

BARKING & DAGENHAM



GOOD FOOD PLAN

**MARCH 2025
EDITION 1**





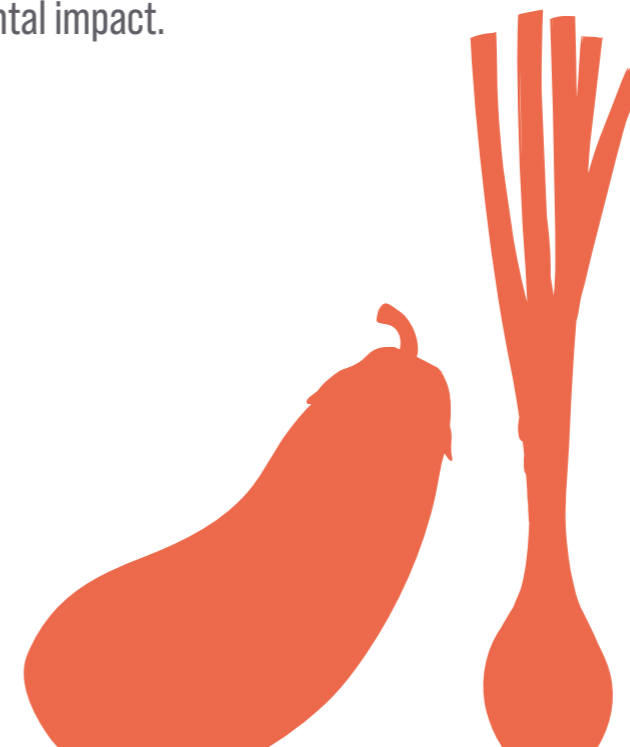
Introduction

Everyone should be able to access the food they need to lead happy, healthy lives.

Food is universal – everybody eats! But it’s more than just sustenance: food brings people together, and certain meals can connect us to others or transport us back to our childhoods.

Eating well is crucial to our health and wellbeing, and poor-quality food is a major cause of ill health and damage to our environment.

This Action Plan, developed by Barking and Dagenham’s Food Partnership, outlines how we will work together for a better food environment: one that supports residents to access sustainable, nourishing and culturally diverse food, and reduces our environmental impact.





Our advisory group



Part 1 Background



Food Partnership

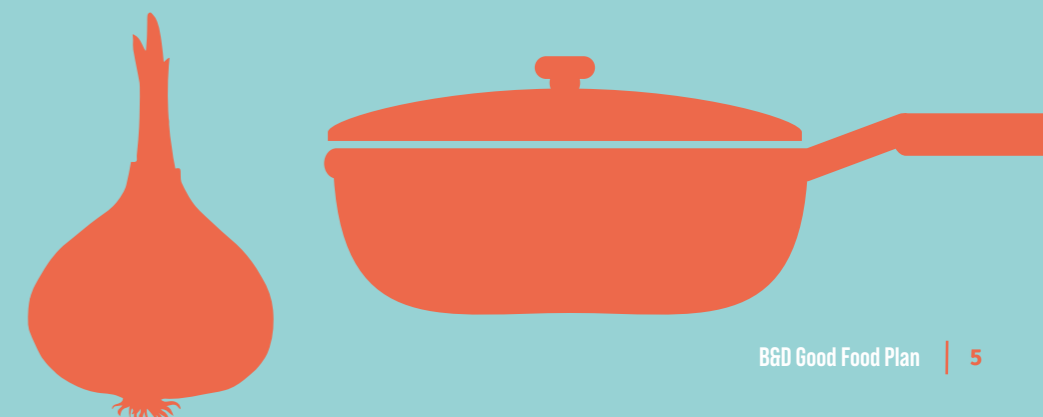
In 2023, Barking and Dagenham Council established a Food Partnership, which is a group of organisations and individuals working together to improve food locally. Our Partnership includes businesses, schools, faith groups, food banks, social enterprises and the council.

The council also brought an Advisory Group together to co-develop this Action Plan, based on local research findings and guided by the Sustainable Food Places framework, an initiative supporting over 100 places nationally to work on food.



By forming an inclusive, cross-sector food partnership, public agencies, community organisations, businesses, and academics can collaborate to create lasting change by agreeing on priorities and action for the local area.”

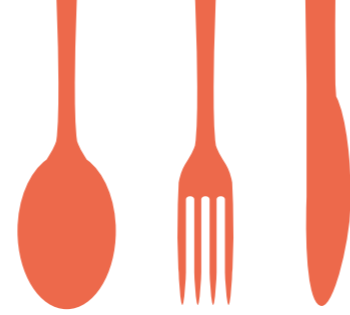
Sustainable Food Places



Good Food Plan research

In 2022, Barking & Dagenham Council commissioned cultural enterprise Company Drinks, and food and farming charity Sustain, to find out more about Barking and Dagenham's food environment.

They trained and supported six community researchers to talk to residents, businesses and voluntary sector food projects. Over 500 people participated in the research.



sustain

The resident-led research revealed that...

- 1 We need access to healthier, fresher food
- 2 The plan must be inclusive
- 3 We need to develop and celebrate Local Food Champions and Advocates
- 4 Affordability and the cost of living must be at the heart of the plan
- 5 We need to nurture a culture of Good Food Businesses and Enterprises
- 6 It's essential to build trust, and grow long-term projects
- 7 We want more local food growing
- 8 We want more choice and cultural diversity

In response, Company Drinks and Sustain came up with a set of recommendations and helpful case studies to inspire and inform:



What influences our food choices?



There's a range of influences on our food choices, from who we are to what is available to us in our area. Here are a few we identified:

appetite
 equipment education
 cost culture taste
 community marketing ethics
 time range heritage routines
 family habits land
 advertising religion
 belief skills





Food Matters – Opportunities

- Barking and Dagenham is one of the most **ethnically and culturally diverse** places in the UK: a quarter identify as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, and a fifth as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or Black African.¹ Nearly a quarter of residents are Muslim and our various faith communities are supported by faith-based VCSE organisations.
- Our **dynamic voluntary sector** supports communities in multiple ways, including food projects. We currently have at least 25 food provision projects, 8 community growing spaces and 16 allotments.² Initiatives like BD Collective have been connecting people, projects and places since 2019.
- We have the **youngest population** in England and Wales, with over a quarter under 16.³ Our population is also growing: in 2021, the population had grown by nearly a fifth and is expected to grow another 42% by 2041.⁴
- Most of our **business sector is small and independent**: more than 95% of businesses in the borough employ fewer than 50 people.⁵
- **Largescale developments**, such as the new Eastbrook film studios in Dagenham, offer significant employment and partnership opportunities for food businesses. The Thames Freeport, a new economic centre in the Thames Estuary, is developing a focus on the food and drink industry.

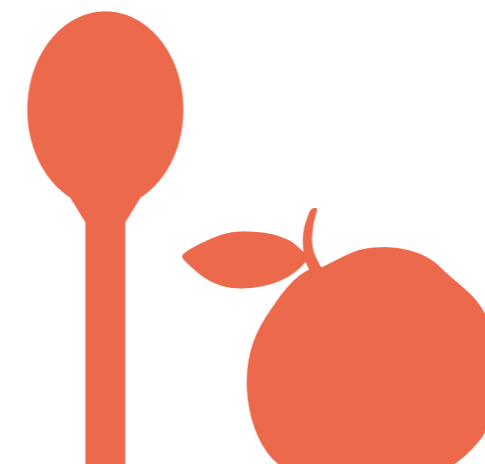
Food Matters – Challenges

The food environment, from what is available in shops and cafes, to what we see at the checkout or promoted on the high street, affects our food choices:

- Nearly half our neighbourhoods are in the top 10% in England for exposure to fast food, alcohol, tobacco and gambling outlets.⁶
- Barking and Dagenham has amongst the highest levels of food-related ill-health in London, including heart disease, stroke and diabetes.⁷

The cost of living crisis is making it harder for residents to access the food they need for happy, healthy lives:

- In a recent survey on the impact of the Cost of Living on residents, nearly half of 920 respondents reported skipping meals or eating smaller meals.⁸
- In 2024, nearly 1,000 families were living in Temporary Accommodation, many of which have limited cooking and food storage facilities.⁹ People who experience rough sleeping and who are hidden homeless (such as staying with friends or relatives or living in overcrowded conditions) also have limited access to food and cooking facilities.



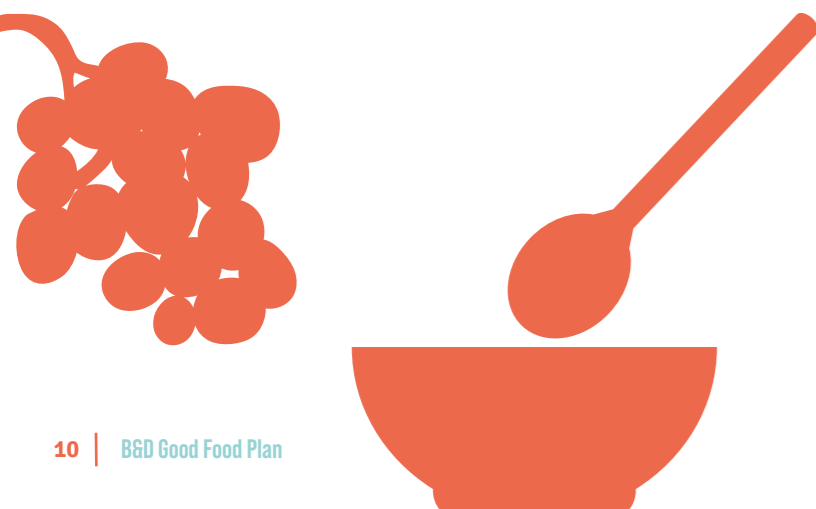


Food Matters – Challenges

- Over half our households would need to spend around half of their remaining income after housing costs on food to eat in line with the Eatwell Guide, the Government’s recommended healthy diet.¹⁰
- Barking & Dagenham has more residents working in low-paid employment and more working-age people unemployed than any other borough.¹¹ 42% of children and 30% of adults are living in poverty.¹²

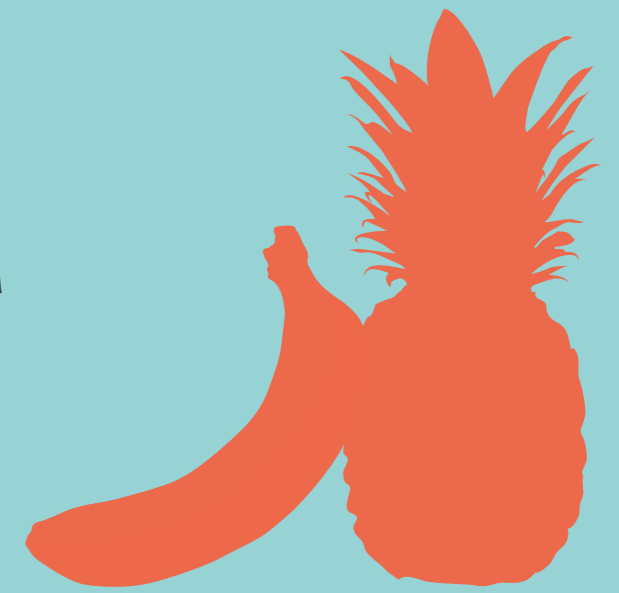
The way food is produced, and the amount we waste, are major contributors to environmental problems, such as climate change, deforestation and nature loss:

- Food is responsible for around a third of the UK’s carbon emissions.¹³
- 1.5 million tonnes of food is wasted in London each year, of which 60% is wasted in homes.¹⁴
- Only 11% of residents surveyed in 2022 thought it was easy to access sustainable food in the borough.¹⁵



Part 2

The Good Food Action Plan



What do we mean by ‘good food’?

At a workshop, partners discussed how we define food as ‘good’. Everyone recognised that good food can be complex and even contradictory. But with food at the heart of so many challenges facing our communities and places, as well as the planet, the group arrived at this definition:

Good food is:

NOURISHING AND HEALTHY

Helping people feel good and reducing their risk of food-related ill-health.

DIVERSE AND DELICIOUS

Food that reflects our borough’s heritage and our communities’ diverse culinary traditions.

FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE

Making it easier for everyone to access food that is seasonal, climate and nature-friendly and fair to its producers.

INCLUSIVE AND COLLABORATIVE

All communities having the tools and resources to organise food projects that best meet their needs, and to contribute to a healthy, diverse and sustainable food environment.



What would a good food system look like in Barking & Dagenham?

Our Places

Our **town centre and district high streets** are full of shops, cafes and restaurants selling good food, including locally-produced food, and a vibrant food-based night-time economy.

Our **parks** include spaces for communities to grow, pick and share vegetables and fruit.

Our **community gardens** offer space, skills and resources for residents to grow their own food, and **allotments** and other **food growing spaces** are accessible to all.

Our **schools and public institutions** serve healthy food and minimise food waste, and teach people how to source, grow, cook and preserve food, and offer inspiring pathways into fulfilling careers in the food industry.

Our **community hubs** are food hubs – places for the community to access good food, to grow, cook and eat good food and to compost unavoidable food waste.

Our People

Residents can **access the food** they need for happy, healthy lives.

Residents live within walking distance of a space to **grow, cook and eat food**, and to **compost food waste**.

Residents have opportunities to share and celebrate **food traditions and stories**.

Residents can **access the skills and infrastructure** they need to secure jobs in the local food economy, or to start their own enterprises.

Young people get **inspiring food education** and a **high-quality school meal**, and are inspired to develop **careers in food** and to start their own enterprises.

Young people learn how to **grow food** and cook using **fresh ingredients**.

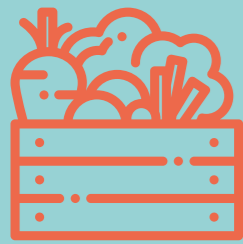
Local businesses are supported to thrive as **Good Food Enterprises** that offer high-quality, sustainable and nourishing food.

Our priorities



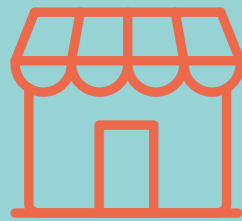
Good Food Movement

People – including residents, young people, policy-makers and businesses – know that access to good food is essential for happy and healthy communities and places, and how they can participate in improving their food environment.



Good Food for All

All residents – particularly those most in need of support – can access healthy, culturally appropriate food, and communities develop their own approaches to increase the availability of good food in their neighbourhoods, including shared purchasing, growing, cooking and eating projects.



Good Food Enterprise

A thriving network of diverse food businesses – including established enterprises and budding food entrepreneurs – trade more of the fresh, sustainable, diverse and affordable food our community wants to see in our neighbourhoods and high streets, and at our events.



Good Food Education and Skills

Our young people and the local workforce can access innovative, inspiring skills and training in sustainable and diverse food, and routes to rewarding jobs in the food sector.



Good Food for People and Planet

Food waste in the borough has reduced, and more of the food bought and served across council services is climate and nature friendly, and produced and traded fairly.



Good Food Movement

People – including residents, young people, policy-makers and businesses – know that access to good food is essential for happy and healthy communities and places, and how they can participate in improving their food environment.

What's already happening:

- Research of our food system involving 500+ residents, food projects and local businesses published.
- Food Partnership established; Advisory Group meeting quarterly to co-develop the Plan and monitor progress.
- Membership of the Sustainable Food Places national network.

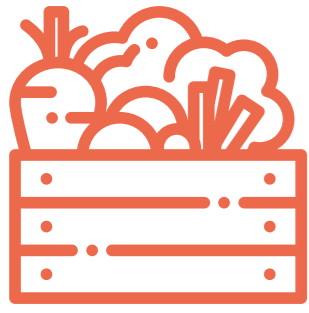
Strategic priorities:

1. Grow the Food Partnership, ensuring that it is representative, diverse and effective, with work recognised by a Sustainable Food Places award.
2. Raise awareness of the Good Food Action Plan and its priorities. Ensure that resident voices – including young people's – are amplified as the food partnership and action plan are developed and delivered.
3. Support organisations and individuals to become trainers, food champions, advocates and leaders in healthy change in their communities.

Next step:

Develop engagement plan to ensure that Food Partnership is diverse and inclusive, and includes local food champions and advocates.





Good Food for All

All residents – particularly those most in need of support – can access healthy, culturally appropriate food, and communities develop their own approaches to increase the availability of good food in their neighbourhoods, including shared purchasing, growing, cooking and eating projects.

What's already happening:

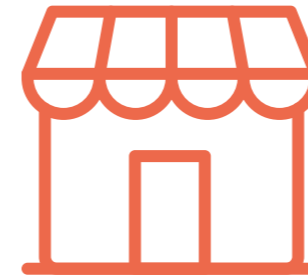
- Food banks and projects providing emergency food and advice, as well as cooking clubs that are increasing residents' cooking skills and confidence.
- The council's Homes and Money Hubs help residents to deal with issues such as rent or council tax arrears.
- Healthy Weight and Active Lifestyles partnerships underway.

Strategic priorities:

1. Increase uptake of Healthy Start, the initiative for pregnant women and families on low incomes with young children, and develop targeted support for other groups with less access to good food, such as single parent families, people with disabilities and those with reduced access to cooking facilities.
2. Increase capacity for community-led, collaborative and inclusive food projects, including cooking projects, shared meals and community supermarkets.
3. Increase availability of land, resources and training for communities to grow, cook and share food, and compost food waste, including in schools and community spaces.

Next step:

Convene a network to develop goals and actions that will improve access to good food.



Good Food Enterprise

A thriving network of diverse food businesses – including established enterprises and budding food entrepreneurs – trade more of the fresh, sustainable, diverse and affordable food our community wants to see in our neighbourhoods and high streets, and at our events.

What's already happening:

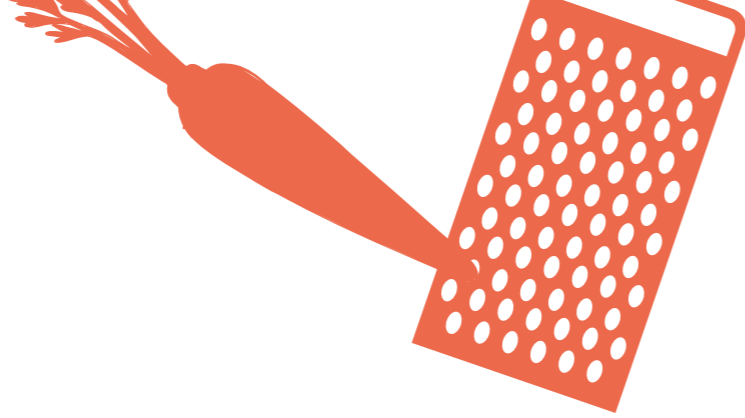
- Council commissioned Amplify and Good Food Retail programmes to provide bespoke support to food businesses.
- Council established Good Food Enterprise Charter and Food Enterprise Network to guide and recognise good practice.
- Council provided capital grants to two food enterprises demonstrating best practice.

Strategic priorities:

1. Support more local food businesses to offer healthier, more sustainable and diverse food, and reduce their food waste.
2. Establish opportunities for Food Enterprise Network to access new trading opportunities on our high streets and at our events.
3. Support local entrepreneurs to grow their projects, including training and investment opportunities.

Next step:

Promote the Good Food Charter and Food Enterprise Network.



Good Food Education and Skills

Our young people and the local workforce can access innovative, inspiring skills and training in sustainable and diverse food, and pathways to rewarding jobs in the food sector.

What's already happening:

- The council has established a programme to improve food education and skills with primary and secondary schools, including pathways into jobs and careers in food.
- Barking & Dagenham College is strengthening its food and hospitality programmes.

Strategic priorities:

1. Develop a network of heads and food leads to co-design food education programmes in primary and secondary schools.
2. Support Barking and Dagenham College to develop the food and hospitality curriculum at its Barking Campus.
3. Broker food industry contributions to work-related learning, training placements and jobs for students at local schools and colleges (including visits, work experience, training placements and apprenticeships in the local and London-wide food sector).

Next step:

Develop a School Food and Healthy Eating Charter with food leads.



Good Food for People and Planet

Food waste in the borough has reduced, and more of the food bought and served across council services is climate and nature friendly, and produced and traded fairly.

What's already happening:

- Council and council-owned company BD Together joined the London Food Procurement Working Group and increased the number of schools using accredited catering service.
- Food waste workshops delivered at schools and community hubs in partnership with East London Waste Authority.

Strategic priorities:

1. Explore how we can limit unhealthy food provision and promotion in our town and district centres.
2. Increase resident and commercial access to food waste systems, and support food waste reduction programmes and facilities in schools, housing estates and high streets.
3. Reduce the carbon emissions from food that is purchased publicly by increasing the supply of sustainable, ethical produce and working with local producers to reduce food miles.

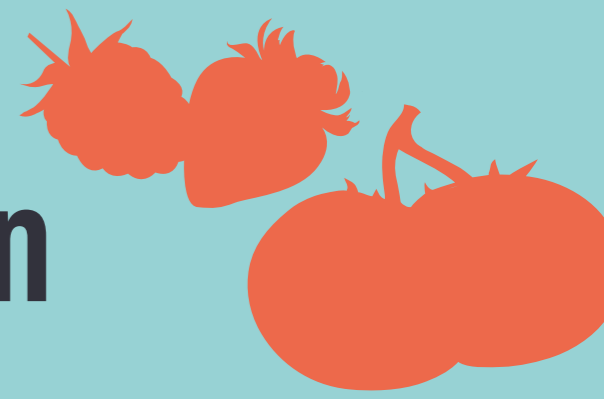
Next step:

Sign up to the London Food Purchasing Commitment.



Part 3

Making it happen



Coordinating action and monitoring progress

This Action Plan is a framework. Throughout 2025, partners will work together to develop detailed goals and priorities across the five areas and coordinate action. The Food Partnership Advisory Group will monitor action and share annual progress updates.



Good Food Movement

Partners: Food Partnership Advisory Group, residents, youth networks and the council.



Good Food for All

Partners: Food banks, social sector food projects, allotments, BD Collective, Felix Project, developers and landowners and the council.



Good Food Enterprise

Partners: Food Enterprise Network, Barking Enterprise Centre, Business Forum, Rice Marketing, schools, BD Giving and the council.



Good Food Education and Skills

Partners: Schools, Further Education providers, Sustainable Kitchen Consultants, City of London Corporation, Billingsgate Seafood School and the council.



Good Food for People and Planet

Partners: BD Together, Mayor of London, East London Waste Authority, wholesalers, food producers, schools and the council.

Photo credits

Page 2

Top: Barking Food Forest – Thames Life

Bottom: Church Elm Hub Cooking Club – Church Elm Hub

Page 4

Top: Taste Festival – LBBD

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Top left: Barking & Dagenham College food business engagement event – LBBD

Top right: Billingsgate Seafood School workshop – LBBD

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Top left: St Peter’s School community garden – LBBD

Top right: Market – Shutterstock

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Top left: Easter HAF hamper contents – LBBD

Top right: Seed saving workshop – Company Drinks

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Food Partnership workshop – LBBD

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Top left: Amplify Celebration Evening – LBBD

Top right: Hospitality students at Barking & Dagenham College – Barking & Dagenham College

Bottom: Community cookbook launch – LBBD

Thanking our partners

Thanks to all the partners who have joined us so far, including:

- Al Madina Mosque
- Barking Churches Unite
- Be Inclusive Hospitality
- Barking & Dagenham College
- Barking Enterprise Centre
- BD Collective
- BD Giving
- BD Together
- Big Ideas
- Billingsgate Seafood School
- City of London Corporation
- Company Drinks
- Couleur Café
- Creative Wellness
- Dagenham Christians Together
- East London Waste Authority
- Fruitful Orchard CIC
- Future Youth Zone
- Growing Communities Dagenham Farm
- Hum Dum
- Independent Living Agency
- Kind Counter
- Kingsley Hall
- Made in Hackney
- Make Your Mark B&D
- Marks Gate Relief Project
- Pitta Santorini
- School Food Matters
- Soul & Sound
- Sustain
- Sustainable Kitchen Consultants
- Thames Life Community Development Trust
- Urban Promise

Footnotes

¹ ONS: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000002>

² Food projects: <https://bdcollective.co.uk/food-network-4/>

Allotments: <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/leisure-parks-history-and-culture/allotments>

³ LBBD: <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics-and-data/population-and-demographics>

⁴ <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/LBBD%20Corporate%20Plan%202023-2026.pdf>

⁵ LBBD: <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/Londons-Growth-Opportunity-2016.pdf>

⁶ Consumer Data Research Centre, Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards [Access to Healthy Assets & Hazards \(AHAH\) | CDRC Data](#) – referenced in Barking and Dagenham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2023-24: <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics-and-data/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-jsna>

⁷ LBBD, Annual Director of Public Health Report 2022/23: Living Longer; Living Healthier [LBBD ADPHR 2023.pdf](#)

⁸ LBBD Cost of Living Survey response, December 2024

⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Statutory homelessness live tables, Detailed local authority level tables: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

¹⁰ Food Foundation, Broken Plate: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/broken-plate>

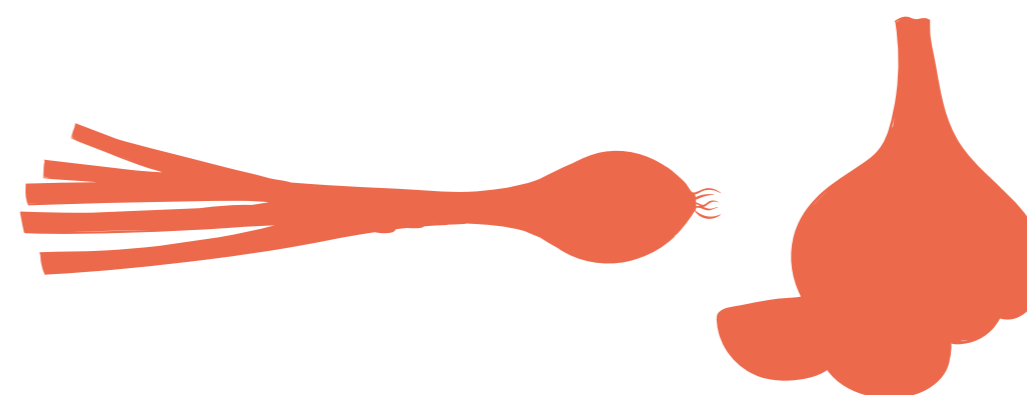
¹¹ Trust for London, London’s Poverty Profile 2024: <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/>

¹² Trust for London, London’s Poverty Profile 2024: <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/>

¹³ National Food Strategy, Independent review for Government, 2021: <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/the-report>

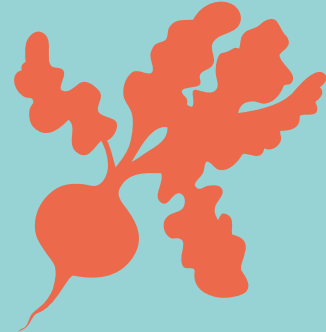
¹⁴ Re London, London’s Food Footprint: <https://relondon.gov.uk/resources/report-londons-food-footprint>

¹⁵ Company Drinks and Sustain, Barking & Dagenham Good Food Plan: https://bdopportunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Good_Food_Plan_PUBLIC-2.pdf





Get involved!



Email thoughts and queries:

goodfood@lbbd.gov.uk

Read more about the work:

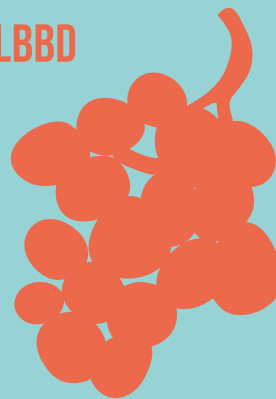
[bdopportunities/food](https://bdopportunities.org/food)

Join the Food Partnership!

bdopportunities.org/good-food-partnership

Follow our Good Food work
on social media:

[@lbbdcouncil](https://twitter.com/lbbdcouncil), [#GoodFoodLBBd](https://twitter.com/GoodFoodLBBd)



**Barking &
Dagenham**