
Warwickshire Food Strategy



Foreword

Food is essential to all our lives. It fuels and sustains us, and it brings us together socially. Food binds communities and its production and supply plays a key role in creating a vibrant local economy. In Warwickshire we have rich history of farming and food production. We benefit from and enjoy a diverse food and farming sector and Warwickshire County Council has excellent partners who have long been active on food issues.

Our means of access to food and consumption of food reflect long standing methods, practices, and traditions – which have adapted to respond to global, national, and local conditions affecting the availability and quality of our food. These conditions are changing rapidly, making us think harder about the future and the way we live.

The National Food Strategy 2020¹ highlighted the need to create a long-term shift in our food culture in order to reduce food inequality and insecurity and to protect our environment and our health. This Strategy is equally driven by the strategic priorities and areas of focus within the Council Plan 2022-27² and makes strong links with supporting Warwickshire strategies. Crucially, we have the wonderful partnership contributions to the development of this Strategy provided through the knowledge and expertise of our Food Forum partners.

For Warwickshire, this means re-evaluating how we can make more



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healthy, affordable food available for all by using sustainable methods which also support food businesses and our local economy. Warwickshire

Through this Food Strategy, the Warwickshire Food Forum Partnership seeks to bring a wide range of partners and businesses together in a common cause, which aims to achieve a strategic and coordinated approach to the management of food security in our county.

There is a lot of work to do if we are to rebuild a food system that delivers safe, healthy, affordable food to everyone; that is a thriving contributor to our urban and rural economies; that restores and enhances the natural environment for the next generation; that is built upon a resilient, sustainable, and humane agriculture sector; and that is robust in the face of future crises. This work must start now.

**The National Food Strategy Part 1 –
July 2020¹**

1. The vision for change

National and local policy drivers

Food insecurity is prevalent across the UK and features prominently on central government agendas. The National Food Strategy, an independent review launched in two parts over 2020/21 set out the vision and plan for a better food system – one which reduces dependency on junk food; reduces diet-related inequality; makes the best use of land and create a long-term shift in our food attitudes and culture. The resulting Government Food Strategy³ was launched in June 2022 and set objectives for achieving secure food supplies; a sustainable, nature-positive, and affordable food supply system which provides more access and choice; and a system of import and export that provides better choices for consumers.

But our vision for change is rooted not only within the national level drivers of food policy but it is also firmly anchored by the ‘areas of focus’ specified in the Warwickshire Council Plan 2022-27 relating to affordable, accessible and sustainable food policy approaches. These include:

- 1) An area of focus to ‘support people to live healthy, happy and independent lives and work with partners to reduce health inequalities’. This will be achieved by:
 - Ensuring sustainable access to services and support for those who need it most, including addressing food poverty through the Food Forum
 - Ensuring health and wellbeing is integral to all aspects of the Council’s work
 - Promoting financial and digital inclusion targeting help at those most economically vulnerable
- 2) An area of focus to ‘tackle climate change, promote biodiversity and deliver on our commitment to net zero’. This will be achieved by:
 - minimising food and food-related waste and promoting re-use and re-cycling
 - Promoting local shopping, including increasing locally grown sources of healthy food and reducing ‘food miles’

Other local drivers include data and information from the Director of Public Health's Report 2022 - 23⁴ – focusing on the impact of cost of living; the State of Warwickshire Report 2022⁵, providing key information about strengths and opportunities relating to: supporting the Warwickshire economy; early years, education and skills; financial resilience; health and social care – as well as responding to the challenges of an ageing population and climate change. Also, Warwickshire Poverty Dashboard data⁶ provides key information to assist with targeting the actions and interventions within this Strategy.

This Strategy plays a vital part in our future planning and service delivery relating to sustainable, healthy food

supplies and consumption– but it is closely linked and mutually supportive of several other Warwickshire key strategies. These include:

- The Tackling Social Inequalities in Warwickshire Strategy 2021-2030⁷
- The Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26⁸
- The Warwickshire Sustainable Futures Strategy⁹
- The developing plans to address the cost of living challenges for Warwickshire residents, communities, and businesses¹⁰. Recognition of all these national and local policy drivers have helped to form the vision, purpose, and priority areas for this Warwickshire Food Strategy.

The Levelling Up agenda

The National Policy objectives link closely to the Government's Levelling Up White Paper¹¹ and in turn, to our own strategies for Levelling Up in Warwickshire. Published in February 2022, the White Paper focuses on the geographical and social disparities across the UK. The main levelling up themes from the White Paper are set out below.

- **Recognising differences in income and opportunity** – taking steps to enable those suffering the most severe food insecurity to be able to access healthy food
- **Impact of poor living standards and digital connectivity** on people's food choices and access – taking steps to help people maximise their income and money management
- **Local empowerment** – providing the means for voluntary and community sector organisations to become more involved and support people to change their food, diet, and health lifestyles
- **Education** – doing more to educate and inform people and communities about accessing healthy, affordable food and healthy cooking
- **Tackling obesity** – targeting action raise awareness of unhealthy, high-calorie food
- **Encouraging healthy lifestyles** – promoting the links between healthy lifestyle and good food choices as a way to improved health and wellbeing, appropriate to individual circumstances

We have examined these themes carefully through the lens of our own levelling up approaches, local data and insight. At the core of our levelling up plans is the development of five District and Borough centred Place Plans and the identification of 22 most deprived Lower Super Output Areas which will be prioritised for Levelling Up. This Strategy and its delivery plan will be factored into these processes so that food Strategy becomes integral to levelling up in Warwickshire. In this way we can address and reduce

the disparities and inequalities around place and communities of interest.

Whilst Warwickshire is overall an affluent County we must address what we know are longstanding disparities, compounded by Covid-19 but relating to access to quality jobs, poor health, low educational attainment and poor connectivity. Six of our 339 localities are in the top 10% most deprived in the country. Therefore, our approach to tackle these differences will be applied to the delivery and targeting of this Strategy.

Community Powered Warwickshire

Our Community Powered Warwickshire approach is fundamental to our ambitions to achieve levelling up in Warwickshire. Community Power is about working with partners to amplify the power of communities to exert greater control over their lives and places, help improve outcomes and encourage innovation in service delivery. Community Power can help with

the delivery and levelling up of our Food Strategy by calling upon communities to join in and support our aims, using their talents, skills and passion. In this Strategy we will utilise the key principles of community power: a joint mission; a long-term approach; addressing root causes; employ strength-based approaches; data driven; and learn and evolve our approach so it is targeted and tailored to communities of place and interest.

The Vision for Warwickshire

Taking all this into account what is our partnership vision for Warwickshire? Put simply our vision is a Warwickshire in which agencies and organisations from across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors work together consistently and effectively to

ensure a supply of good quality, healthy and affordable food for everyone. This means fewer people with diet-related ill-health, fewer people experiencing food insecurity and reduced levels of food-related waste and greenhouse gases related to our food system.

The Purpose of this Strategy

The purpose is to provide a shared, collaborative approach and a plan of action which agencies across the sectors can commit to, with key priorities for the short, medium, and long-term. The Strategy aims to

deliver a shared approach to better learning and understanding the root causes of food poverty and the cultural needs around food. This will enable us to decide and implement the highest impact interventions.

Our Priority Areas

This Strategy is divided into three priority areas – each with its own objective. These objectives will be achieved through a range of supporting actions – which are set out in the delivery plan that accompanies this Strategy.



Priority One - Affordability and access (short term)

The Objective – All partnership member organisations to work together to help residents access affordable, local, healthier lifestyle food choices – at the same time promoting financial inclusion and support in order to help prevent food insecurity crises.



Priority Two - Food education and choice (medium term)

The Objective – Warwickshire County Council supported by partnership member organisations to signpost people to education sources and help communities develop their own skills thereby enabling and encouraging them to make healthier food choices.



Priority Three - Sustainable choices (long term)

The Objective – The Food Forum Partnership to work with and influence local supply chains to encourage locally-sourced food choices, help reduce food miles and reduce food waste and reduce the need to travel further to make healthier lifestyle choices.



The Food Forum Partnership

We aim to work as widely as possible as a partnership and welcome all agencies, partners, and community groups to join in the delivery of this strategy, as members of the Warwickshire Food Forum. Below are our existing key partners.

- Citizens Advice Warwickshire
- Edible Links
- FareShare
- Feed the Hungry
- Integrated Care Service
- Mid-Counties Co-operative
- National Health Service
- North Warwickshire Borough Council
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- South Warwickshire Foundation Trust
- Stratford-Upon-Avon District Council
- The Equality and Inclusion Partnership
- The National Allotment Society
- The National Farmers Union
- The Trussell Trust
- The University of Warwick
- Together for Change
- Warwick District Council
- Warwickshire Association of Local Councils
- Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action
- Warwickshire County Council

2. Defining the Warwickshire Food Challenge

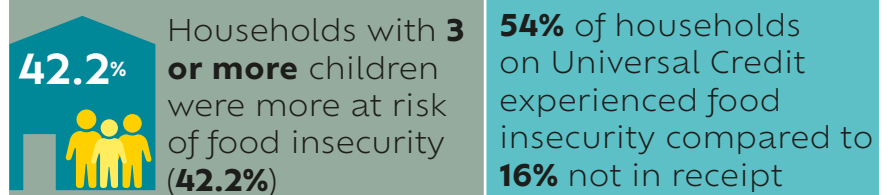
The National Picture

The Food Foundation tracks national trends in food insecurity and food inequality in England through its regular representative surveys. It publishes key data which illustrates the scale of the national problem being faced in terms of access to affordable, healthy food and the inequalities that exist with regards to this and health outcomes.

Food insecurity – national data

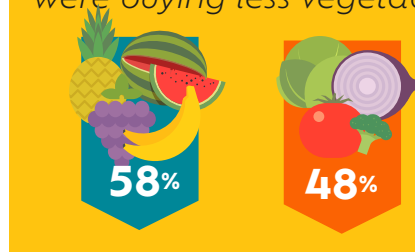
The picture with regards to food insecurity is likely to get worse. The Consumer Prices Index has been rising since early 2021 and rose by 10.7% in the 12 months to November 2022. Rising food prices has made the largest upward contribution to these increases with food and non-alcoholic beverage prices rising by **16.5%** in this period¹³. Staples such as bread and cereals,

In September 2022:



Households with people with disabilities were **more likely** to experience food insecurity

Around **half of households** who were food insecure reported buying less fruit (**58%**) and less vegetables (**48%**) compared to those who were food secure (*13% were buying less fruit and 8% were buying less vegetables*)



Food Foundation website¹²

In addition:

Healthy foods are nearly **three times more expensive** than less healthy foods per calorie

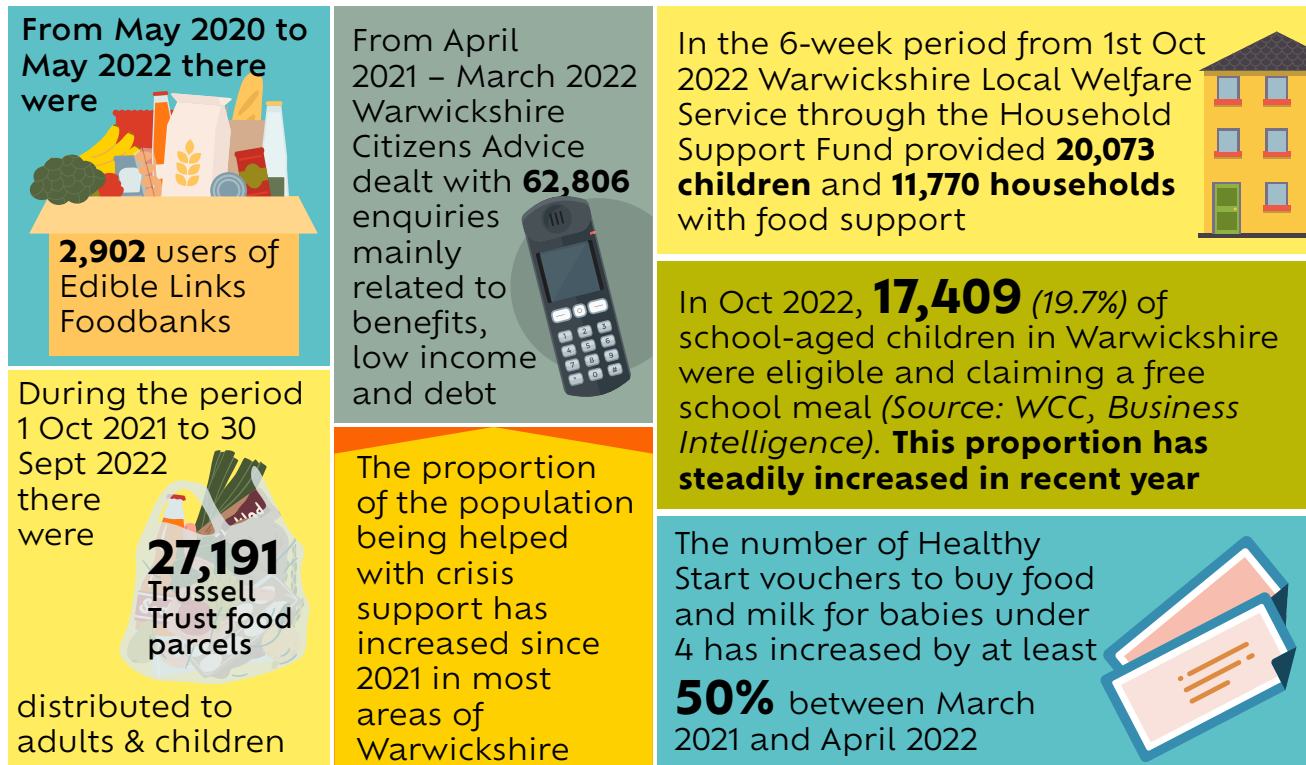
Both reception and Year 6 age children in the most deprived households are **twice as likely to be obese** than children in the least deprived households

meat products, and milk, cheese and eggs have seen the biggest increases with some lowest-priced food items increasing by over 50%.¹⁴

The food challenge in Warwickshire

We know from our own experiences and data sources in Warwickshire that these issues of food insecurity and food inequality affect residents of Warwickshire too.

Poverty in Warwickshire Dashboard¹⁵



This Strategy acknowledges the key drivers of the current socio-economic environment and aims to tackle the food-related issues that arise from them. We know that when the right food is not available from the right sources, it creates enormous risks for the health of our communities and our environment. By understanding the important role that food plays in health, the environment and our local

economy, this Strategy will ensure that food is considered alongside the other strategic priorities of the council as an area of importance. We know that improving access to localised and sustainable food can be an opportunity to improve food security for vulnerable groups, meet Warwickshire's climate and sustainability targets and improve food supply resilience.

Food insecurity – Warwickshire data

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing disparities in accessing good quality, affordable food across the county. In a challenging economic

climate, many residents increasingly came to Food Forum partner agencies and organisations for help due to job loss, furlough, and increased pressure

on household budgets. Recently, following on from the pandemic and now the cost of household goods, energy and food rising more children and adults are facing food poverty.

The impact of this is reflected in increased demand for food support across Warwickshire and reflects significant disparities in food security. Our data sources track the usage by Warwickshire residents of foodbanks and take up of welfare benefits and advice and support. The data on support provided to residents gives examples of the real issue of food insecurity and financial exclusion affecting many residents in Warwickshire.

A project by the University of Sheffield and the Food Foundation showed local authority levels of adult food

insecurity across the UK in January 2021. In Warwickshire, 9% - 11% of people were worried about being able to have enough food, 10%-15% of people struggled to obtain the food they needed and 3%-8% of people had experienced hunger and not been able to get food¹⁶ - see Table.

The data illustrates the disparities in food insecurity at all three levels across the five boroughs and districts with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough displaying the greatest levels of food insecurity. This is unsurprising given that Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough is the most deprived local authority in Warwickshire with the largest number of lower super output areas (LSOAs) in the top 20% most deprived LSOAs in the country according to Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019¹⁷. Although

	Nuneaton & Bedworth	Rugby	Stratford Upon Avon	Warwick	North Warwickshire
Adults who have experienced hunger as they did not have enough food to eat	8%	7%	3%	3%	3%
Adults who have struggled to have food	15%	11%	11%	8%	10%
Adults who have worried about having enough food to eat	11%	10%	8%	9%	9%

this data is from January 2021, the patterns of food insecurity are likely to continue to align with deprivation in Warwickshire but as illustrated by national data to be much worse and more widespread. IMD data can be

used to target interventions relating to food insecurity. Please see the map of IMD 2019 data for Warwickshire at Appendix A, broken down into Lower Super Output areas and showing relative levels of deprivation.

Food and health

What we eat is central to our health so availability of affordable and healthy food can impact on health outcomes and inequalities in Warwickshire. Overweight and obesity in both children and adults is a key health

concern affected by poor diet and lifestyle. The table below shows the percentage of children in reception, Year 6 and adults recorded as overweight or obese in recent years¹⁸.

	Reception (2021/22)	Year 6 (2021/22)	Adults 18+ (2020/21)
North Warwickshire	22.3	39.2	69.4
Nuneaton & Bedworth	23.4	40.8	69.1
Rugby	21.0	37.1	68.5
Stratford	19.4	31.5	64.2
Warwick	20.6	30.2	62.3

This data table illustrates the increase in percentages of overweight and obesity as children progress from reception to year six and then to adulthood. In all boroughs and districts there is a substantial increase through the life course with the percentage approximately tripling between Reception and adulthood. The higher prevalence of overweight and obesity, particularly in young people, in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough, closely followed by North Warwickshire Borough are notable. This trend again correlates with higher levels of deprivation in these boroughs.

Achieving healthy weights amongst children is a target within the Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26. Local data from the National Child Measurement Programme can be used to target areas and schools where percentages of overweight and obesity are greatest.

Food availability

The availability of affordable foods that contribute to a healthy, balanced diet impacts on what choices there are and ultimately what is consumed. Those living in areas dominated by relatively premium supermarkets, or in areas dominated by small convenience stores, are likely to face higher prices for a range of grocery products¹⁹. In addition, those on low incomes, or relatively vulnerable individuals such as those with a disability which limits their ability to travel are more impacted if they live in areas that are poorly served by food stores. Not having access to a car can limit an individuals' ability to shop at stores offering a good selection of products at a good price. It is recommended that residents should not have to walk any more than 500m to a shop that sells healthy foods²⁰.

Recent information on the supply of food particularly fresh, healthy foods in Warwickshire is limited. However, research in 2017 found that the rate of fast-food outlets was highest in North Warwickshire Borough (104.4 per 100,000 population) followed by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough (84.6)²¹. On average there are more takeaway stores in deprived areas²².

In summary

In Warwickshire we have a real challenge to tackle food insecurity, the consequences of which are being exacerbated by increased pressures on household budgets, the cost of living, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a clear need not only to ensure access for all to affordable food, but to safeguard future supplies of local healthier food. Educational campaigns need to encourage more children, young people, and adults to eat more healthily and exercise more choice around having a good diet and accompanying healthy lifestyle habits.

Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-26 recognises the problem of health inequalities in Warwickshire, which have been further compounded by Covid-19, and contains a strategic objective to reduce health inequalities through prevention measures which focus on the determinants of health and well-being. A healthy diet and lifestyle are key to this, and this Strategy therefore has the potential to contribute significantly to the outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

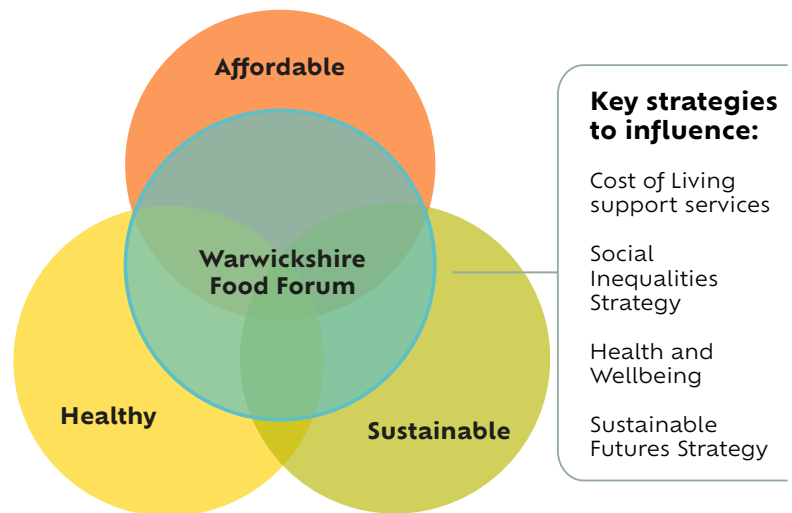
We must also build on the many successes we have achieved so far through the good work undertaken by the Food Forum, partner agencies and community groups working together. It is vital that our new work is targeted at areas of most need – so that Levelling Up principles and practice drive our service delivery.

3. What we will do

Overview

This Strategy draws together the priorities and current activity of the Warwickshire Food Forum with other key existing strategies and initiatives, to create a reference point for action over the next three years. It sets out the Food Forum's ambitions to align and influence effort across partners and influence organisations, agencies, and businesses in Warwickshire to enable residents to make affordable, well - informed and sustainable choices on food. For this Strategy to be a success we need to ensure that food is integrated within existing policy and programmes.

Using a series of interactive workshops, the Warwickshire Food Forum have collectively identified three priority areas where residents need support and set out the key actions and deliverables to be taken over the next 3 years. These will be reviewed regularly and refreshed annually. These actions will form the basis of our delivery plan for the Strategy.



The diagram above shows how this will work



Priority 1 – Affordability and Access

What we will do

We want all Warwickshire residents to be able to access nutritious, healthy food and make well-informed choices for their diet. However, we recognise that for many households the first barrier to a healthy, balanced diet is cost. For individuals and households to be able to access appropriate food choices it first must be affordable and for some, fresh produce and high-quality food can be unaffordable. As part of this Strategy, we want to prioritise households struggling with food poverty and insecurity so that healthy, balanced meals are no longer a luxury.

Key actions and deliverables

- Produce a partnership document which maps the provision of healthy affordable food as well as financial advice and support against the identified Levelling Up priority places and communities of interest
- Promote and use the Search Out Warwickshire Directory as a central point for sharing and promoting information about food affordability and accessibility
- Design and undertake an engagement plan to gather the views of people experiencing food insecurity. The output would be used to inform and design interventions which will empower and help people access affordable healthy food
- Review Warwickshire County Council and partners data collection and reporting around food access and affordability, food education and choice and food sustainability. Identify gaps in data and working with partners propose potential metrics to measure progress of implementation of the Food Strategy
- Produce a full evaluation of our scheme for social supermarkets in priority areas and make recommendations for a model which is sustainable
- Undertake campaigns of awareness raising to promote take up of free school meals entitlement and Holiday Activities and Food programmes
- Support community groups with setting up community-led healthy food programmes in priority areas

Key outcomes

- A reduction in the percentage of households in Warwickshire experiencing food insecurity
- A reduction in the percentage of households with children experiencing food insecurity
- An increase in the number of healthy and affordable



Priority 2 – Education and Choice

What we will do

For residents to be able to make better, healthier food choices, food education is essential. We want all Warwickshire residents to be able to make informed decisions on their health and diet and to be able to understand the impacts of their food choices. Alongside this we want everyone to have access to the cooking skills and the white goods needed to make healthy, nutritious meals. We will work with partners across the county to ensure there is better knowledge and understanding of food and diet for both adults and children.



Key Actions and deliverables

- Develop a Delivery Plan, which supports an uplift in the quality and timeliness of information to the people of Warwickshire ensuring all diverse communities are being reached and vulnerable groups are included
- Develop and publish case studies showcasing people we have supported from crisis to healthy and sustainable lifestyles
- Design and complete a series of specific projects which capitalise on current activity adding value to partners' existing campaigns e.g., Love Food - Hate Waste²³, campaigns about composting, food supply, welfare and buying local
- Establish an information sharing system for sharing our key messages with fitness classes, sports clubs, community centres, GP surgeries, Children and Family centres, places of worship, schools and nurseries and other venues and groups, including elected members and other stakeholders
- Conduct a benchmarking survey to establish the level of interaction with communal activities around food and the numbers of residents who participate in healthy choice and lifestyle activity

Key outcomes

- A reduction in the number of Warwickshire residents with diet-related ill-health
- Strengthened communities through more people engaging in communal activities around food
- An increase in the percentage of surveyed Warwickshire residents who have participated healthy choice and lifestyle education opportunities
- Increased numbers of educational initiatives to raise awareness of the production of food and its role in supporting health, economy, and the environment.



Priority 3 – Sustainable choices

What we will do

We want Warwickshire residents to have greater protections against food insecurity and to be able to make sustainable choices which contribute to sustaining the environment. For this to happen individuals and households need to have a greater understanding and appreciation of the food ‘landscape’. We want to work with partner organisations, businesses, and residents to promote local food sourcing, food and food-related waste reduction and improve local food supply chains – in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support biodiversity.

Key Actions and deliverables

- Pilot a ‘Warwickshire Food Miles’ scheme at local level (where food comes from, miles travelled)
- Identify ‘food champions’ who can work with large organisations and local businesses to adopt best practice in buying food and procurement and champion local food producers
- Research and provide an inventory of local ‘Food Waste’ initiatives and publicize good practice – later evaluating projects to assess their impact upon reduction of food waste
- Promote longer-term healthier lifestyles information working with District and Boroughs – linking to their activities provision and green space strategies
- Encourage local food sourcing such as fruit tree planting schemes (with links to the Sustainable Futures Strategy) and reducing food waste through community orchards and other community-based approaches
- Evaluate examples of the key initiatives and projects to clearly demonstrate their impact upon the reduction of food waste and related green-house gas emissions

Key outcomes

- A reduction in the amount of food – related waste produced in Warwickshire
- A reduction in the level of greenhouse gas emissions related to the food system in Warwickshire

4. Making it happen

Our approach to delivering this Strategy and our arrangements for governance

As a partnership we will adopt a place-based approach to finding solutions, listening to our residents, and working with our partners across the public, private, voluntary and community sector. We understand that we are living in a time where change is constant and fast paced, we will remain flexible in approach, adapting to emerging issues where necessary.

This Strategy sets out our direction and priorities for the next 3 years but we will review our plans on a yearly basis to make sure this Strategy remains relevant and focused on those with the greatest need. The Strategy seeks to influence the work of partner organisations within a complex landscape and network of service providers. To ensure we deliver our vision we have identified the key outcomes needed to support this. We have benchmarked our current position in relation to these future outcomes and identified the resultant suite of key business measures which will be used to chart progress and measure our success with the Warwickshire Food Forum being the body to which we are accountable for performance. Our metrics around progress have been set out in detail as part of our Food Strategy Delivery Plan.

The Warwickshire Food Forum will formally adopt the Strategy as the overarching umbrella for its work and meets quarterly. The Food Forum will receive reports on the progress of the Strategy, monitor progress and support its delivery.

The Delivery Plan

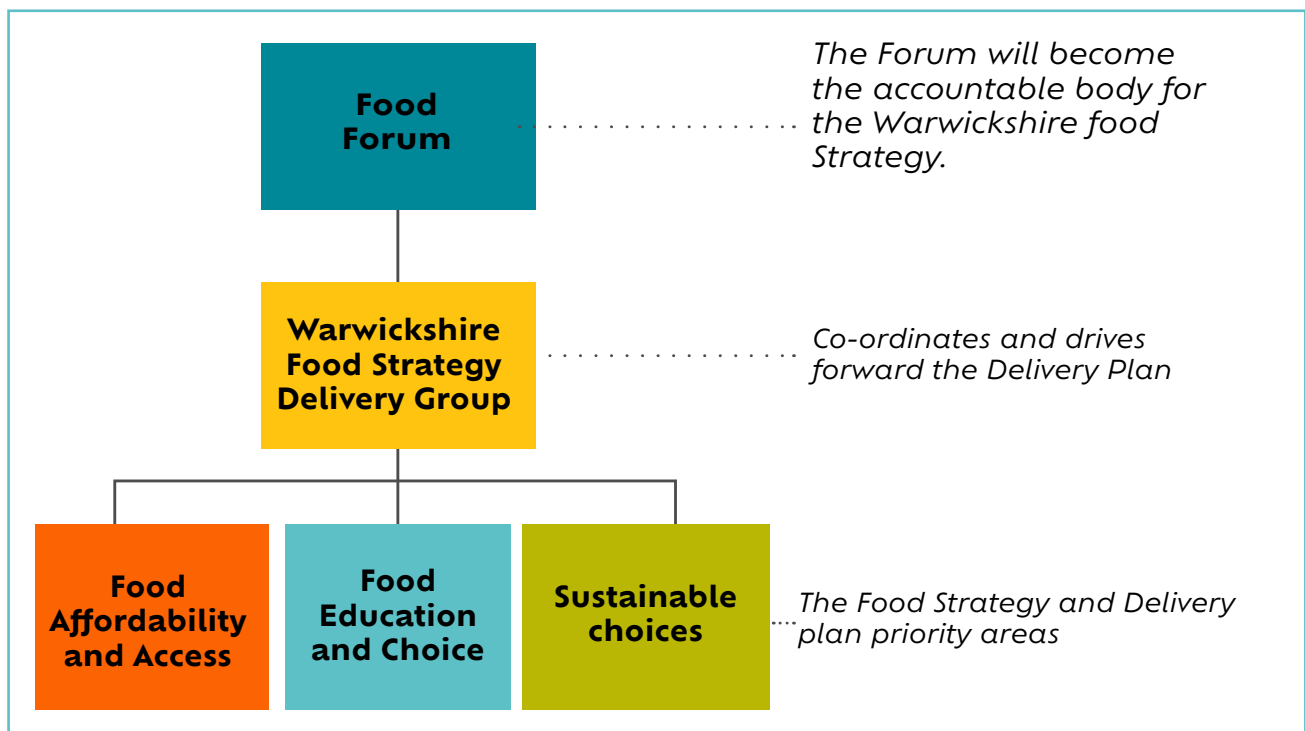
Our Food Strategy Delivery Plan is at the heart of our approach to bringing the Strategy to life. The plan contains key deliverables and actions we intend to take under each priority theme. The plan clearly shows who is responsible for the delivery of each action, deadline dates for delivery and it sets out the performance measures and outcomes we plan to achieve. The plan will drive activity and be regularly reviewed at meetings of the Warwickshire Food Strategy Delivery Group and results will be reported to the quarterly Food Forum partnership meetings.

Members of the Warwickshire Food Forum will be asked to commit to the Delivery Plan and to supporting the achievement of its outcomes. Warwickshire Food Strategy Delivery Group members will be drawn from across the wider Food Forum partnership members. The

governance structure for the Food Strategy is shown in the diagram below.

The Warwickshire Food Strategy Delivery Group will escalate risks and issues with delivery or resourcing to the Food Forum as necessary. Feedback

from residents, via client groups of forum members as well as utilising engagement opportunities will help us to understand the impact we are making and if our intended outcomes are being achieved.



Communications Plan

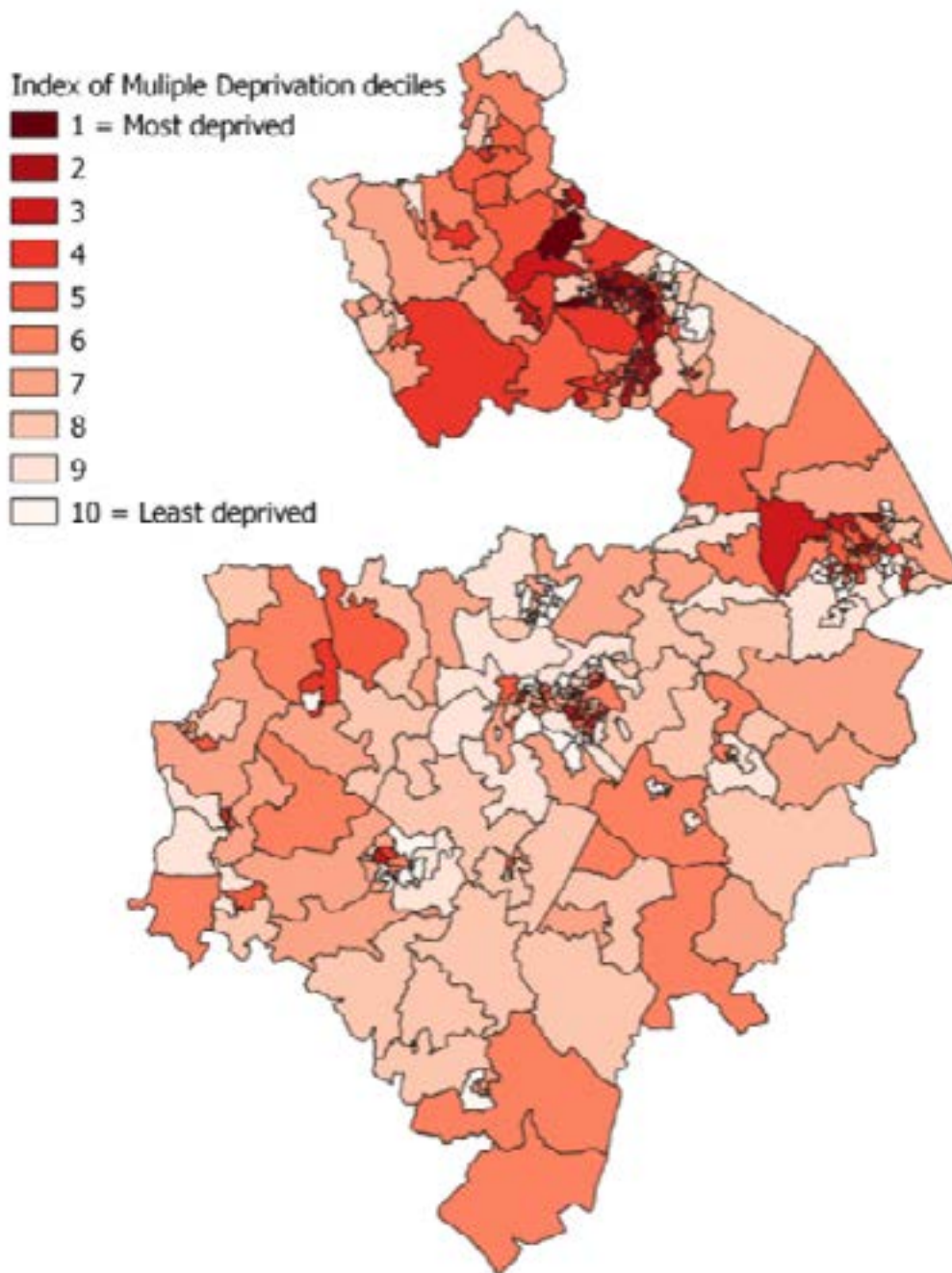
A detailed marketing and communications plan will support and accompany the Strategy. This plan will establish key links between the Strategy and the wider communications activity across the Council and throughout the

partnership. The marketing and communications plan will enable strong engagement and dialogue across Warwickshire's communities about this Strategy and how we can work together to deliver it.

Appendices

Appendix A

All Warwickshire Index of Multiple Deprivation map showing Lower Super Output Areas





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