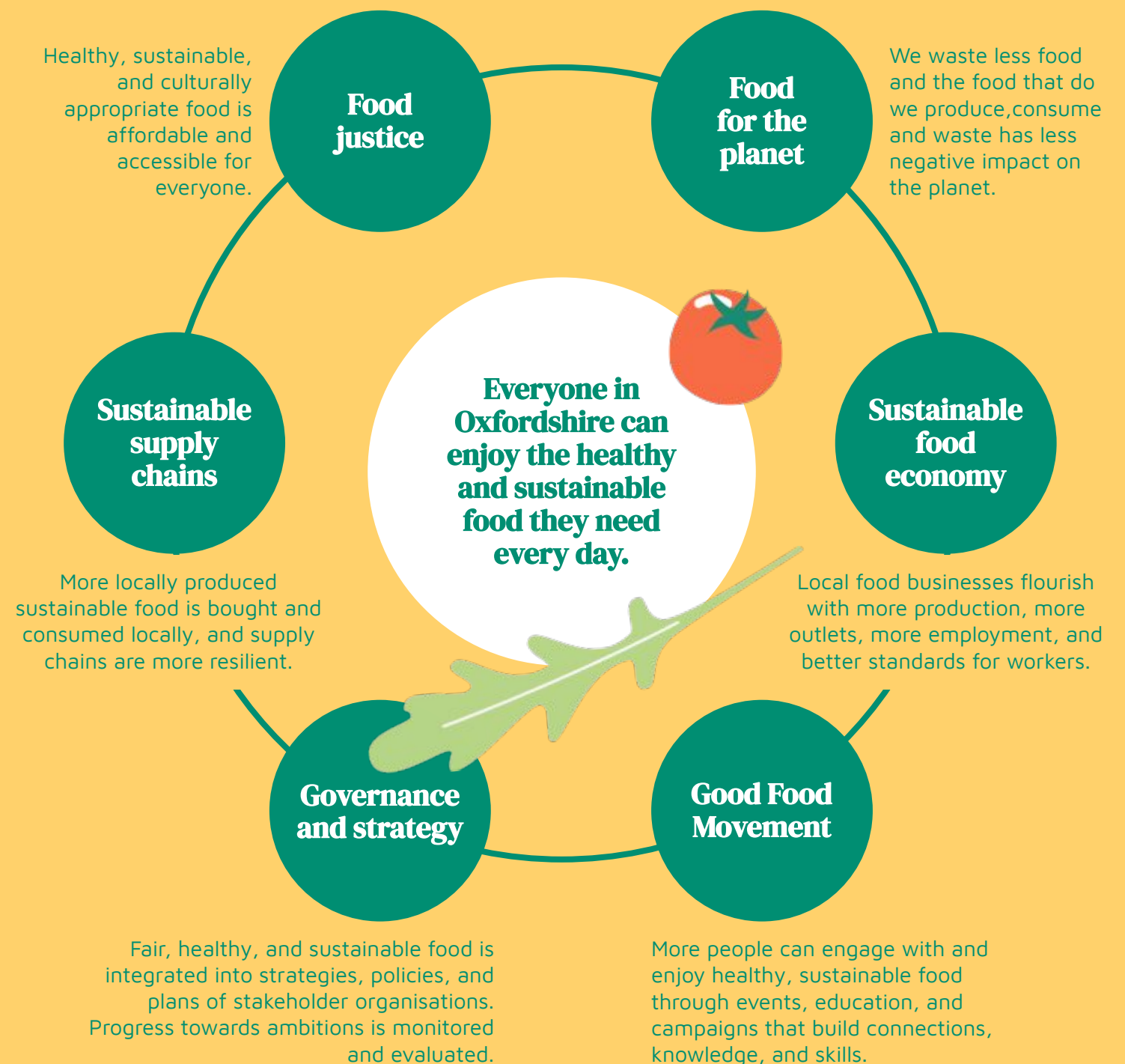
# 3.

## Vision and strategic priorities



## Ambitions to help deliver a collective vision

A coherent food strategy for all those involved with food in Oxfordshire can help push back against these pressures and deliver a vision in which everyone in Oxfordshire can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need every day.



# We have identified the following priority areas for action

Addressing these priorities will deliver the following outcomes.



## Tackle food poverty and diet-related ill health

### Priorities

Expand and strengthen existing services and programmes aimed at those at risk of food poverty, including Community Food Networks (foodbanks, larders, and fridges), Healthy Start Vouchers, Holiday Activities and Food.

Adopt Healthy Place Shaping principles and a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight.

### Outcomes

Everyone in Oxfordshire can access healthy food every day without shame or stigma.

More eligible people accessing existing schemes that tackle health and nutrition inequality.

Uptake of available central government funding is maximised, making full use of available funds, and providing evidence of the local need.

## Build vibrant food communities with the capacity and skills to enjoy food together

### Priorities

Support communities to grow, cook, learn, and enjoy food together. Promote campaigns and events that enable everyone to access healthy food, reduce food waste, and encourage dietary choices that are good for health and for the planet.

### Outcomes

Stronger communities through sharing and participation in food-related activities.

More people can access knowledge and skills to support growing, cooking, and better nutrition.

People make food choices that are better for their health and planetary health.

## Grow the local food economy through local enterprises, local jobs, local wealth generation

### Priorities

Focus on local enterprises that are driven by local needs, provide employment, and multiply the impacts of money earned and spent locally.

Use the power of anchor institutions (schools, hospitals, universities, businesses, etc) to procure locally and provide access to finance, infrastructure, and skills. This is called a Community Wealth Building approach.

### Outcomes

More local food enterprises flourish.

Better livelihoods, skills, and opportunities for local food workers.



## Strengthen short, transparent local food supply chains

### Priorities

Detailed scoping project to define the needs, options, and future plans for local supply chain solutions for Oxfordshire.

Consider public and institutional procurement as a way to provide scale and certainty for local sustainable producers.

Identify appropriate infrastructure to support the supply chain including local food processing hubs and dynamic procurement systems.

Work with landholders, existing producers, and new agricultural practitioners to explore access to land, infrastructure, and skills to meet local food demands.

### Outcomes

Clear and robust understanding of appropriate solutions for Oxfordshire.

More sustainable food is produced and processed locally for local consumption.

Net zero goals are supported through sustainable food production and reduced food miles.

Consumers are more engaged and connected to the provenance of their food, reinforcing healthier and more sustainable habits.



## Improve the health and sustainability of institutional catering

### Priorities

Embed healthy, sustainable local food principles and targets within institutional catering.

Link food to net zero targets and promote accreditation schemes such as Food for Life, Fairtrade, and Sustainable Restaurant Association.

### Outcomes

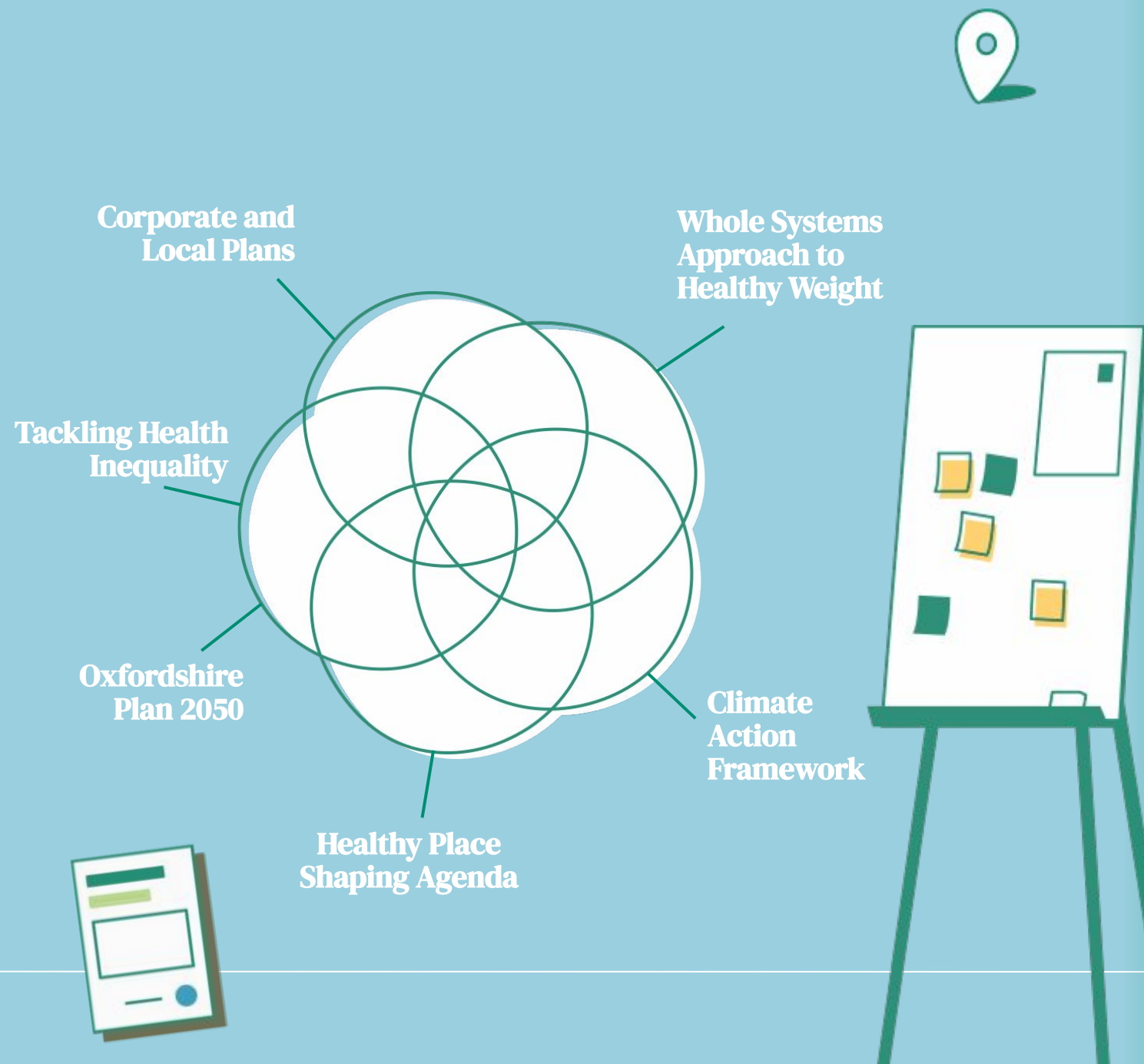
More people have access to healthy and sustainable food via local institutions.

The local food economy is supported by institutional procurement.

Institutions' climate and sustainability targets are supported through better food practices.

# 4.

## Delivering the outcomes



To achieve these ambitions, we need to ensure that food is integrated within existing policy and programmes.

Policy/ programme	Synergies with food strategy
<b>Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to healthy food</li> <li>Awareness and promotion of a healthy diet</li> <li>A healthy start for families</li> <li>Planning healthy weight environments</li> <li>Tackling health inequalities</li> </ul>
<b>Healthy Place Shaping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 minute neighbourhoods - easy access to healthy food</li> <li>Planning healthy weight environments</li> <li>Food systems central to healthy places - growing, buying, cooking, sharing</li> </ul>
<b>Tackling Health Inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on areas of inequality where access to food and health outcomes such as higher rates of obesity in children, and life expectancy gaps, are usually worse than the Oxfordshire average (Director of Public Health Report 2019/20)</li> </ul>
<b>Climate Action Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emissions and biodiversity: food choices, production, handling, and waste</li> <li>Improved local supply chains, reducing emissions from e.g., transportation, waste, and higher production standards</li> </ul>
<b>Oxfordshire Plan 2050</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate action planning and infrastructure</li> <li>Healthy Place Shaping to guide housing growth and inclusion of growing spaces</li> <li>Land-use - local food production to support short, local supply chains</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate and Local Plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role of farming in climate, nature, and economy</li> <li>Sustainable food businesses as part of green economy</li> <li>Food as a facilitator of Inclusive communities through growing, cooking, and sharing together</li> <li>Community health and wellbeing improved through access to affordable, nutritious food</li> <li>Access to spaces and infrastructure</li> </ul>





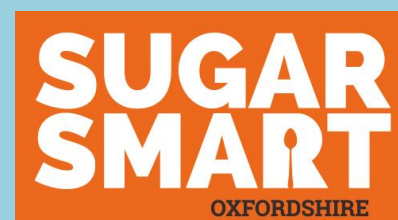
We must ensure that flourishing campaigns and initiatives across Oxfordshire are recognised, supported, and strengthened.



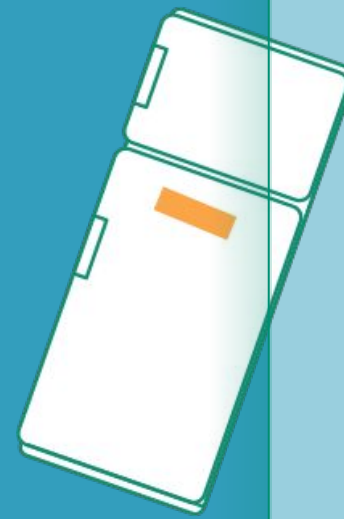
Better Health Let's do this



NOURISH AND FLOURISH



By showcasing examples of excellence, we aim to celebrate success and show what is possible...



...as well as building foundations and collaborations, and developing new initiatives.



Case study

Great example of...

<b>Chippy Larder and Bruern Farm</b>	Communities growing and sharing food together
<b>Salt Cross Garden Village</b>	Ambition to create better food environments in new developments, navigating complex planning challenges
<b>Oxford City Council – Healthy Start</b>	Partnership working to increasing the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers
<b>Swan School</b>	Improving the health and sustainability of school food
<b>Play:Full</b>	Community-led approaches to tackling holiday hunger
<b>Cherwell Collective</b>	Building solutions to food poverty and the climate crisis through community growing, cooking, sharing
<b>OX4 Food Crew</b>	Community Wealth Building, tackling food poverty, supporting resilience and community-led enterprise
<b>Abingdon Community Fridge</b>	Building community, tackling food poverty, reducing food waste
<b>The Wonky Food Company</b>	Sustainable food enterprise preventing food waste
<b>The Orange Bakery, Watlington</b>	Supporting local producers and providing employment for disadvantaged persons
<b>Oxford City Farm</b>	Community education and engagement in growing
<b>Sandy Lane Farm</b>	Organic and regenerative agriculture

Priority areas to develop



**Work with schools, caterers, and children to better understand the challenges of school food.** Collaboratively develop solutions that are impactful but achievable to improve the quality and sustainability of school food. This approach can also benefit the local food economy through institutional commitments to buying local, ethically, and sustainably produced food. The learnings from the schools pilot can be applied to other institutional settings, including – hospitals and social care.



**Strengthen short, transparent local food supply chains that improve resilience to external shocks and the local food economy.** Work with local institutional buyers – including schools, universities, and hospitals – to commit to increasing local procurement. Work with local producers to increase local, sustainable production to meet demand. Identify the technology, infrastructure, processes, and relationships to facilitate this.



**Support Community Wealth Building approaches to preventing food poverty, building resilient communities, and developing skills, jobs, and enterprises that retain wealth locally.** Councils and major institutions commit to being anchor organisations, increasing local procurement, making local assets available to local enterprises, and championing local enterprise.





# Examples of excellence from Oxfordshire

## Chippy Larder and Bruern Farm

Promoting dignity, affordable access to good food and community growing.

I set up The Chippy Larder to redress the imbalance in my community. We support families who are not only in food, fuel, and educational deprivation but also at high risk of poor physical and mental health. To be surrounded by businesses offering high quality, nutritionally dense, locally produced food, that was and still is financially inaccessible to many is not acceptable.

The first step was to set up a hub that didn't stigmatise those in need, the key was to be inclusive so the whole community could benefit. The Community Larder model was a perfect fit - Chippy Larder is open to everyone providing access to affordable food and reducing food waste. Partnering with Bruern Farm we have set up the Chicky Larder - getting members outdoors and involved with growing. Visiting a local farm, engaging with growers, and learning new skills, having your own chick and farm fresh eggs at an affordable price, makes the 'aspirational' accessible.



## Wonky Food Company

Reducing food waste - flourishing with support from OxLEP

The Wonky Food Company makes relishes from imperfect and surplus fruit and vegetables. Started in Oxfordshire in 2018, the business sells via the Midcounties Co-op and Ocado, as well as through a growing network of independent delis, farm shops and artisan food stores.

In 2022, it was accepted on to the Co-op's first national incubator scheme, focusing on small sustainable food and drink brands. The Wonky Food Company has benefited from local business support since its inception. It received start-up support via OxLEP and is now part of OxLEP's eScalate programme, a three-year European funded initiative supporting social enterprises, charities, and purposeful businesses in Oxfordshire. "It's been such a fantastic programme to be part of," says founder Ashley Cavers. "We have benefitted from some great peer group and networking opportunities. It has also enabled us to build our knowledge in important areas such as impact measurement and raising investment."



## Community Wealth Building

from food poverty to resilience and prevention

## OX4 FOOD CREW

OX4 Food Crew (OX4FC) is a partnership of nine organisations based in OX4 working with and for people experiencing food poverty, which has been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. Founded in April 2020, we quickly responded to local needs by delivering nutritious cooked meals to people experiencing food insecurity in the local area. We are now developing the partnership to move beyond the emergency pandemic-driven response to include services which help build community food resilience. These include free cooking for health and wellbeing courses for parents, 'Pay as you feel' community meals, and incubator support for food social enterprises including Damascus Rose Kitchen and No Vice Ice. As a coalition of organisations, our aim is to work with local communities to co-investigate and design flexible, community-led support and innovations that will help build food resilience in the local area, alongside ongoing emergency food support.

## The Swan School Oxford

Improving school food

Family dining enables all students and teachers to share a delicious hot meal together every day. No packed lunches are allowed.



We recreate a 'family' atmosphere. Everyone is encouraged to engage in conversation and take responsibility for different aspects of the service, for example laying the table, serving food, or tidying the table at the end of the meal.

Lunches at The Swan are vegetarian (meat is available at other times) for three main reasons:

- Quality – vegetarian meals allow us to provide better quality for the same price.
- Environment – reducing meat consumption decreases our carbon footprint.
- Community – all our students are able to sit together, regardless of their dietary preferences or religious requirements.



# Examples of excellence from Oxfordshire

## Cherwell Collective

**Stronger communities, reducing waste, alleviating poverty by growing, cooking, learning, and sharing together.**

Started during COVID lock-down, Cherwell Collective was a response to food poverty, hardship, and isolation. We have developed our ambitions to empower our community, to increase well-being, to support the vulnerable, and to reduce waste and environmental impact in daily lives. We have over 5,000 users, hundreds of whom are supported weekly.

Our food services include three main groups:

**Cherwell Larder:** Friends feeding friends - alleviating food poverty, reducing food waste, and a community hub for distributing surplus of all kinds.

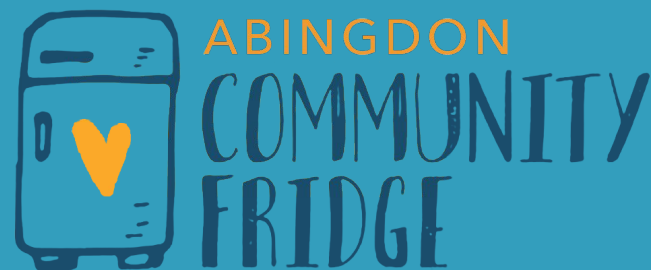
**Harvest at Home:** Food security from the ground up - supporting people to grow at home and in the community. Providing home-growing kits, skills training, support, and access to resources. We have helped over 900 people start growing food for the first time.

**Climatarian Kitchen:** Eat to save the earth! At our food surplus cafe we enjoy climate-friendly meals together, using surplus and locally grown food. 'Pay what you can' meals have suggested donations according to the carbon footprint of the dish. We also offer freshly made ready meals, meal kits, flexi recipes, shared equipment (via Oxford Party Library), and cooking courses.



## Abingdon Community Fridge

**Fighting food waste and building community**



At Abingdon Community Fridge we are focused on reducing food waste by collecting surplus food from local organisations and making this freely available to the whole community. Over 85 tonnes of food has been redistributed since opening in July 2019. Local residents benefit from this access to healthy, nutritious food, with the fridge supporting over 150 visits each week. As a volunteer-led group we are extremely proud of maintaining this free resource and the real sense of community which has grown between the fridge-users, volunteers, and the wider community.

## Orange Bakery, Watlington

**Embedded in local community, supporting mental health, local producers, employment, and training**

We started in our kitchen during lockdown to support mental health and help young people with focus, purpose, and an opportunity for creativity. Initially we baked for ourselves, then our neighbours who were isolating, and then through crowd-funding we were able to fund a shop front on the high street in Watlington.

We bake from the Scout Hut and now employ an apprentice from the local prison. We have learnt so much, from the basics of baking through to running a business. Being embedded in our local community has been vital to this journey - we have benefitted from the generosity of other bakers who offered their time, expertise, and equipment as well as those who crowd-funded us. More formal start-up support from small local enterprise schemes for mission-driven businesses via OSEP's Escalate scheme has been invaluable, particularly the opportunity to connect with peers and networks of like-minded organisations.



## Play:Full

**A local response to holiday hunger**

Play:Full is a response to tackle holiday hunger experienced by many children who rely on Free School Meals during term-time. The evidence suggests that this group of children start the new term several weeks, if not months intellectually behind their more fortunate peers who have enjoyed a more wholesome diet and lots of activity during school holidays.

Play:Full was initiated in Banbury as part of the Brighter Futures project, and has since been trialled in the City and South and Vale. Healthy, nourishing food is embedded alongside enrichment activities and positive food experiences from trying new foods, preparing simple snacks and meals, and enjoying shared meal-times with friends. Sessions are open to all to avoid stigmatisation, but focused on the most deprived wards to target children most in need. The impacts of the programme are clear: children try new foods, learn through enrichment, have fun, and are less isolated. Play:Full helps parents and carers with extra holiday food bills, and connects vulnerable families to a wider network of support.



# Examples of excellence from Oxfordshire

## Oxford City Farm

Growing food and growing community



At Oxford City Farm we provide valued opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with farming and food production, animals, nature, and each other. The food we grow is shared with volunteers and distributed within our local community, enabling us to get fresh produce onto the plates of people who might otherwise have limited access to it.

We work with a range of local organisations to deliver engaging hands-on land- and kitchen-based social and educational opportunities related to food and farming and the environment. Participants include children, vulnerable adults, and people experiencing loneliness and mental health challenges. Not only can participants learn growing and cooking skills in our new on-site teaching kitchen, but also experience an increased sense of well-being and connectedness, greater confidence, team-working, and life skills.

## Oxford City Council - Healthy Start Vouchers

Partnership working to increase the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers in Oxford



Healthy Start Vouchers support eligible pregnant women and young children to buy fruit, vegetables, and dairy and are funded centrally via the NHS. In January 2022 in Oxford City, around 240 eligible families were missing out on Healthy Start Vouchers, equivalent to £9,000 per week of unclaimed vouchers.

Through joined-up working across housing, health, and locality teams, the City Council has supported an additional 36 families to access the scheme since the start of 2022. Providing a dedicated contact point within the council to liaise with other teams and provide training, and communications materials has been pivotal to making this change happen.



## Sandy Lane Farm

Organic and regenerative agriculture

We are a traditional, mixed, family run farm in the South Oxfordshire countryside, passionate about growing organic veg. The team produces a wide diversity of vegetables in the farm's sandy soil. This is partly to spread the risk that is inherent when you farm without pesticides, partly to keep the soil healthy, and also to champion locally grown veg. Selling vegetables directly to our customers means better value for them and us, and a good variety of produce throughout the year keeps things interesting. The Bennett's commitment to organic growing is both a passion and a mission, and they utilise traditional farming methods - firmly backed by modern science. Biodiversity (above and below ground) is at the heart of organic farming, and our approach is try to keep 'nature in balance' every step of the way. Each year the farm's fields are bordered by beautiful 'beetle banks,' areas of wildflowers and grasses, sown to encourage pollinators and 'nature's pest controllers' to the crops. Early in 2020, the teams also planted nearly 1000 trees on the farm, a mini-agroforestry project which should improve irrigation, provide a habitat for birds and other wildlife, as well as providing valuable aerial cover for the farm's 350 organic egg laying hens.



## Salt Cross Garden Village

Ambition to create better food environments in new developments, navigating complex planning challenges.

'a place to grow, a space to breathe'

West Oxfordshire's Salt Cross Garden Village is a landscape-led proposal. It hopes to tackle climate change, is proposing a zero-carbon community, and 25% biodiversity net gain. It hopes to contain 2,200 homes, 50% of which will be affordable within walkable neighbourhoods; a park and ride with 6 minute connection to Oxford City; and utilise the local rail station to Oxford and London.



Salt Cross's edible garden community aims to embed sustainable food systems and maximise food growing opportunities. It will connect people to growing, production, consumption, and contribute to local, fresh food supply.

It proposes: private and community food growing gardens, doorstep allotments, and community orchards; people coming together to cook, learn about, and celebrate changing seasons; careful species selections, hedgerows, woodland edges providing foraging grounds; edible trees and plants along walkways; places for residents to engage with growing food and nature. Planning, delivery, and stewardship challenges are being carefully considered with committed leadership, vision, and ambition. Salt Cross will be an edible garden community that will contribute to Good Food Oxfordshire's sustainable food network, providing healthy, fair, and environmentally sustainable food for all.



# We all need to act now to make this vision a reality

## Ideas for local councils

- Adopt a whole systems approach to food, ensuring that food is considered within health, climate, and economy policies and programmes
- Embed healthy and sustainable food and healthy weight environments within existing policies, plans, and targets
- Develop a specific food policy that encapsulates key themes and recommendations defined in the strategy
- Champion the development of district level Food Action Plans in partnership with other stakeholders to agree specific council commitments and measure progress against these
- Promote and support community groups and businesses working for a better food system through public procurement and access to resources
- Support vibrant, healthy food communities through access to skills and spaces for growing, cooking, and sharing food
- Lobby national government using local evidence and action
- Appoint food champions at cabinet level as conduits for food issues and action



ACT  
NOW

## Ideas for community groups

- Sign the [Oxfordshire Good Food Charter](#) and join a movement of collective action for a better food system for everyone in Oxfordshire
- Connect with a range of partners in your local food system to work together to solve local food problems like community food services, cooking and growing groups, councils, farms, and food businesses. Together we can do more. Contact [mail@gfo.org.uk](mailto:mail@gfo.org.uk) to find out more
- Participate in the development of Food Action Plans for local areas, and agree specific commitments. Measure progress against these
- Join campaigns and events that bring communities together to grow, cook, and share food. Visit [gfo.org.uk](http://gfo.org.uk) to find out more



## Ideas for institutions and businesses

- Commit to buying more sustainably-produced local food for catering
- Participate in initiatives to scope and develop short, local supply chain solutions. Contact [mail@gfo.org.uk](mailto:mail@gfo.org.uk) to find out more
- Ensure food policies and reporting reflect health and sustainability targets, and link into net zero ambitions
- Participate in the development of Food Action Plans for local areas, agree specific commitments and measure progress against these
- Adopt accreditation and measurement schemes that support food targets
- Engage employees around healthy, sustainable local food. Support campaigns and events. Visit [gfo.org.uk](http://gfo.org.uk) to find out more



## Ideas for individuals

- Support local organisations working to tackle food poverty and food waste
- Join local growing schemes. Visit [www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk) and [www.goodtogrowuk.org](http://www.goodtogrowuk.org) to find out more
- Use local sustainable food businesses and markets whenever possible
- Support and volunteer with campaigns and events that promote good food like cooking, nutrition, and growing programmes
- Participate in the develop of Food Action Plans for local areas
- Visit [gfo.org.uk](http://gfo.org.uk) or email [mail@gfo.org.uk](mailto:mail@gfo.org.uk) to find out more





End of part 1

