



HOUNSLOW'S FOOD ACTION PLAN



Developed by the Hounslow Food Network in
partnership with Hounslow Council



FOREWORD

Cllr Katherine
Dunne

Cabinet Member for
Communities and Climate
Emergency

Every local authority has felt the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic over the course of the past year. Hounslow is no exception and has had to tackle the many challenges the pandemic has brought in terms of job security, health & well-being and how we interact as a community.

Across Hounslow this has led to a huge increase in the number of people seeking food support. However, what has become clear is that whilst the pandemic exacerbated these issues, the many difficulties surrounding food security and health in Hounslow have been growing for a long time.

The Council has now developed a Food Action Plan for the future of tackling food poverty in the borough. Working with our colleagues across the council, voluntary groups and partner organisations, this Food Action Plan sets out a series of actions we can take collectively. We will build on the fantastic work has been done by our food banks and our voluntary and community organisations. With this action plan being the first step to a more long-term approach.

The Food Action Plan has been developed in conjunction with a large range of partners across the borough and our newly created Food Network, bringing everyone together to help the most vulnerable in our community.

FOOD POVERTY IN OUR BOROUGH

→ Helping the most vulnerable people in our borough

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21 highlighted the inequalities that exist in our borough. One of the most striking discoveries has been the amount of food insecurity being experienced by many of the residents of Hounslow.

Having low food security or being food insecure means that, at times, a person's food intake is reduced and their eating patterns are disrupted because of a lack of money and other resources for obtaining food.

From the start of the pandemic our voluntary and community groups were committed to meeting this need and they provided a lifeline to our most vulnerable residents.

Food banks, faith groups and community organisations all increased the amount of free food that they were providing to people in need and we saw thousands of volunteers turn out to help this effort by packing and delivering food and collecting donations.

→ New partnerships

Everyone who came forward to help during the pandemic became crucial partners with the Council's Community Support Hub in providing vital help to our vulnerable residents. Very successful local partnerships have been created which have done some great work supporting their local communities, but we were all aware there was a need for a borough - wide forum where the many food providers could collaborate to swap information, identify the demand for food and join forces to work together.



→ A new Food Action Plan

The newly established Hounslow Food Network wants to meet this challenge and through this Food Action Plan we aim to set clear goals that Hounslow Council and the borough's community, voluntary and faith sector organisations.

The Hounslow Food Network

This Food Action Plan has been developed by the Hounslow Food Network. This new, borough-wide, network brings together the many organisations providing food support in the borough and, for the first time, supports a coordinated approach to addressing food poverty in Hounslow.

This will enable a greater level of collaboration between Hounslow's food providers and the Council so that long-term priorities for the borough can be established. It will also help to maximise the amount of food available to support vulnerable households and ensure that local support, resources and facilities are accessible to those experiencing food poverty.

The Council has worked closely with all of the organisations in the Food Network to understand the key issues that we should be tackling and what practical actions should be taken.

Now that the Food Action Plan has been developed the aim is for the organisations in the Hounslow Food Network to take the lead on the delivery of these proposed actions in collaboration with the Council. This Food Action Plan will exist as a 'live' document, one that can be added to in the future as new issues and new priorities emerge.

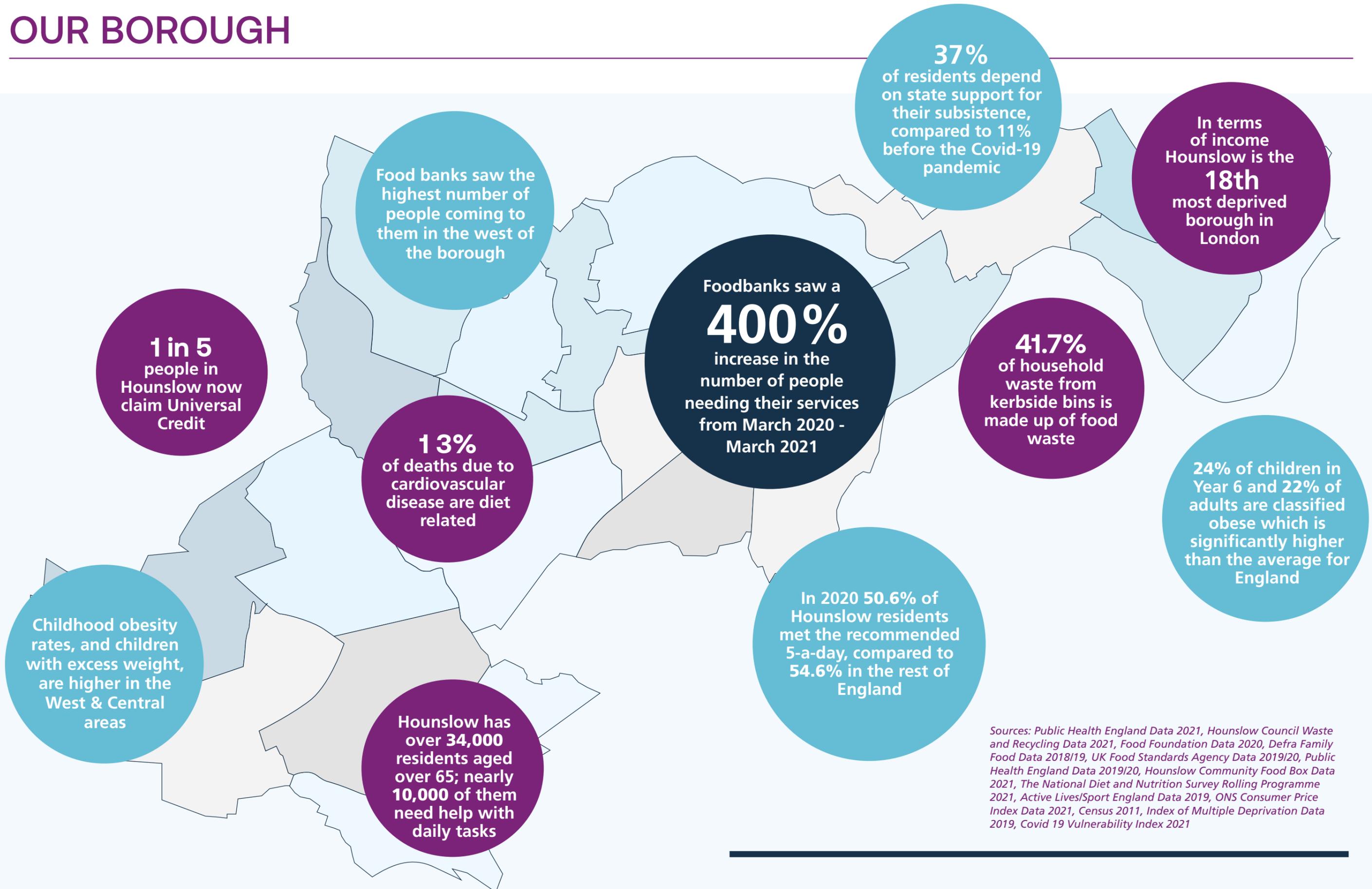


The Five Pillars of the Action Plan

The Hounslow Food Network identified five key areas of need and a series of workshops allowed participants with wide-ranging local knowledge and expertise to shape the recommendations in the Action Plan.



OUR BOROUGH



Sources: Public Health England Data 2021, Hounslow Council Waste and Recycling Data 2021, Food Foundation Data 2020, Defra Family Food Data 2018/19, UK Food Standards Agency Data 2019/20, Public Health England Data 2019/20, Hounslow Community Food Box Data 2021, The National Diet and Nutrition Survey Rolling Programme 2021, Active Lives/Sport England Data 2019, ONS Consumer Price Index Data 2021, Census 2011, Index of Multiple Deprivation Data 2019, Covid 19 Vulnerability Index 2021

FOOD INSECURITY



When the pandemic started most of the families that we supported were on low incomes, but families are now coming to us because of losing work and becoming unemployed due to Covid-19.

St Michael & St Martin Church Foodbank



➔ What we will do

Short Term

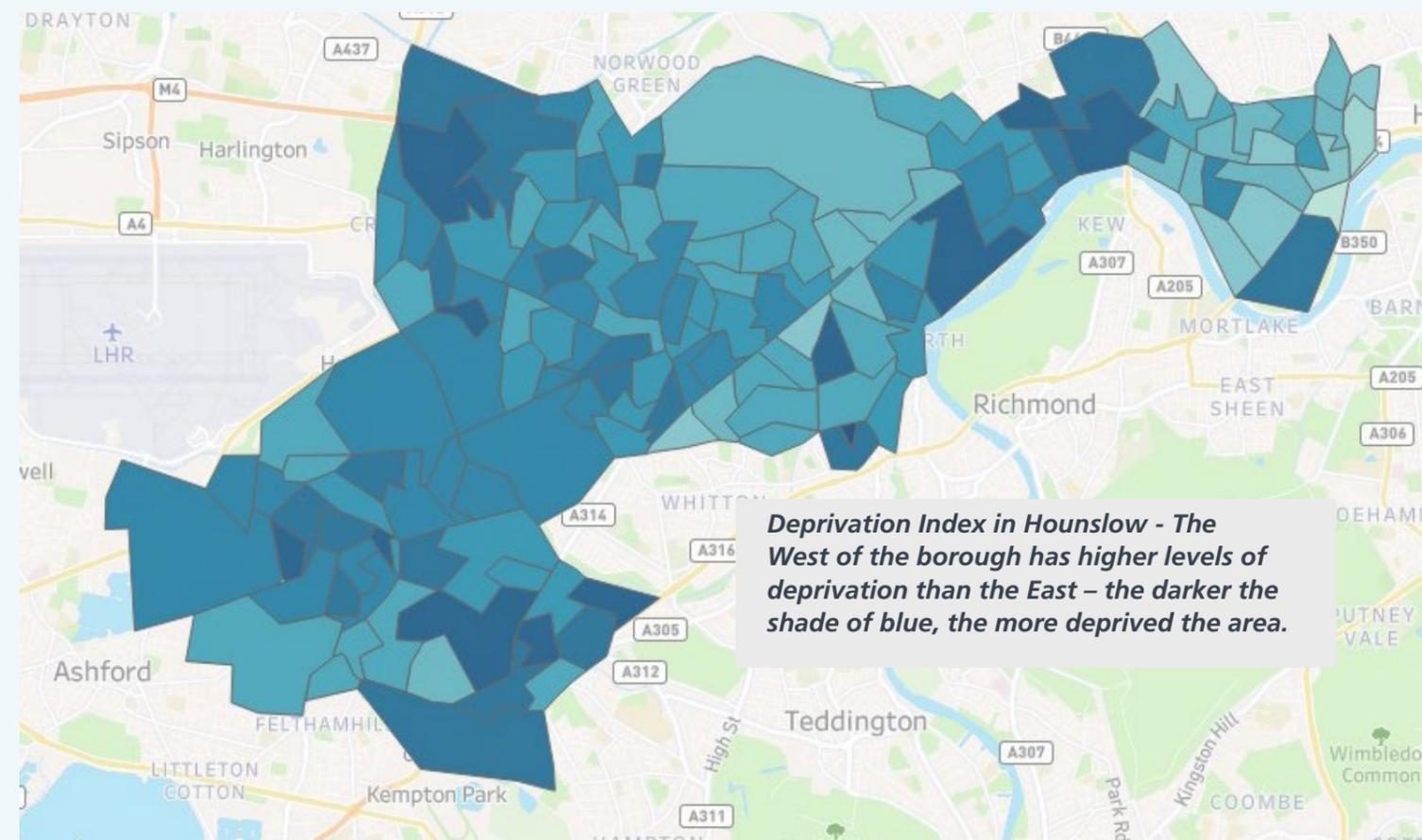
- Create a shared understanding of the need across the borough, by sharing data and listening to service users to understand their support needs. The Hounslow Food Network can support this with quarterly meetings to share information.
- Utilise & publicise the new One Hounslow Connect platform – making sure referral partners and service users can make use of the platform easily to find services relevant to them.
- Co-locate other services around food support to ensure an integrated support offer such as debt advice services, mental health and employment support.

Medium Term

- Explore the potential of a shared referral system to manage the levels of support needed across the borough and to help maximise the offer that is available.
- Consider the potential of a cash-first approach to reduce levels of demand for food aid and increase the independence and resilience of households.

➔ What we know

- Hounslow has suffered more economically because of Covid-19 than most other London boroughs.
- Furlough levels are high, meaning there are more people on low incomes who require extra support.
- There are currently limited formal opportunities for food providers to share information and to collaborate with each other.
- There is additional pressure on foodbanks due to an increases in referral from:
 - ➔ Large families with multiple children
 - ➔ Asylum seekers, with no resource to public funds, housed in hotels in the borough for longer periods than normal
- Food support providers are well placed to establish supportive relationships with vulnerable residents and connect them to a wider range of support, advice and guidance.
- A lack of knowledge about the range of services available across Hounslow hinders the ability to make timely referrals to wider support services.
- Food banks are not a long-term solution; we need to understand and address the causes of food insecurity.



TACKLING FOOD WASTE



The pandemic has set us back in terms of reducing food waste. We need to get involved in local communities to educate people about reducing their food waste.

Hounslow Council Waste & Recycling



→ What we know

- 70% of all food wasted in the UK comes from people's homes.
- Food waste is the third largest contributor to global warming.
- There has been a significant increase in the monthly tonnage of kitchen waste collected in Hounslow over the last year; with 530 tonnes collected in April 2020 to 590 collected in January 2021. This is down to the effects of people being at home more, but also as a result of people panic buying unnecessary food in response to Covid-19.
- Lack of understanding of food labelling can lead to food being thrown away and wasted.
- Lack of cooking knowledge and lack of awareness of the best ways to make use of vegetables and leftover food results in a lot of usable food being wasted.
- In Hounslow 18-30-year olds and young professionals are the main demographic producing high levels of food waste.

→ What we will do

Short Term

- Encourage residents and businesses to share or sell surplus food and avoid potential waste, via apps such as 'Too Good To Go' & 'Olio'.
- Support families and individuals with advice about food planning and using recipes for their cooking.
- Provide cooking information online, such as the cooking videos.
- Work with existing services and venues to roll out support to residents, e.g. Children's Centres and community centres.
- Improve and increase the understanding of food labelling. This will involve a focused approach to raising awareness of the differences between best before and use by dates

Medium Term

- Improve the distribution of surplus food from local business to food aid providers, via local and regional organisations.
- Raise awareness of where local businesses and supermarkets can donate their surplus food in Hounslow.
- Identify opportunities to distribute more surplus food across the borough, by using surplus food stalls outside local schools and community venues.



The diagram shows the different types of food waste across the borough.

ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOOD



We need to move towards a 'cash first' approach to improving access to healthy food, because it provides people with more choice.

The Felix Project



→ What we will do

Short Term

- Raise awareness and take up of Healthy Start Vouchers, Free School Meals and other sources of support such as emergency grants.
- Engage with supermarkets and food businesses on how they can offer reduced - price fruit & vegetables and other food items at the end of the day.
- Improve the links between food projects and sources of support such as Felix Project and City Harvest, with other providers of surplus food.

Medium Term

- Review access to healthy food within the context of the '15-minute neighbourhood' approach.
- Work with Hounslow Council's Public Health & Planning Teams to review decisions on the location and number of takeaway outlets across the borough.
- Promote the cash first approach to food poverty, which gets money to people who are financially vulnerable, to enable them to buy the essentials that they need for themselves.
- Increase access to food growing spaces, including community gardens and allotments.
- Explore opportunities to establish community pantries and community supermarkets to widen the access to affordable food and offer support that goes beyond just providing food parcels.

→ What we know

- The Food Foundation reports that people on low incomes are likely to be eating half a portion less of fruit and vegetables per day than those on a high income.
- Children get more of their fruit and vegetables from eating at school or nursery than eating at home.
- There is a need for support and education for families around healthy cooking, using value for money recipes and making the most out of a limited income.
- The cost of meeting the recommendations of the Eatwell Guide diet is 74% of the income of the poorest household's income, but only 6% for households on higher incomes.
- Different parts of the borough have different levels of access to healthy and affordable food options:
 - Density of takeaways is highest in the west of the borough
 - The area around Chiswick lacks lower-priced supermarkets for families on low incomes.
- Some households do not have access to sufficient cooking and food storage facilities limiting their ability to maintain healthy diets. For example, asylum seekers placed in hotel accommodation and households in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation and hostels.



ADDRESSING HEALTH ISSUES



Many families think that eating healthily is expensive, which is not necessarily the case.

One You Hounslow



→ What we know

- Diabetes levels in Hounslow are above the national average.
- Breastfeeding rate for new mothers is 55% in Hounslow, compared to 74% across England as a whole.
- Obesity and excess weight are particularly high in the west of the borough at school reception age, spreading eastwards by Year 6 and into adulthood.
- Hounslow has a higher level of mortality from cardiovascular disease than the national average.
- Hounslow ranks 3rd from bottom in London in terms of the proportion of the adult population meeting the recommended '5-a-day' for their diet.
- Dental decay is consistently higher in 5-year-olds in Hounslow than the national average.
- There has been a very low take up of Healthy Start vouchers in Hounslow.
- The location of takeaways next to schools and the lack of alternative meeting spaces for young people is contributing to the popularity of cheap takeaway food – which is contributing to them having a poor diet.
- Schools do not teach home economics as they used to, which means children and young people are not getting enough opportunities to learn how to cook or how to make the best use of food.

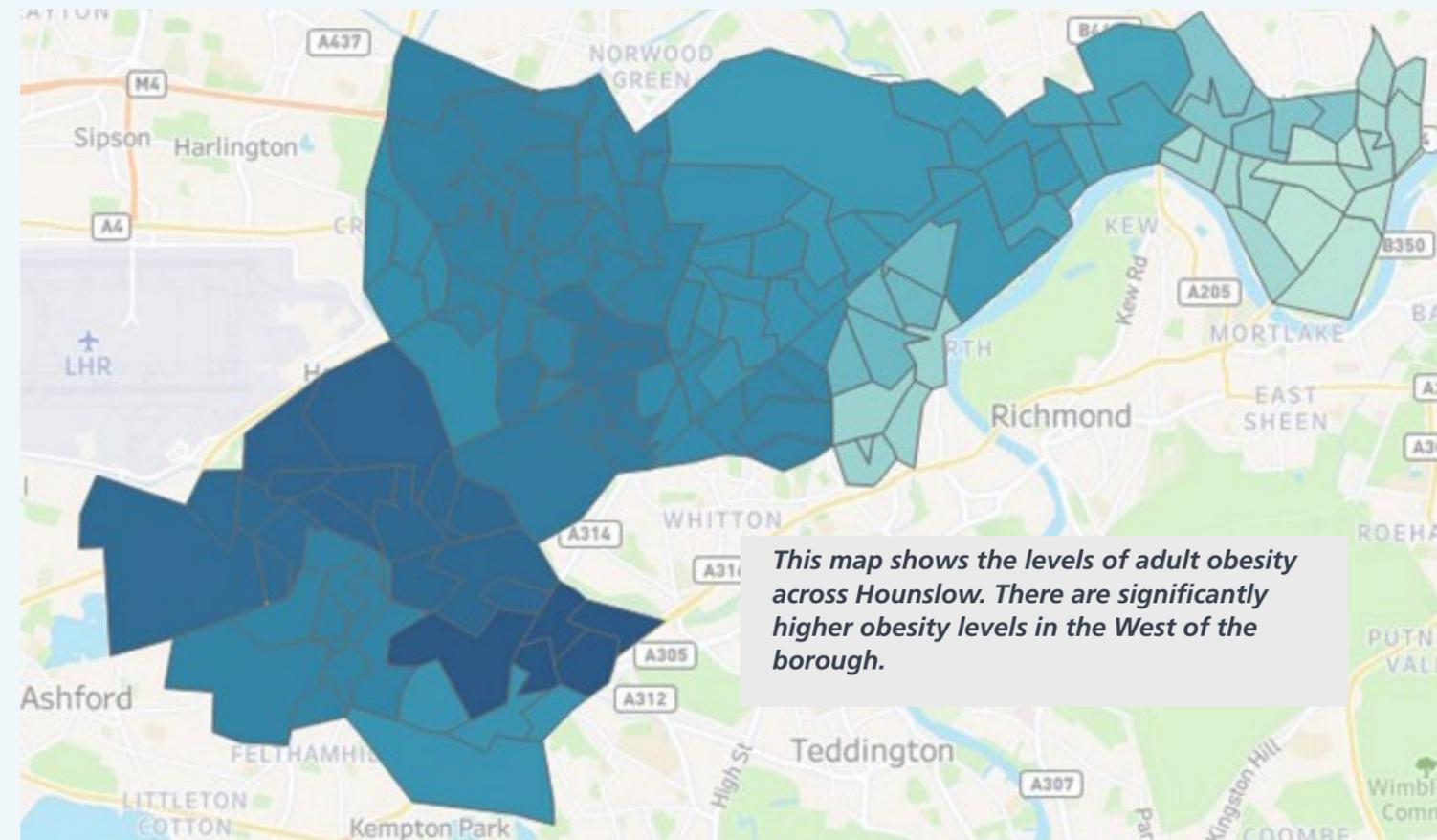
→ What we will do

Short Term

- Improve the understanding of the relationship between diet and personal health and wellbeing.
- Liaise with local supermarkets with a view getting them involved in promoting healthy eating campaigns.
- Widen access to cooking classes and guidance on creating simple, healthy recipes.
- Promote the work of One You Hounslow and their offer of free 4-week online courses on cooking and healthy eating.
- Support foodbanks to consider the nutritional content of their food parcels and add fresh fruit and vegetables to the offer.

Medium Term

- Make use of the Council's recent behavioural insight study commissioned by Public Health to better understand the local issues and identify potential solutions.
- Local businesses can be brought on board, as part of the local community, to help promote better health and wellbeing.
- Explore the options for developing the role of the Covid Community Champions, so that they can pass on other health messages to their communities: such as how to eat more healthily, and where to find information about having a healthy diet.



SUPPORTING OLDER AND VULNERABLE ADULTS



Good nutrition is very important for older people, but so is maintaining their social connections as it motivates people to take better care of themselves.

Hounslow and Richmond Community Healthcare NHS Trust



➔ What we will do

Short Term

- Use existing sources of support to raise awareness of the need that exists amongst older people, such as Every Contact Matters model to encourage a wider range of conversations.
- Provide guidance and training on issues of food and nutrition for front line support providers and wellbeing volunteers, such as telephone befrienders.
- Post-restrictions, support the reopening of lunch clubs to provide opportunities for social contact, encouraging older people to cook and eat and take better care of themselves.
- Raise awareness of cooking classes which provide spaces for people to learn to cook and cook together.

Medium Term

- Address the issue of dehydration amongst older people. Explore the idea of 'Hydration Champions' and more training for providers and carers on this issue.
- Investigate the need to re-commission a 'meals on wheels' type service to meet the need for cooked meals for vulnerable residents.

➔ What we know

- The diets of people over 65 years old are often very high in saturated fat, sugar and salt and low in oily fish, fruit and veg and protein.
- Because of poor health and physical weakness some older people have problems with shopping and other tasks.
- Poor nutrition in older people can lead to low mood and depression and reduced appetite levels, which in turn can cause further health problems.
- Social factors such as poverty and loneliness can result in reduced motivation to cook, or to maintain a healthy diet and to generally take care of themselves.
- Many of those who suffer dementia may forget to eat and will need greater support to manage cooking, meal preparation and eating regularly.



OUR PARTNERS

This Action Plan exists entirely due to the hard work and commitment of our many partners from charities and voluntary and community groups across the borough.

Their expert insight into their local communities, together with their innovative ideas and suggestions, has enabled us to put together a Food Action Plan that we hope can genuinely address the needs of our borough.

We are extremely grateful to all of them for their help.

- A2 Dominion
- Anne Shine Charity Community Foodbank
- Brentford FC Community Sports Trust
- Richmond Foodbank at the Bridgelink Centre
- Chiswick House & Gardens
- Christ Church Feltham
- City Harvest
- Feltham Food Bank
- Fight Hunger Feed Hope Foodbank
- Food for Thought Heathfield
- Food With Love
- Heston Action Group
- Heston West Big Local
- Hounslow Alzheimer's Society
- Hounslow and Richmond Continuing Healthcare (HRCH)
- Hounslow Community Foodbox
- Hounslow Multicultural Centre
- ILAYS
- Isleworth Deen Centre
- Muslim Hands Open Kitchen
- One You Hounslow
- Reach Academy
- Refugees Welcome Hounslow
- Richmond Aid
- Riverside Vineyard
- Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara
- St John's with St Mary's, Isleworth
- St Paul's & Church of the Good Shepherd
- Sunshine of Hounslow
- Surplus To Supper
- Tamil Community Centre
- The BeeHive Social Enterprise
- The Felix Project
- The Salvation Army
- Wiltshire Farm Foods



This Food Action Plan and the establishment of the Hounslow Food Network has been coordinated by Charlotte Hall, a National Management Trainee at the London Borough of Hounslow.





London Borough
of Hounslow