

# Sustainable and healthy food policy

*Altogether better*



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## Contents

Summary and Introduction	Page 4
Purpose	Page 4
Scope	Page 5
Background	Page 5
Actions	Page 7
Responsibilities	Page 9
Evaluation/Monitoring	Page 9
Equality	Page 9
Appendices	Page 10
Alternative Formats	Page 14

## Summary/Introduction

The overall aim of this policy is to enable Durham County Council to lead by example by offering healthy and sustainable good food to staff, clients and visitors.

In this context good food is defined as food which is produced, processed, distributed and disposed of in ways that:

- Contribute to thriving local economies and sustainable livelihoods in County Durham, in the wider UK, and where foods are imported, in those producer countries;
- Protect the diversity of plants and animals, and the welfare of farmed and wild species;
- Avoid damage to the environment, the waste of natural resources, or contribution to climate change;
- Provide good quality food that is safe and healthy, and:
- Provide wider social benefits such as educational opportunities.

The arguments for doing this are very strong, and continue a direction taken by existing Council policy. The Council has already signed up to the **County Durham Food Charter** (Appendix 1) and adopted a Sustainable Buying Standard for Food and Catering Services (Appendix 2).

The next stage is to strengthen this commitment by adopting a Sustainable and Healthy Food Policy.

## Purpose

The policy covers four main areas:

- Assisting staff, clients, and the communities we serve to access healthy and sustainable food,
- Offering and promoting good food when catering for any public events or functions held by the Council,
- Embedding good food into Council policy and practice to demonstrate its commitment to staff wellbeing and the promotion of local food supply chains wherever possible, and
- Engaging the Council's influence to lead by example, encouraging others to participate, and directly support good food across County Durham and the region.

## Scope

The policy applies to a number of audiences including Council officers, partner organisations such as schools, as well as residents and visitors who access food or drink procured or supplied by the Council and its contractors.

## Background

The public sector spends around £2.4bn per annum procuring food and catering services, which is around 5.5% of UK food service sector sales.

It is estimated that costs to the NHS of treating the health effects of poor diets are over £5 billion per year.

Organisations serving or selling foods to adults can enable positive changes to the diet of the nation by reducing foods high in saturated fat, salt and sugar and increasing provision of higher fibre foods, fruit, vegetables and oily fish.

The population consumes too much saturated fat, salt and sugars, and eats too little fibre, fruit and vegetables and oily fish than is recommended. In addition, some population groups have intakes of vitamins and minerals below recommended levels. In 2012 the government estimated that only 30% of UK adults eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

Diets high in salt and saturated fat but low in fish, fruit, vegetables and fibre increase the risk of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and some cancers. Consuming foods and drinks that are high in fat and non-milk extrinsic sugars (NMES, often referred to as added sugars but also includes sugars in fruit juice and honey) too frequently can contribute to excess energy intake and weight gain. Obesity carries with it many negative effects on health.

The government recommends that everyone eats a diet containing:

- plenty of starchy foods such as potatoes, rice, bread and pasta (choosing wholegrain varieties or eating potatoes with their skins on for more fibre)
- plenty of fruit and vegetables; at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day
- some sustainably-sourced meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- some milk and dairy products, choosing reduced fat versions

To avoid dehydration, it is recommended that people drink between six to eight glasses (about 1.2 litres) of water, or other fluids, every day.

These government recommendations are reflected in the Eatwell Guide (Appendix 3). This is a pictorial representation of the types and proportions of food that should be eaten to make a well-balanced, healthy diet. It is a guide to getting the balance

right over time such as each day, or over the course of a week. The Eatwell Guide can be applied to snacks as well as meals.

In light of the high levels of obesity in the UK population, the government continues to advise that, as a guide, men and women should consume 10.5MJ (2500kcal) per day and 8.4MJ (2000kcal) per day, respectively. These values are readily understood.

As well as having direct impacts on people's health, food has significant environmental, social and economic impacts, both positive and negative, at every step in the process, from production, through processing and transportation, to preparation and consumption.

Internationally, the food industry is a leading cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss, accounts for around 70% of all human water use and is a major source of water pollution, as well as accounting for between 20% and 30% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Reducing food miles and promoting increased use of seasonal, good food produced locally or in the UK can help address these risks while creating increased opportunity for the local economy. In this context, it should be recognised that small and local primary food producers may not be directly able to service major Council contracts, and opportunities to involve them in the supply chain in other ways may need to be harnessed.

Both at home and abroad, animal welfare remains an area of concern, both on the farm and in transport and slaughter. The Council has a duty to monitor and enforce animal health and welfare on farms in County Durham, and it follows that we should also consider these issues in the food we buy. The Council's buying standard takes some steps to address this by specifying animal products which meet minimum animal welfare standards, including free range eggs, and Red Tractor or equivalent farm standards for meat, poultry and dairy, and promoting MSC certified sustainably-sourced fish, while avoiding fish from threatened stocks.

The Council is committed to mitigating negative environmental and social impacts and, where possible, securing additional sustainable benefits from our food and catering contracts. This policy reinforces that commitment.

In County Durham local strategic developments have been underpinned by the following strategies and frameworks (available via the links section at the end of this policy document):

- The Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham 2014-2030
- Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention Strategic Framework for County Durham
- Healthy Weight Framework for County Durham 2014-2020

- County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy 2014 – 20 and associated Food and Health Action Plan, 2014 -20
- Director of Public Health’s Annual Report on Obesity 2015
- Durham County Council Social Value Procurement policy 2017 - 19

Durham County Council was one of the founding organisations to sign the **County Durham Food Charter** in 2013 and in 2015-16 assisted Durham City to achieve five stars and become a Sustainable Fish City one of only two five stars UK towns/cities to have achieved the award.

The Government’s Childhood Obesity Plan (2016) containing revised national guidelines on sugar with the announcement of a sugar tax from 2018, provide additional momentum for the Council to consider its current role not only as a local leader but also as one of the largest local employers. The policy links to the Sugar Smart project organised by Sustain and Jamie Oliver and as part of Change4Life national campaign.

## Actions

A sustainable and healthy approach to food and catering starts with senior leadership commitment, organisational buy-in, and a plan designed around this.

There are three main actions areas to support the delivery of this policy:

- **Corporate Procurement – applying and promoting sustainable buying standards for food and catering.**

The Council already has contracts with companies that supply catering goods and services, and periodically tests the market competitively. These contracts incorporate a range of relevant mandatory and best practice criteria, derived from the Council’s Sustainable Buying Standard for food and catering. These standards are published on the Council’s website so that suppliers and producers can see them, and are used when specifying relevant contracts.

In support of this action, we will:

- ✓ Ensure that the Sustainable Buying Standard is kept under regular review to reflect developing best practice and respond to any new environmental or social issues impacting on food and catering.
- ✓ Seek to work across Procurement and Catering teams in Council establishments and schools to move towards the Best Practice standards set out in the Government Buying Standard for food and catering services.

- **Catering Managers – driving menu standards**

By aiming for good quality food that is safe and healthy, Catering Managers can make a positive impact on the dietary health of those they serve. This is particularly true where people eat most or all of their food in such settings – for example within residential settings.

A healthier menu is varied and balanced, uses a range of cooking methods and includes appetising food and drink. It does not exclude or ban foods that are higher in fat, salt and sugars or methods of cooking like frying. However, it does offer choice and variety. A sustainable menu offers less meat, but of a better quality, to reduce the carbon and methane emissions associated with meat production. Healthy menus are clear about the nutritional impact of the food and drink on offer.

In support of this action, we will:

- ✓ Take steps to reduce the salt, saturated fat and added sugar content of our menu options.
- ✓ Increase the fibre, fruit, vegetables and healthy fish in the food we provide.
- ✓ Support and promote higher quality, higher welfare meat, whilst seeking to encourage reductions in overall meat consumption.
- ✓ Seek to increase the clarity of nutritional information in our menus and highlight and promote healthier choices.

- **Communications – getting the message across**

The workplace presents many opportunities to create a good food environment, to improve employee well-being, provoke good food conversations, and show people how individual and organisational food choices can have a positive impact on issues such as health, animal welfare, fair trade, wildlife and the planet. Council staff, the school community, and the users of our services can feel more motivated and positive if their workplaces, and the places they eat, promote ethical values.

In support of this action, we will:

- ✓ Promote this Policy across the organisation.
- ✓ Set out a communications plan, to ensure everyone to whom we serve food understands our good food approach, and the benefits of healthy and sustainable good food.

## Responsibilities

The responsibility for implementation of the actions lie with a number of Council services.

Oversight of the Policy, which includes monitoring against the actions and reporting to Corporate Management Team will lie with the Director of Public Health

Where achievement of the policy's goals lie with contractors in the Council's supply chain, responsibility shall lie with the Strategic Procurement Officer (social value lead), who will ensure that food suppliers are kept aware of the Council's policy requirements, and monitor compliance.

## Evaluation/Monitoring/Measurement

Monitoring of the impact of this policy will be achieved by tracking a number of relevant Performance Indicators, including:

- Proportion (%) of desserts served, which are based on fruit
- Proportion (%) of sugar-sweetened beverages served
- Proportion (%) of sales of healthier products via vending machines
- Proportion (%) of low-salt meal options served
- Staff, resident, school and visitor feedback on changes and the impact on their wellbeing.
- Contractor compliance with the Sustainable Buying Standard for food and catering.

## Review

The Public Health Portfolio Lead, with support from the Strategic Procurement Officer (social value lead), will review this policy on an annual basis. Review findings will be included in an annual report shared with Corporate Management Team, County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance, Food Durham, and other partners, to demonstrate progress made.

## Equality and Diversity

Durham County Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated. Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Appendix 1 – County Durham Food Charter

# COUNTY DURHAM FOOD CHARTER

We pledge to support:

## A Strong Local Food Economy

1. A flourishing, competitive local 'good food' sector, providing gainful employment for local people.
2. Public and private sector caterers sourcing 'good food' from local producers and suppliers, keeping value within our local economy.
3. An economically viable supply chain for sustainable local food.

## Environmental Sustainability

4. A local food system that protects biodiversity and ecosystems and minimises its environmental footprint.
5. Food that is processed, distributed and disposed of in ways that increase composting and recycling and reduce the need for transport, energy use, packaging and waste.

### Signup Now!

1. Sign and display the Charter in your workplace/home.
2. Sign up online & make a commitment to do one new thing to support the aims.

[www.fooddurham.net](http://www.fooddurham.net)

For more information on how you can help, please contact [info@fooddurham.net](mailto:info@fooddurham.net)

## Health and Wellbeing

6. The creation of environments and infrastructure that make it easier to adopt and maintain healthy and sustainable diets.
7. Food-related activities (e.g. growing, cooking) to improve physical and mental health for all, and which are available in our communities.

## Resilient and Active Communities

8. All our communities to have access to land, knowledge and skills in order to grow some of their own food.

## Education and Skills Development

9. Opportunities for everyone to learn about 'good food' – growing/rearing, cooking, preserving, marketing and selling it.

## Food Fairness

10. Improved access to 'good food' for everyone, regardless of their income or where they live.
11. Food produced with high animal welfare standards, and producers being fairly rewarded.

What we mean by 'sustainable local food': 'food that is produced and consumed in or near County Durham that is healthy for people and the planet, and supports our local economy.'

What we mean by 'good food': 'food that is safe, nutritious, of good quality, and environmentally sustainable.'

## FOOD CHARTERS

A few cities around the world have adopted Food Charters to set out how organisations and individuals will work together to develop and promote sustainable, healthy local food systems.

They recognise that food can be a powerful driver of positive social, economic and environmental change, improving lives and protecting the planet.

In County Durham we are taking a countywide approach and this Food Charter forms the backbone of a Sustainable Local Food Strategy for County Durham.

**The success of the Charter and Strategy depends on the active support of a wide range of institutions and individuals. As a start, sign up to this Charter and display it in your organisation, and make a commitment to doing one new thing in support of the stated aims.**

Name .....

Organisation .....

Date .....

## Appendix 2 – Council Sustainable Buying Standard for Food and Catering Services

### Sustainable Buying Standard:



### Food (including catering services)

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#### Introduction

The Council is committed to delivering its services in a sustainable manner, looking at the environmental, social and economic impacts of its purchasing decisions. This includes food contracts – both for direct food supplies, and catering services.

Food has significant environmental, social and economic impacts, both positive and negative, at every step in the process, from production, through processing and transportation, to preparation and consumption. This standard is designed to ensure the mitigation of negative impacts across our contracts and, where possible, to secure additional sustainable benefits.

Compliance with this standard is mandatory for all Service Groupings. This includes any corporately managed services which are delivered to schools. The standard is strongly advisory for any individual school contracts which are under the direct control of the school.

#### Buying Standard

Durham County Council will:

- Ensure that, wherever possible, food is sourced ethically and locally, with animal products meeting minimum animal welfare standards, including:
  - Free range eggs,
  - Red Tractor (or equivalent farm standard) for meat, poultry and dairy.
- Give preference to seasonal produce wherever possible, as well as food from higher environmental production schemes and that which is produced with minimal negative environmental impact.
- Specify fairly-traded, ethically-sourced foods, where available, for the following food categories:
  - Tropical and sub-tropical fruit (*bananas, pineapples, kiwi fruits, mangoes, avocados, etc.*)
  - Fruit juices\*
  - Rice
  - Cocoa and chocolate
  - Tea and coffee
  - Sugars\*
  - Herbs and spices\*

\* Unless sourced sustainably from within the UK.

- Recognise that small and local primary food producers may not be directly able to service major Council contracts, and work with primary suppliers to ensure supply chain opportunities, where possible (and where a demand for their produce exists within Council establishments and schools), are extended to small local producers.
- Support Durham City in becoming a Sustainable Fish City, by adhering to the following standards with specific relation to fish purchasing:
  - Ensuring that the Council never purchase any fish which are on the Marine Conservation Society “fish to avoid” list.
  - Specifying highly sustainable Marine Stewardship Council certified fish wherever possible.
  - Promoting the sustainable sourcing of fish with our food and catering suppliers, and through our schools and establishments.

## Definitions

### ***“Fairly-traded, ethically sourced”***

Ethical principles mean providing a fair deal for workers and the local community and/or producing foods in a way which does the least harm to the local environment. Foods will be regarded as fairly traded only if:

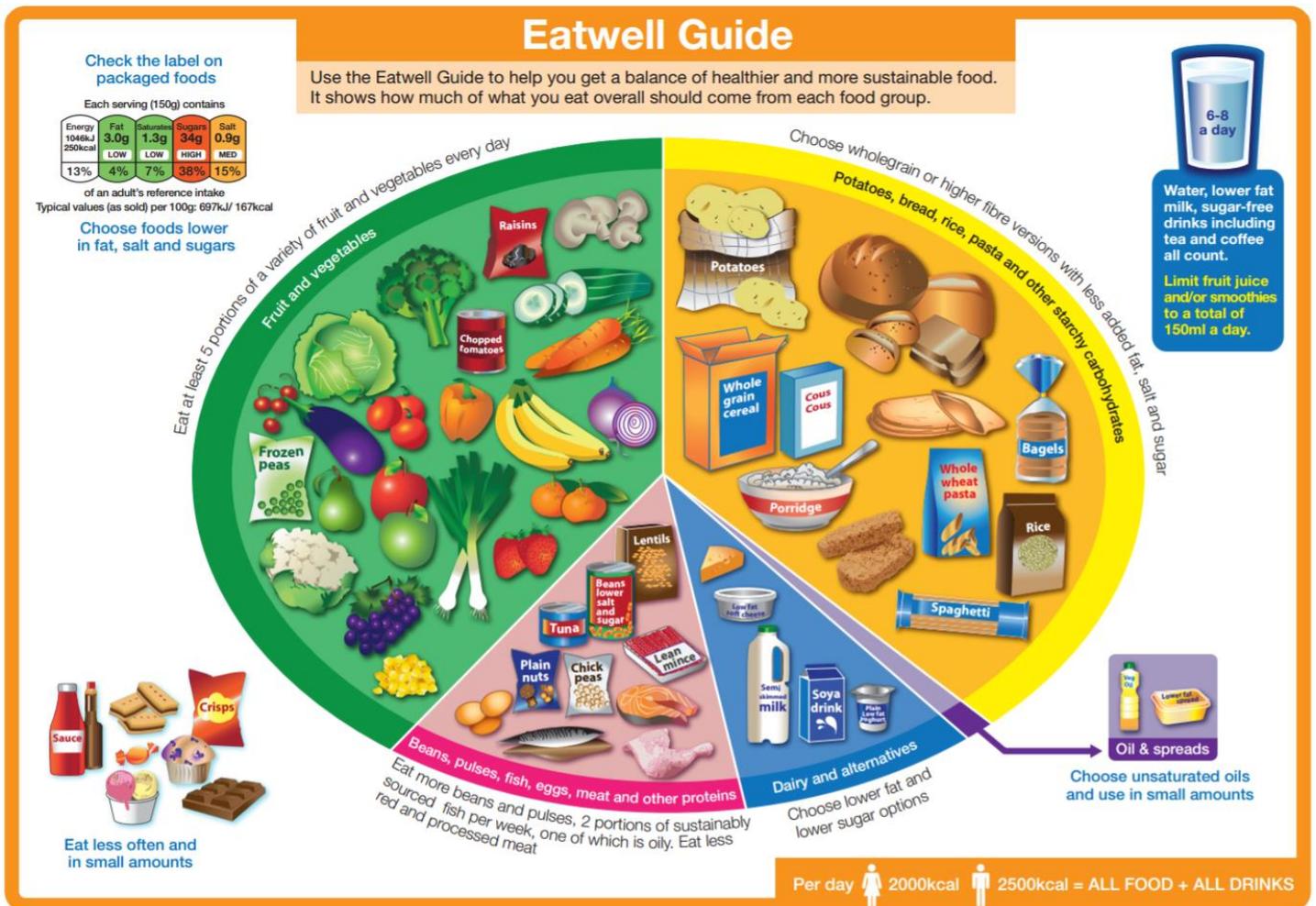
- they carry the FAIRTRADE mark; or
- It can be demonstrated that the food, although not carrying the FAIRTRADE mark, meets the fair trade standards set by Fair-trade International Organisation (FLO).

### ***“Fish to Avoid”***

Means fish which are listed on the “Fish to Avoid” section of the Marine Conservation Society’s Fish Finder website at: <http://www.fishonline.org/fishfinder>

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/6824/Sustainable-Buying-Standard-Food/pdf/SustainableBuyingStandardForFood.pdf>

## Appendix 3 – Eatwell Guide



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

## Appendix 4 – Links to DCC and Partner strategies, plans and frameworks

Altogether Better: The Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham 2014-2030

<http://www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/media/12760/Sustainable-Community-Strategy-2014---2030/pdf/SCS2014.pdf>

County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-19

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/9935/County-Durham-Joint-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-2016-2019/pdf/JHWS20162019.pdf>

County Durham Partnership: Integrated Needs Assessment, Excess Weight in Children, 2016

[http://www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/media/17336/Excess-weight-in-children/pdf/Excess\\_weight\\_in\\_children\\_HSCW\\_010\\_.pdf](http://www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/media/17336/Excess-weight-in-children/pdf/Excess_weight_in_children_HSCW_010_.pdf)

County Durham Partnership: Integrated Needs Assessment, Life Expectancy, 2016

[http://www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/media/13762/Life-expectancy/pdf/Life\\_expectancy\\_HSCW008.pdf](http://www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/media/13762/Life-expectancy/pdf/Life_expectancy_HSCW008.pdf)

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention Strategic Framework for County Durham

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=919&MIId=7674> – **Item 14**

Healthy Weight Framework for County Durham 2014-2020

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MIId=7569> – **Item 10**

County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy 2014 – 20

<http://fooddurham.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/SLFS-May-2014.pdf>

Obesity An issue too big to ignore....or too big to mention? Report of the Director of Public Health County Durham, 2015

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/10077/Obesity-an-issue-too-big-to-ignore-or-too-big-to-mention---Report-of-the-Director-of-Public-Health-County-Durham-2015/pdf/PublicHealthAnnualReport2015.pdf>

Durham County Council Social Value Procurement policy 2017 – 19

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/6824/Sustainable-Buying-Standard-Food/pdf/SustainableBuyingStandardForFood.pdf>

H.M. Government, 2016, Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action>

## Alternative formats

**Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.**

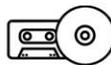
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