



2020 REPORT

# YOUR FUTURE, YOUR FOOD

Youth Consultation for the National Food Strategy



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are extremely grateful to everyone who contributed to this report, including all the young people, teachers and youth leaders from the schools and youth groups that took part. We would especially like to thank our funders, The Health Foundation and SHEFS.

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO

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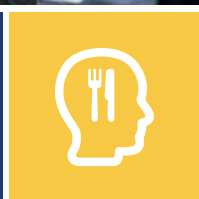
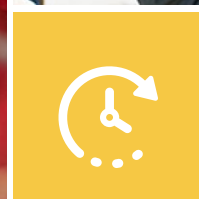
### ABOUT

The Food Foundation is a charity working to influence food policy and business practice, shaping a sustainable food system which makes healthy diets affordable and accessible for all. We work in partnership with researchers, campaigners, community bodies, industry, investors, government and citizens to galvanise the UK's diverse agents of change, using surprising and inventive ideas to drive fundamental shifts in our food system. These efforts are based on the continual re-evaluation of opportunities for action, building and synthesising strong evidence, convening powerful coalitions, harnessing citizens' voices and delivering impactful communications.

The Food Foundation was asked to lead a nationwide youth consultation project and compile an independent report for submission to the National Food Strategy authors. The youth voices captured in this report will contribute to shaping Part Two of the Strategy, to be published in Spring 2021.

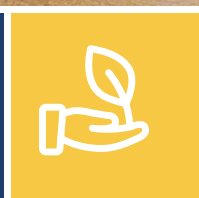






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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**here is no aspect of our lives in which food does not play a central role. It dictates our physical and mental health, shapes our communities, is a pivotal feature of our economies and is a leading factor in the decline of our planet's health. The need for food system transformation has never been so widely recognised or so urgently felt.

Today's food system was driven into being by a number of socioeconomic factors, including immediate concerns over post-war hunger, the industrialisation of agriculture and the automation of production. In this world of growing choice, convenience and exciting product innovation, people, or as we are often called, consumers, did not stop to question how this changing, globalised food system might be harming their planet and whether these new habits of consumption could be sustained. Nor were they aware of how the nutritional content of these innovative products was changing the health trajectories of their children.

Today's young people are the first generation to grow up in this modern food system, expertly designed to shape our choices, win our loyalties and maximise profits, whilst at the same time being faced with the long-term realities of the impact this system has on their future. Through their experience they have an objectivity and an insight that the generations before them lack.

In our consultation to capture this insight and inform the National Food Strategy, we spoke to young people across England.

**426**  
young people  
consulted

**24** workshops in  
**15** secondary schools and  
**9** youth groups

**1** online national  
event with  
**21** young people

We captured their perceptions and experiences of food in relation to their health, the environment and affordability. We asked them what their priorities for change were and what solutions they believed were necessary to enable everyone across the nation to have a healthier and more sustainable diet. Their voices make up the majority of this report.

Three clear areas arose as priorities:

## **EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENT and EQUALITY.**

1. Young people want to see more education about the food system and its impacts, both in schools and by the food industry for their customers. How food impacts planetary health should be included in the curriculum, as well as healthy cooking skills and nutrition, which should be embedded in education from an early age. There should be more advertising of healthy foods and clearer consumer information on both health and environmental impacts of foods. They recognise the need for knowledge to be able to understand the issues, make more informed choices and create a culture shift.
2. Young people want decision makers in business and government to transform our food system to one that does not harm the environment, through greener agricultural policies and business practices, as well as changes that enable a shift in consumer diets, such as more meat free options, greener packaging and more locally produced food.
3. Young people want healthy and sustainable diets to become accessible and affordable for all. The barriers that prevent people from being able to achieve this diet should be addressed and removed. They want to see less disparity in local food environments, action on the relative price of healthy and unhealthy food, investment in healthy food businesses and schemes to enable healthy eating for low-income households. In the long-term, they call for systemic change, reducing wealth inequality to address the root causes of food and health inequalities.





## 1 BACKGROUND

**T**he critical role which food systems and our diets play in shaping our natural environment, contributing to climate change, and determining our health is now undisputed. At the same time, the road ahead for re-designing food systems to deliver better outcomes is only starting to emerge.

Only 20% of people who can vote in Britain are under 35 years old<sup>1</sup> and yet the future of our food system matters more to them than any other sections of British society. For many young people today, there is a growing feeling of disenfranchisement. They are bombarded with uncertainties, over trade and the economy, over politics and climate, that threaten their future.. They are living through a global pandemic that sees them increasingly isolated, with opportunities slipping away before them and a looming economic crisis that will bring a period of recession and unemployment, the repercussions of which they will be dealing with for decades to come.

The ability of young people to shape the future of food policy is limited and yet there is mounting evidence that young people not only care deeply about these issues, but they also want their voices heard. The international school climate change strikes led by Greta Thunberg that saw millions of young people take to the streets across the world, are evidence of this and so are the young food ambassadors from the Children's Future Food Inquiry in the UK. The 2017 UK General Election saw the highest rate of turnout among young people in a quarter of a century. Youth groups from

every continent are organising, campaigning and demanding change.

If we can create opportunities for young people to shape the agenda for re-designing food systems, it is likely to not only create better policy but also help to accelerate its delivery and embed sustainable practices for future generations.

The National Food Strategy was commissioned by the government in 2018. Since then, Henry Dimbleby and his team have consulted with citizens, researchers and experts, food businesses, food producers, policy makers and many more.

The Food Foundation was asked to consult with young people in England, to identify issues that they care about regarding food, its impact on their health and the environment, their lived experience of the food system and their priorities for change. This consultation will ensure that their voices contribute to the shaping of the National Food Strategy and influence the food policies that emerge as a result of the strategy.

Due to the disruption of the pandemic, Part One of the National Food Strategy was released in July 2020. This first report made a series of urgent recommendations responding to the economic impact of the pandemic and forthcoming changes to trade being triggered by EU Exit<sup>2</sup>.

Part Two is due to be released in Spring 2021. The findings in this report will help inform the recommendations that are made.

## Changing times

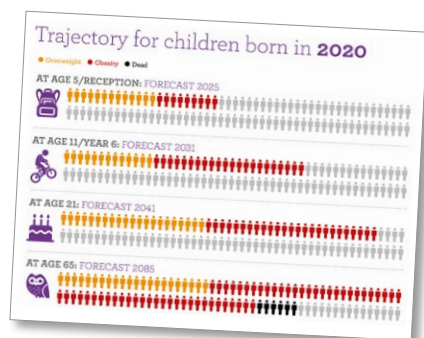
Young people today are growing up in an increasingly turbulent world. Three of the most critical challenges they face in their near future are directly related to food:

### AN EPIDEMIC OF OBESITY AND DIET-RELATED ILLNESS

**1 in 10** children in **RECEPTION**  
are **OBESE**, rising sharply to  
**1 in 5** in **YEAR 6**<sup>3</sup>

Without action to change this trajectory,

**25% children**  
born in 2020 will be  
**obese by age 21**  
and 57% by age 65<sup>4</sup>



SOURCE: THE BROKEN  
PLATE 2020 REPORT

There were **9,155**  
**diabetes-related**  
**amputations**

on average per year for the period  
2015/16 to 2017/18. This has increased  
from 7,733 amputations for the period  
2011/12 to 2013/14<sup>4</sup>

Globally, **1 in 5 deaths**  
are linked to **POOR DIET**<sup>5</sup>

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

Our current food system is  
responsible for around  
**one third**  
of global **GREENHOUSE**  
**GAS EMISSIONS**<sup>6</sup>

**GLOBAL MEAT CONSUMPTION HAS**  
**tripled in 50 years.**

Together, the world's top five meat  
and dairy corporations are now  
responsible for **MORE ANNUAL**  
**GHG EMISSIONS THAN EXXON,**  
**SHELL OR BP**<sup>7</sup>

**0%**  
**OF RIVERS, LAKES**  
**AND STREAMS**  
in England are in  
**'GOOD ECOLOGICAL STATUS'**<sup>8</sup>



### ECONOMIC DISRUPTION AND WEALTH INEQUALITY

Before Covid-19,  
**4.2 million children**  
were **LIVING IN POVERTY** in the UK  
- 9 in every classroom of 30<sup>9</sup>

Children from **BLACK AND MINORITY**  
**ETHNIC GROUPS** are more likely  
to be in poverty:  
**46%** are now in poverty, compared  
with  
**26%** of children in **WHITE**  
**BRITISH** families<sup>9</sup>

**14% of parents**  
and guardians living with  
children have experienced  
**FOOD INSECURITY BETWEEN**  
**MARCH AND AUGUST 2020**<sup>10</sup>

The Office of Budgetary  
Responsibility's **WORST-CASE**  
**SCENARIO** forecasts an  
**unemployment**  
**rate of 13.2%**  
by the first quarter of 2021<sup>11</sup>

## Beyond the National Food Strategy

Through the design of this youth consultation project, the Food Foundation team have not only aimed to capture the experiences and priorities of young people in England, but also to bring together a small selection of those we spoke to and empower them to become food advocates. Through this work, the Children's Right to Food campaign, and projects currently in

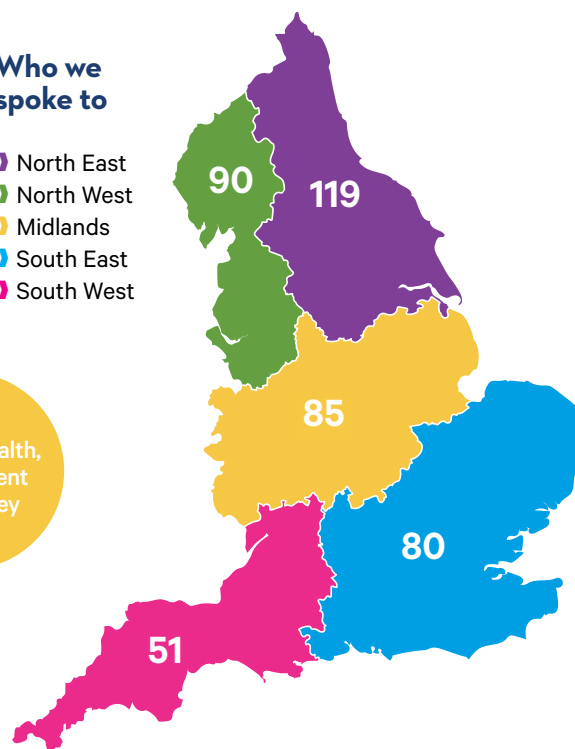
development that are working to create a global youth food movement, we are mobilising young people to be leaders of the future; leaders who prioritise issues of health, environment and equality, who think in systems, not siloes, who work collaboratively and creatively, and who are confident to stand up for what they believe in and drive positive change.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

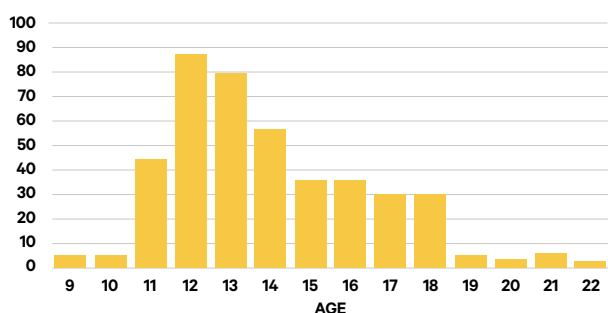


### Who we spoke to

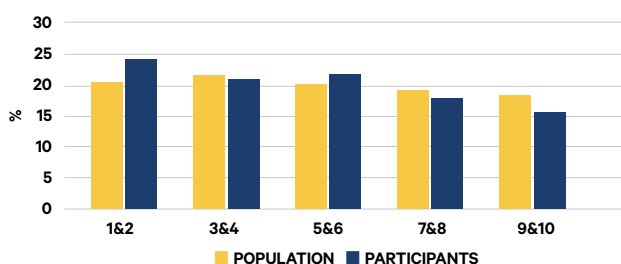
- North East
- North West
- Midlands
- South East
- South West



### The age range of our participants

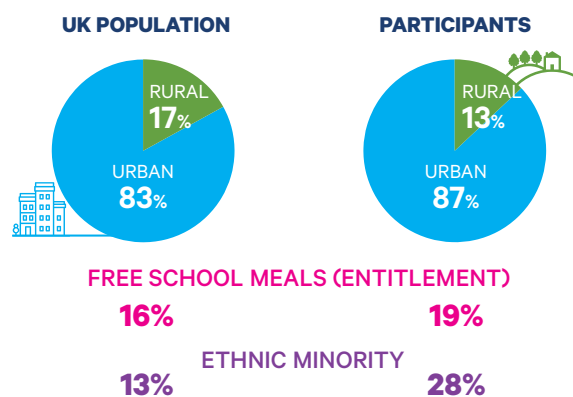


### Indices of Multiple Deprivation scores of the UK population and our participants



Indices of Multiple Deprivation scores describe deprivation levels in UK neighbourhoods. Split into quintiles, we compare the UK population and our young participants

### Comparing the UK population with our participants



We aimed through our selection of secondary schools and youth groups to secure a broadly nationally representative sample of children aged 11-18 years, covering geography, rural and urban populations, levels of deprivation and ethnicity. We aimed to have an even spread of ages across the group.

Due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is some misalignment between national demographics and our final data set. A full methodology of our selection process, as well as a detailed outline of the workshop and national event through which we gathered this data, is described in the [appendix](#).



## School and Youth Group Workshops

We created a workshop that stimulated discussions around food, focusing on three key themes of Food & Health, Food & Our Living Planet and Food & Money.

The workshops were recorded and transcribed. The direct quotes that make up the body of this report are the product of these workshops.

THE WORKSHOPS WERE DESIGNED TO CAPTURE:

1. Key influences on food choice
2. Experiences and perceptions of barriers to a healthy diet and ideas as to how these could be addressed
3. Experience and perceptions of barriers to a sustainable diet and ideas as to how these could be addressed
4. What food and affordability means to them – exploring issues of food insecurity and solutions to address it
5. Who they believe is responsible for addressing the issues
6. Themes that participants want to focus on – their priorities



## National Workshop

From the school and youth group workshops we identified young people that had shown the most interest and enthusiasm for the issues. They were invited to participate in a national event.

We gathered 21 young people from the length and breadth of the country for a two-day online event. This event included sessions on advocacy and citizenship skills and exploring and understanding the complexity of food systems. We workshoped the problems and solutions that emerged from the school sessions. Finally, the young people developed a series of policy proposals which they presented to invited guests from the food industry, parliament and other governmental bodies.





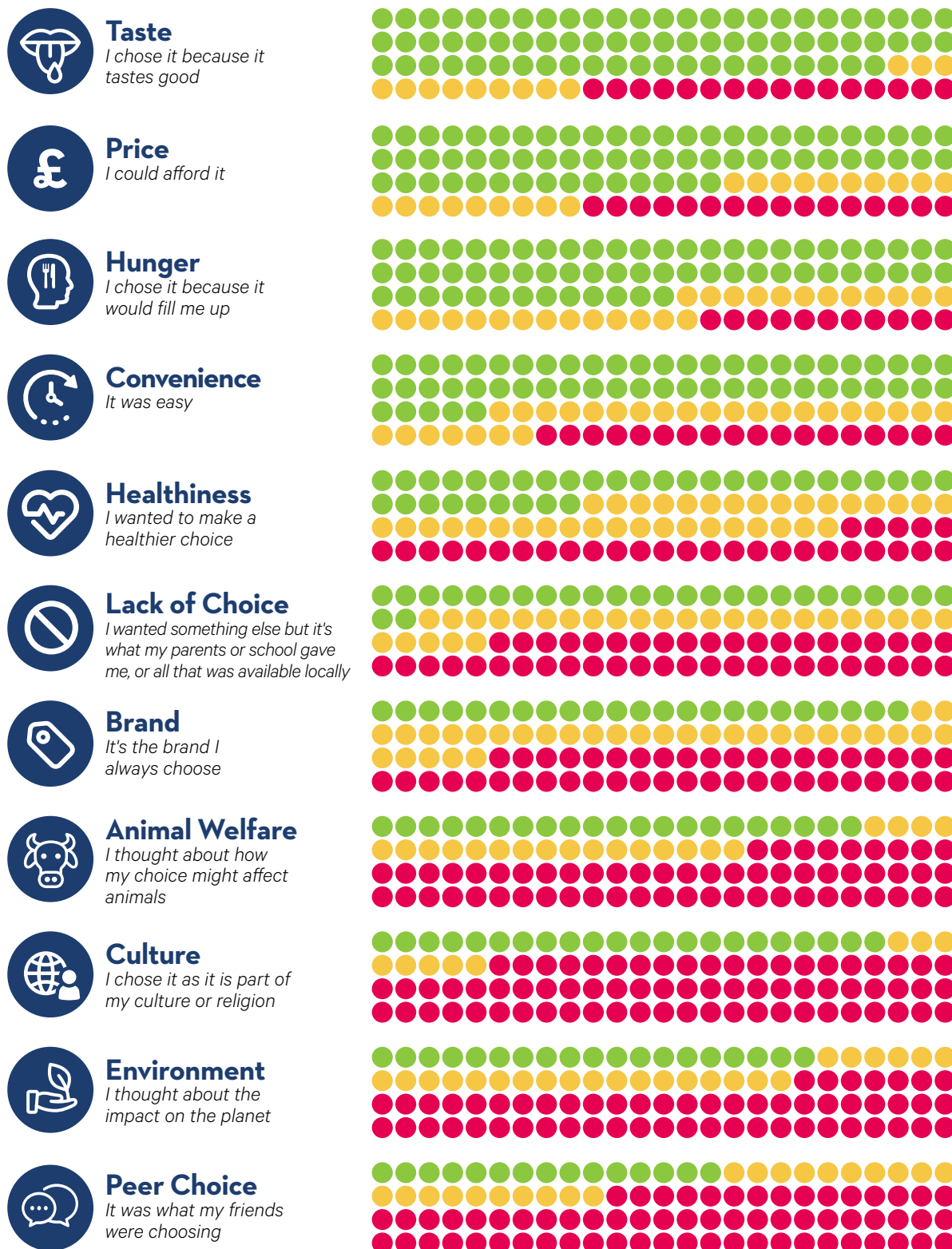
# 3 WHAT WE FOUND

3.1 FOOD & HEALTH  
3.2 FOOD & OUR PLANET  
3.3 FOOD & MONEY  
3.4 PRIORITIES

## Key influences on food choice

The young people were asked whether 11 potential factors influenced their food choice.

● YES ● SOMETIMES ● NO



For details on how data was collected, see the appendix.

### 3 WHAT WE FOUND

#### Key influences on food choice (continued)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the strongest influences on choice were taste, price, hunger and convenience.

“ I choose food because it fills me up.

“ I'm a very lazy person. I live about 400 meters away from McDonald's so it's an easy walk.

When considering whether the healthiness of food was an influence, the young people answered 'yes', 'no' and 'sometimes' in even numbers.

“ I don't know why I don't eat more healthily. My lifestyle [is stopping me]

“ I'd like to gain weight so I'm not bothered about eating healthily.

“ I don't care about taste, as long as it is healthy.

The least influential factors were Animal Welfare, Culture & Tradition, Environmental Impact and Peer Choice.

The influence of both Peer Choice and Culture & Tradition are likely to be unreported here. In the discussion after the activity, many young people were dismissive of peer choice as an influence, but when the point was raised that they may find themselves going to eateries that others had chosen there was often a concession that this may be a stronger factor than they realised.

“ Me and my friends, if we go to town, we all just go to Nando's. Cause we know what everybody likes. It's an easy place.



Similarly, whilst Culture & Tradition was a clear influence for Muslim or Jewish participants, others felt that it did not influence their diet. In the ensuing discussions the culture of meals such as Sunday roasts and Friday fish and chips was raised and acknowledged as tradition.

“ Some cultural food might bring memories. As a family, if you're having certain types of food, sometimes it maintains culture or tradition.

Animal Welfare and Environmental Impact was a definite consideration for only 21% and 19% respectively, with 59% and 58% saying it was never a consideration for them.

“ When I'm looking at food I don't go "How does this impact the environment?" I just want to know if it tastes nice and if it will fill me up.

“ I don't really think about that. I just eat it.

“ If I'm hungry, I eat. I don't really care about the environment.

“ When I'm eating meat, I remember that it came from an animal and I can't help but feel sorry for it. I just prefer not to think about that. The meat is just too good.



### 3 WHAT WE FOUND

## 3.1 FOOD & HEALTH



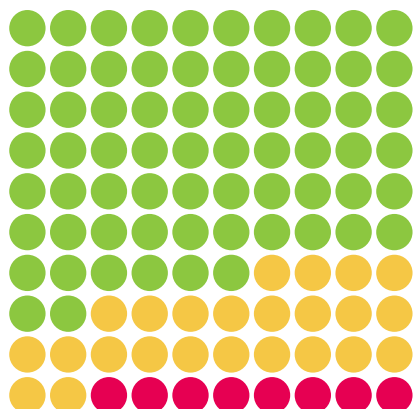
In secondary school children 45% of dietary energy comes from foods high in saturated fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) and 65% of dietary energy comes from ultra-processed foods

95% of 11-16 year olds eat less than 3.5 portions of veg per day - the lowest of all age groups<sup>12</sup>

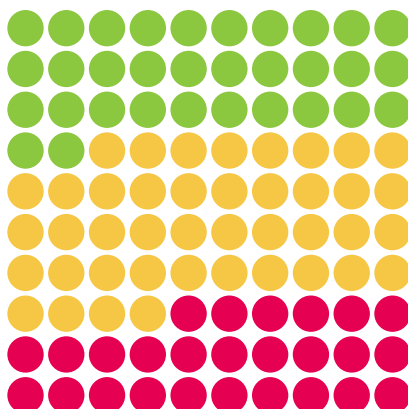
The workshop participants were asked three questions relating to food and health.

● VERY ● SOMEWHAT ● HARDLY

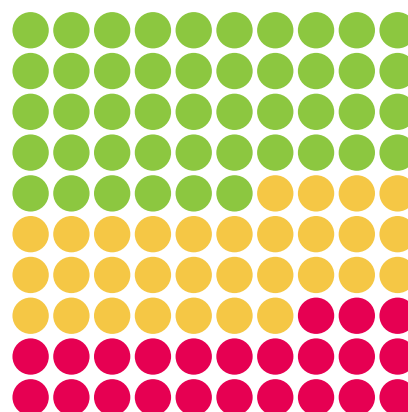
How important is food to health?



Do you eat healthily?



Would you like to eat more healthily?



“Food is basically the most important part of lifestyle. If you eat unhealthily, then you'll become unhealthy and won't be able to do things that contribute to your normal lifestyle.”

Young people in the sample overwhelmingly agreed that food was important to good health, however when asked if they eat healthily themselves, there were less positive responses. When asked if they would like to eat more healthily, the majority answered yes. We then asked them, if this was the case, what were the barriers to them doing so.



## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.1 FOOD & HEALTH (continued)

#### Access and affordability

##### • COST

The affordability of healthy food was the leading barrier to a healthy diet for the young people we spoke to. It was raised multiple times by every group. Groups not only raised the cost of healthy food, but also the low price of unhealthy food.

“It's quite sad that to eat healthier costs more. I don't think people necessarily want to eat unhealthily but sometimes that's the only option we have.”

Most felt the price of healthy food should be brought down and many suggested there could be an increase in the price of unhealthy food.

“They tried to change the prices of fizzy drinks to make them more expensive but they're still not reducing the price of healthy foods.”

“We could mass produce more organic, healthy food and sell it for cheaper and increase the prices of fattier foods.”



#### SOLUTIONS PROPOSED INCLUDE:

- \* Schemes to make healthy food more affordable and accessible, such as Healthy Food reward schemes on Clubcards and Buy One Get One Free offers on healthy food
- \* Schemes for young people to buy more healthy food
- \* Taxation of unhealthy food for consumers
- \* Taxation of unhealthy food for businesses
- \* Increase in wages
- \* Government support for businesses to reduce price of healthy options

“Some people need to be paid more money. They need more money so they can afford healthy food.”

They felt that removing this barrier was largely the responsibility of government, through investments and taxes, and businesses.

“I don't get why healthy eating has that extra price on it. When the whole government system wants us to eat healthier. I don't get it. Isn't the government, at the same time, struggling with child obesity?”

“Salad is more expensive than a happy meal at McDonald's. If it was cheaper, I'd probably buy it more often.”

“The shops could give free fruit to school kids. Or anyone, because obesity is rising. Then people wouldn't hesitate to eat the fruit. Or what about the Eat Out to Help Out scheme? If the government can do that to promote unhealthy food, can't they do ... 'If you eat healthy food you get 50% off'?”



## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.1 FOOD & HEALTH (continued)

#### • LOCAL FOOD ENVIRONMENTS AND PRODUCTS

The prevalence of fast-food restaurants and the layout of shops and choices on offer were felt to be a major barriers to healthy eating. Similarly, the formulation of products themselves was highlighted as an area for change.

A few participants called for clearer and more honest labelling of food. They suggested health warnings and tighter regulations to allow consumers to make more informed choices.

“If McDonald's is by this school, that's where everyone's going.

“I live right in the middle of a Turkish take out and a pizza place and I get Maccers delivered and KFC delivered. It's not good.

“There's takeaway shops at every corner. There's like 8 of them in my street.

“There's so much fast food, it's hard to resist.

“I don't see healthy stuff anywhere.

More than 69%  
of manufactured  
products sold in the  
UK in 2018 were  
'unhealthy'<sup>13</sup>



#### SOLUTIONS PROPOSED INCLUDE:

- \* Limit the number of takeaways in an area
- \* Remove unhealthy foods by shop tills and replace with healthy options
- \* Increase the number of healthy options available in shops and restaurants
- \* Fast-food restaurants with healthy menus
- \* Put health and obesity warnings in fast-food restaurants
- \* Regulate unhealthy food
- \* Reformulate products to make them healthier
- \* More healthy products that don't contain common allergens

“In our area, there are about 50 fast food restaurants. When you're going home from school, you don't have that much money on you. You've only got a pound or two. So if you think about it, would you go out there, look for something healthy and go home and cook it and eat it, or would you just jump into a chip shop and grab a pack of chips.

“Big companies can make the food addictive.

“There's takeaway shops and chip shops and they're all cheap and they're easy to access and everything. There's no shop that is easy to access and at the same time healthy and at the same time cheap. If there was, everyone would go there. Everyone wants healthy eating. And that's the issue because people are rushing in their lives. Everyone's got jobs, everyone's got school, everyone's got places to be, but they can't do all of that and also get healthy food in their system because the food that's available for them is not healthy. So, it's kind of not in their control to eat healthy.

Whilst it was felt that it was the responsibility of governments, local authorities, shops, food businesses and producers to change the food environment, there was a recognition of the role of individuals to have the right attitude and make the right choices.



## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.1 FOOD & HEALTH (continued)

## Attitudes, choices and knowledge

### • PERSONAL CHOICE

Many young people raised the preference for the taste of unhealthy foods. They discussed the addictive nature of unhealthy food and the challenge of motivating yourself to keep to a healthy diet. Many young people mentioned eating out of boredom and emotional eating.

“You, the individual. You can choose what you eat.

“It's up to everyone to change - parents, children.

“People's attitudes are bad. Only some people care about their health.

“I don't like McDonald's. It's fatty and salty and just not good for you.

“The problem is that people are addicted to the unhealthy foods.

“There's sweet and fatty stuff around that everybody likes, it makes it so much harder not to have it. When people eat unhealthy, you can't stop.

“We need to learn to resist cravings and temptation.

“We were brought up eating unhealthy food. We need to change our attitude.



### • PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

The role of parents in providing healthy choices, in teaching cooking skills and to instilling healthy habits came up many times. Some young people described wanting healthier food at home but having to eat what they were given. Some participants wanted to see healthier meals in their schools. One participant described having only one option for their free school meals voucher at a greasy café opposite their school.

“It's kind of hard to get your own food and not eat what's put in front of you. So, it's difficult to go against what your family is eating.

“Sometimes you have to eat what's there.

“I feel like if you eat what's at home, you have to deal with what you got. If I lived by myself, I would eat a lot healthier.

“No I think I would order food everyday, actually.

### • ADVERTISING AND PERCEPTIONS



Children exposed to adverts for HFSS foods on TV and in online games consume 13.6 more calories per minute of advertising watched. This increases to 20.9 calories in obese children<sup>14</sup>

Many participants noted the role of advertising in promoting unhealthy diets. There was also discussion about the perception of what a healthy diet looked like, and at least two young people described feeling that they did not identify with the image or culture of 'health foods'.

“Adverts always hype it up saying how good it is and people (are) trying to be healthy but then see the adverts and it's tempting to go eat it, so they can't resist temptation. It's TV producers. They're making so much money so they won't say no to it. If TV put loads more healthy adverts up, I think it would encourage a lot more people to do it.

“I feel like a lot of the food that is advertised is unhealthy food. And because capitalist society is in charge of advertising, you'll find people in higher power in charge of that kind of industry, they're going to promote food that benefits them in some kind of way. They will exploit the working class. For it to change, there has to be a change in attitudes.

“It's unclear what a 'healthy' diet looks like. We are bombarded with diet fads and it can be confusing to navigate it all.

“There should be a ban on unhealthy ads.

“When I go to ASDA there's like a whole "healthy food" range. I don't know, whenever you go down the aisle, there are people giving you weird looks.





## CHANGING ATTITUDES – THE SOLUTIONS

### • EDUCATION

Almost every group named education as a key solution. They wanted to see education in schools and youth clubs on healthy cooking and understanding nutrition, including the long-term effects of having an unhealthy diet. Many of them explained how important it was to have this from a young age and throughout their education, to embed healthy habits and attitudes.

“If you're educating us better to make healthier choices, then maybe we would.

“If you know how to cook at an early age it'll make you understand how a lot of food can and can't be healthy. It doesn't have to be advanced. It can be basic. But it will help the kids understand the difference between unhealthy food and healthy food so they can make those better choices for the future in their life.

There was also a loud call for more education for parents on healthy eating. They described the key role parents play in, not only feeding their children healthy food, but also teaching them to cook. Many discussed knowing how to use the same ingredients and make the same dishes but in a healthier way.

“The government should fund cooking classes for new parents so they are more inclined to buy and cook healthy food.

“Everything can be counted as healthy, but it depends how you cook it. Fish is technically healthy, meat is healthy, vegetables are healthy. But if you cook them in the wrong way then it's no longer healthy.

“Most people think about healthy food they think of bland, plain. You can make healthy food taste good as well, you just have to know how to do it. Schools and youth clubs could hold these workshops.

There was mention of the role of culture and tradition in cooking foods a certain way. Some of the young Muslims we spoke to described their parent's traditional cooking style as using a lot of oil. Someone also raised the challenge for immigrants in knowing what to do with the British food that was available to them locally.

“UK's got a lot of different cultures and different styles of making food. I don't think healthy food is an influence in certain cultures as much. Everyone is used to cooking it however they like. They're not educated about how to make it healthier. You can make a healthy curry, you can make a full-fat curry.

“I think it is quite multifaceted really. I mean, there is the accessibility issue. I think there's also an education issue. So for example, most of my friends at work or around my age, or maybe younger, they don't know how to cook. So if I talk about a pasta dish with some protein mixed in for example, they won't be quite sure how to make it. So for them, if they need something to eat, it's easy and quick to just go outside, grab something quick and come home. Pasta's pretty cheap, rice is pretty cheap, staple foods like that. And for a lot of people, a lot of younger people, they need to know how to use it. I think that would help. I think primarily the parents are responsible for this education. I think it's a family thing. Parents teach their kids. I learned to cook primarily from my mother, I used to watch her in the kitchen and I started chopping the onions myself, and then I moved on from there. I suppose parents, possibly schools. I never went to school, so I'm not sure what provision there is there for culinary education.





## • POSITIVE ADVERTISING



In 2016, only 2.9% of the millions spent on food and drink advertising in the UK was for fruit and veg<sup>4</sup>

Veg Power's Eat Them To Defeat Them campaign resulted in an extra 517 million child portions of veg being served between February 2019 and July 2020<sup>15</sup>

Another solution that was repeatedly identified was advertising that focuses on healthy food. Participants want to see more campaigns for healthy food, and suggested the food needed to look more aesthetically pleasing than it often did.

Whilst this was felt to be the responsibility of the government and retailers, they also named celebrities and influencers as playing a role.

“People will keep eating what they are used to eating, but the government need to encourage people to eat healthier.”

“Celebrities should promote healthy eating on YouTube and social media.”

“Celebrities could endorse healthy food.”

“Social media can promote anything. Why not promote healthy foods and how to make it?”

“The Government should use Google & social media to advertise healthy food and cooking education.”

“The Government could make more gyms and encourage people away from unhealthy food.”





### 3 WHAT WE FOUND

## 3.2 FOOD & OUR LIVING PLANET



4% of students feel they know a lot about climate change

68% of students want to learn more about the environment<sup>16</sup>

### Understanding the impact

Among the 426 young people we spoke to, some had a good understanding of the environmental impact of our food system. For the most part, however, there was a clear lack of knowledge as to how food and the environment were linked.

There was often only a basic understanding of the term 'sustainability' and a surprising lack of concern about climate change and environmental damage. Some participants did not see the importance of sustainability, or preferred not to think about the impact of their food choices.

This lack of knowledge emerged as the leading barrier to having a sustainable diet.

“In school we don't get taught about how food affects the environment. We just get taught what is good to eat and not. I think that needs to be more integrated into the education system.

“I don't think we know about [the environment/climate change] a lot. It's not something that's talked about enough or brought up in life. If it was, then yes we would think about it a lot more. I don't think people raise awareness of it much, it's something that is brushed under. I think in the PSHE lessons in schools they should put more emphasis on food and talking about the impacts of pollution in regards to food. They don't really talk about it in school in Science and in PSHE.

“I've never really thought about it.

“I don't worry about the environment when I'm eating.

“If I think about it too much it's just going to make me not want to eat it.

“Wouldn't make a difference to me if a food was sustainable or not, I would still buy it. Food is food.

“I feel bad when I see animal cruelty, but I would still eat it if it tastes nice.

Another area of knowledge that was lacking, and was particularly apparent when discussing meat consumption, was the concept of supply and demand. Some young people suggested that animals might go extinct if we stopped breeding them, or that if we did not eat them there would be too many on the planet.

“We've gone into a process where animals are killed for meat, what if there's too many animals?

## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.2 FOOD & OUR LIVING PLANET (continued)

#### Meat



An area 1.5 times the size of the EU would be saved from agricultural production if the amount of animal products eaten globally was reduced to meet nutritional requirements<sup>17</sup>

Overconsumption of meat was often recognised as an environmental issue. Many participants said we needed to reduce the amount of meat we eat but others were not willing to consider this.

The main suggestions for enabling this reduction were education in meat-free cooking and more meat-alternatives. There was a call for more vegetarian and vegan options in shops, restaurants and fast-food outlets. A few participants wanted to see more organic meat.

“I've learned a lot more about beef. Beef is really, really bad for the environment. Those sort of decisions I've made personally, like reducing how much beef I



eat and stuff like that. And I've worked in school as well to make sure the canteen reduces beef. So those kinds of decisions and choices that affect the climate with food, I think are quite important to some young people too.

“People need to be educated more on what a balanced diet can consist of, because not all your protein needs to come from meat. I have a healthy balanced diet while being vegan. As well, the accessibility of organic food needs to be increased to allow more people to buy it.

Perhaps more than with any other issue, it was felt the responsibility lies with everyone, from individuals, to communities, schools, businesses, scientists, advertisers, governments and bodies such as the EU and the UN.

#### Plastic

The environmental impact of plastic packaging was discussed by the majority of groups. There was clearly an awareness of the issue and a number of participants mentioned having seen or read something about it, demonstrating the impact that media coverage has on public awareness.

Some felt they had a responsibility to avoid plastic and to carry and use reusable containers, but many felt the lead should be taken by businesses to reduce the amount of packaging they use, to use alternatives and bio-degradable options, and to work with product designers to create new alternatives.

“I read that by the year 2030 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish in it. That's going to affect a lot of Bengali families. The businesses need

to change it because they're making the packaging and the plastics. Entrepreneurs and enterprises.

“I think more about packaging and things like that. That has become a huge thing and people are trying to cut down on plastic. So usually when I buy food, I try and buy stuff that isn't in plastic wraps. It's either biodegradable or fruit and things that come loose.

“I tend to make plant friendly choices however there are some things that are unavoidable. The amount of plastic and packaging on foods means it is so difficult to avoid this.

“Give everyone a free bag for life. For every bag used, plant a tree.

There was also a recognition of the role governments play in enforcing and encouraging a reduction in plastic.

“Packaging needs to have government laws that must be followed to reduce plastic and other food options need to be made available, such as fresh unpackaged food being cheaper.



## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.2 FOOD & OUR LIVING PLANET (continued)

#### Food Waste

Whilst there was an awareness of food waste as a problem, most participants were surprised to learn just how impactful it is and the scale of the problem.



##### SOLUTIONS PROPOSED INCLUDE:

- \* Redistribution to people in need
- \* Composting
- \* Laws against cosmetic restrictions imposed by shops
- \* National campaigns to inform and discourage
- \* Education on reducing food waste
- \* Personal actions, such as controlling portion size, planning meals and freezing food

“There should be laws around what manufacturers are allowed to do, like what they're allowed to add to things and the amount they are allowed to dispose of, like just because a product isn't a certain shape or something.

“People need to be educated in how they can eat fresher foods and use up what they have rather than wasting foods.

“People need to buy what they need rather than bulk buying and having lots of stuff left over that they can't then use.

“People buy more than they need because they give those 'buy one get one free' deals, so you may think that it's a good deal, but you won't end up eating it.

“We could vary the size of food packaging, some foods are sold in huge quantities that small families cannot eat alone, so food is wasted.

“Could wasted food be used for something else, such as to generate electricity?

“Compost food - every home should have a compost bin or have a special community compost bin for food in streets and towns that anyone can go to.

“The government could make it illegal to waste food.

#### Harmful production methods

Some groups discussed how to mitigate the environmental impacts of production. They raised issues of pollution and soil damage from chemical use, deforestation, palm oil, the impact on wildlife and biodiversity and the emission of greenhouse gases that drive climate change.



##### SOLUTIONS PROPOSED INCLUDE:

- \* Use less chemicals in farming and natural alternatives
- \* More organic produce
- \* Find methods of farming and production that produce less greenhouse gases
- \* Use more green energy in production
- \* Return to more traditional, less energy-intensive methods of farming
- \* Consume less processed food
- \* Create allotments/community food gardens & farms for people to grow food
- \* Implement laws and regulations on harmful farming practices
- \* Implement a charge for carbon emissions in production, processing, manufacturing, wholesale
- \* Tax unsustainable farming methods and subsidise sustainable methods

“Become self-sufficient again. People should grow and farm themselves. Regenerative agriculture is the future.

“We should focus on growing local, sustainable farming practices, leaving wild areas for nature and organic growing.

“We need to stop putting as much chemicals in the food to make the soil better, and the food will have more nutrition as well.

“It costs more money and farmers may not have the money to go sustainable. We could make it more expensive to be an unsustainable farmer. A farmer's guild could meet and make rules about that.

52% of global agricultural land is moderately or severely affected by soil degradation<sup>18</sup>



## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.2 FOOD & OUR LIVING PLANET (continued)

#### Transport and local food

The impact of our globalised diets on the climate through transportation was often discussed. Many felt we should have more localised diets, focused on seasonal food. Some felt they did not have enough access to locally produced food, particularly in the city.



##### SOLUTIONS PROPOSED INCLUDE:

- \* Encourage more uptake of local produce
- \* Educate people on where food comes from and the impact of their choices
- \* Limit how much food is imported
- \* Provide more locally produced food in shops
- \* Tax business on imports

“We need to make food more local.

“Check where your food is coming from. We should cut down on tropical fruit from other countries.

“People want strawberries in winter. So they have to import stuff from other countries to keep up with peoples' demand. But now we just want everything all the time, all year round.

“We should educate people on what they are eating and how their food is made.

“I think what's stopping people being planet friendly is how unaware they are of how far things have to travel, especially when they aren't in season. I think shops should sell more seasonal foods because a lot of people pick out foods in winter not realising how far they have travelled and the impact on the environment from that one product.

“It could be the shops' responsibility to make sure they do try to get local produce. People can't try to buy local produce if it's not in the shops.

“We should buy more food direct from the farmers.

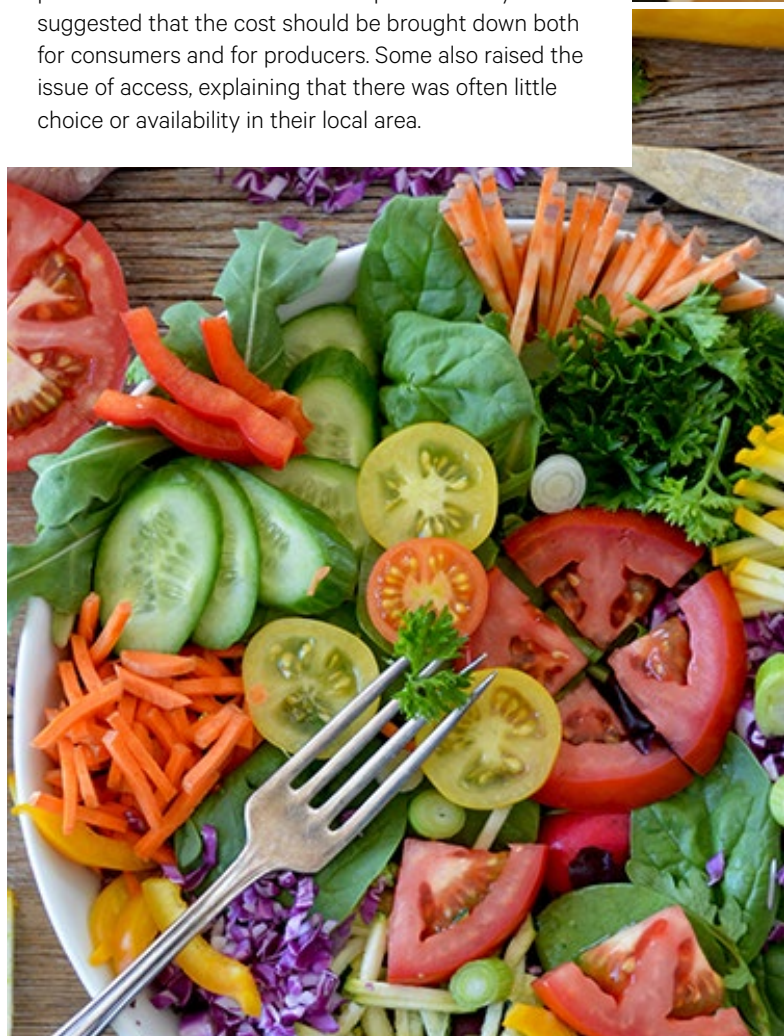
“Companies and businesses should be charged a premium tax for how many miles the food they produce has travelled.

We get 74% of our pears from Europe, despite the fact that pears are easily grown on UK soil<sup>19</sup>



#### Affordability and access

A number of young people pointed out that sustainably produced food was often more expensive. They suggested that the cost should be brought down both for consumers and for producers. Some also raised the issue of access, explaining that there was often little choice or availability in their local area.





## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.2 FOOD & OUR LIVING PLANET (continued)

#### The role of the individual

When the question of responsibility was raised there were differing opinions on the role of the individual to drive change.



“ It's everyone's responsibility - us as human beings must change our ways to help the environment.

“ We need people coming together to make a difference.

“ Consumers have power to control the system, because if we refuse to buy things that don't fit with what we want to see, if we don't buy things which produce greenhouse gases, then they're just going to go out of production because they're making a loss rather than a profit.



“ I don't think it's down to individuals.

“ I know for a fact that we cannot all change the planet. The governments hate each other, they're not going to work together. Some people are stubborn. Apparently in a couple of years it's going to be irreversible. Even if people did try to do it all together, the government wouldn't really agree with it.



“ I think the government can do things, But at the end of the day, they'd only do that if there's an affect from the public. So it would be protest campaigns, and even then it might not be accepted. So we do play a part. Us playing a part will have an effect on the government's decisions.

“ People need to change, in the sense that they need to be more conscious. We need to be more aware about how we're affecting the planet. We buy a snack, eat it and throw the wrapper away. There's bins everywhere on the road. Especially teenagers, it's normal just to throw [the wrapper] away. There need to be more bins and recycling bins. Police, laws, fines could stop people from behaving like this. It's not nice seeing your home area like that with rubbish everywhere. In this area, it's a norm to have rubbish in the road.

## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

# 3.3 FOOD & MONEY



The Low Pay Commission estimates that there were 2 million workers paid at or below the minimum wage in April 2019, around 7% of all UK workers<sup>20</sup>

When it came to discussing food insecurity, the conversation often returned to the high price of healthy food, the low cost of unhealthy foods and the local food environment. In the conversations that ensued, where we considered why many people were unable to afford a healthy diet, inequality and systemic failures were considered the main drivers.

“Sometimes my mum goes hungry so me and my brother can eat.”

“I remember when my dad lost his job and we were on really hard times. We'd have to budget. I remember I was only like 10 or so, and I didn't really understand why my mom couldn't buy me chocolates or crisps. And I'd see other kids eating and I'd be like, 'Mom, why can't I eat that? Why can't I eat that?' Even if you do buy healthy items, you've still got to cook, etc., which means at best you've got to have the utensils already at home and then you're using gas or electricity. It adds up. So, logically it just does actually make sense to buy from outside.”



“In the areas that are more deprived, you'll always see places like the chicken shops which have the cheaper food. And if you go to an area like Harborne, you'll see shops such as Boston Tea Party which are more expensive and the food is healthier, like you can get avocados and poached eggs. You have to look at the situations as well. If you could buy that kind of food for the same price as what's in shops here, I'm sure people would be buying that way more than buying takeaway. But sometimes takeaway works out cheaper than something healthier. It's just eating to survive, basically. It's not eating to be healthy.”

Many participants called for a higher minimum wage, more job opportunities and a better welfare system.

“Basically, we have a welfare system that doesn't work, minimum wage isn't enough to live off. Governments should put more money into this and into communities and food insecurity will go down and things would rise up from there.”

“Bring up the minimum wage so people can afford to live and not have to go to food banks.”

“I think people who don't earn enough from their jobs to eat healthy food should have their wages rise.”

“I think it's the governments fault. They're the ones who build the economy and tell us how much things are and are causing a divide. They're creating a hierarchy, if you removed that line between the two and made everything equal, we would have lot healthier of a country.”

“The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.”

“Large business owners only think about themselves and they don't think about other people. They pay them the cheapest option they can.”

There were a number of practical ideas for government initiatives and solutions, with a few groups describing the concept of a Universal Basic Income.

“I think people should be given money to buy food rather than having it donated to them so they can make their own decisions about what they eat.”

“The Government could give people who are poor some money every week to survive and/or bring them food from foodbanks to help them and keep them safe, also provide them with shelter.”



## 3 WHAT WE FOUND

### 3.3 FOOD & MONEY (continued)

“We can address food insecurity by making healthier food cheaper and making it more ‘cool’ to eat healthy. The government could tackle food insecurity by injecting money into healthy food businesses to make them charge less.

“I think the Government should provide more food for the homeless or people in need and this shouldn't be left to charities, churches and food banks. The government should provide more money for people in need.

There was a strong lack of confidence in the government's inclination and ability to address systemic issues of inequality.

“Everything is in the governments hand these days.

“I don't think the government pay attention to people struggling to afford food.

“The government has power, but they only use it for their own gain.

“The government has a lot of money and power to make those decisions. Those are really the people that decide how Britain can be improved and where the money goes, economically.

“The Government is all about keeping people safe and helping them, but they aren't doing anything about the 800 million people every year that are going hungry. That can be solved because this world has enough food to feed everyone. The governments can set up local banks for wealthy or supportive people to donate and support people in need.

“We want a more socialist society than our current style of government can give us.



### 3 WHAT WE FOUND

## 3.4 PRIORITIES

When asked what their priorities were, a wide variety of areas were named. Between the groups, the top priorities that emerged were:

- **INCREASING THE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF HEALTHY FOOD.**

“Healthy food prices should go down, so you can automatically go to healthy food.”

“Making healthy meals a real option for young children.”

- **CHANGING THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT THROUGH HEALTHIER MENUS AND POSITIVE ADVERTISING.**

“Less fast food adverts. Advertise the idea of healthy eating and the environment over fast food.”

- **EDUCATION IN FOOD, HEALTH AND PLANET.**

“Clear food education in schools, in workplaces, make it a priority.”

“We need to be more educated on food.”

“Teach in school more about long term effects of poor nutrition.”

- **LESS INTENSIVE, GREENER FARMING PRACTICES.**

“We need to stop putting as much chemicals in the food to make soil better and the food will have more nutrition as well.”

“Creating new industries like local small city farms and smart farming, and a vegan production industry. A complete revamp of the system basically.”

- **REDUCING PLASTIC POLLUTION.**

“We have to stop using plastics.”

“Make all food packaging biodegradable & increase plastic taxes.”

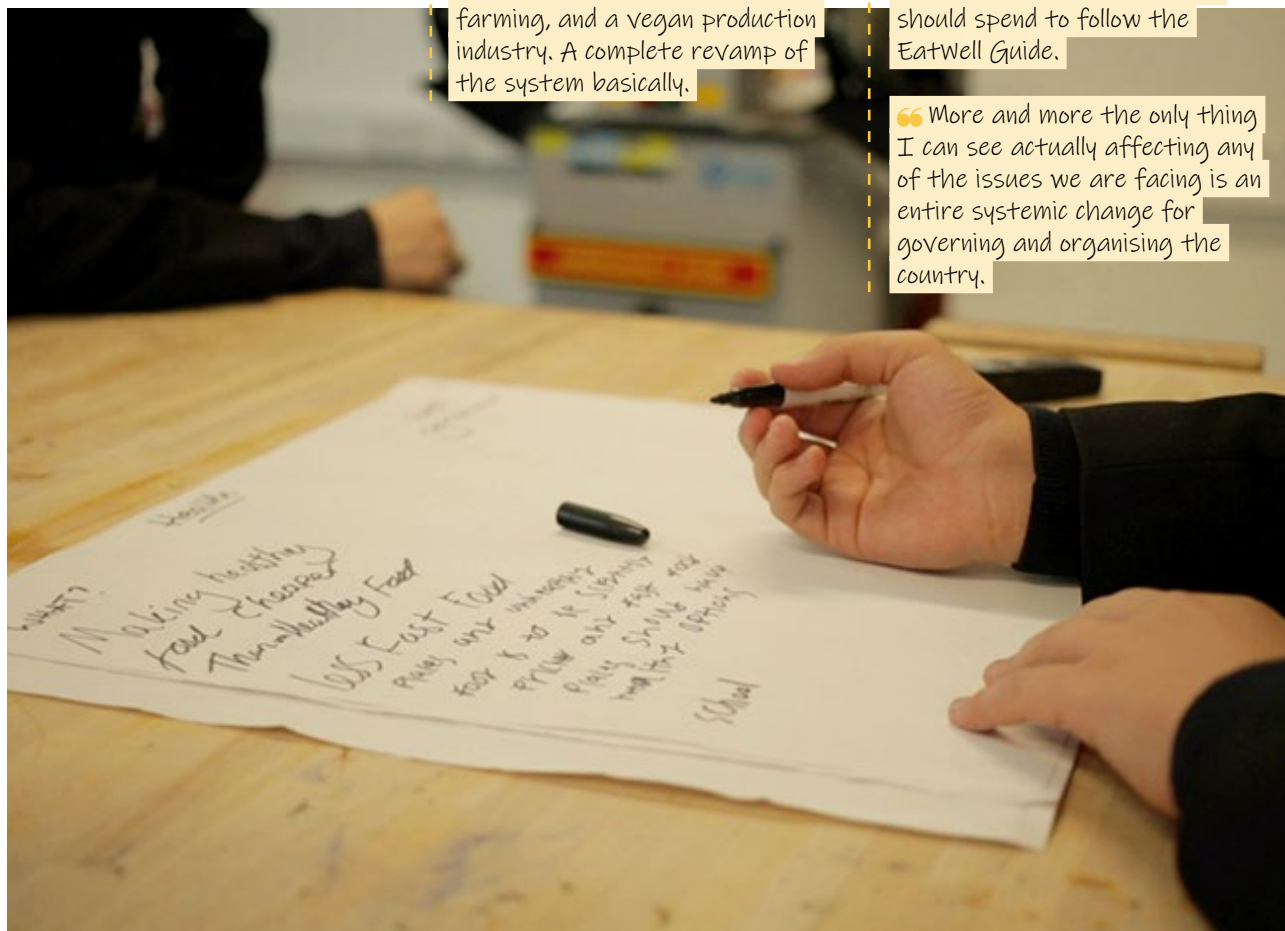
- **EQUALITY AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE.**

“Increasing minimum wage, which allows you to eat healthier.”

“Money for people on Universal Credit so they can improve the healthiness of their children without having to worry about costs.”

“Ensure that money given for benefits meets the price you should spend to follow the EatWell Guide.”

“More and more the only thing I can see actually affecting any of the issues we are facing is an entire systemic change for governing and organising the country.”





# 4 POLICY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## National Event

We held a weekend event with a group of 21 young people who had all participated in the first workshop and had shown a particular enthusiasm for the subject. The event was designed to build upon their knowledge and to allow them to explore the issues, culminating in an opportunity to create and present policy proposals to invited guests. For details on what the workshop entailed, please see the [Appendix](#).

The event was recorded and two podcast episodes were produced, capturing the workshops the young people participated in across both days, including the session in which they presented their policies to the guests. The episodes are available to listen to through this link [Podcast](#).

The young people split into three groups and each group agreed upon three policies or policy areas that they believed to be priorities. They created presentations which were delivered to the guests. From the nine proposals generated,

three focused on education and two on food security. These have been amalgamated to give the following seven recommendations in the written and spoken words of the young people.



**Provide kids with education on food systems, climate change and how to support a better food future.**



This type of education is lacking. It's not part of the current school curriculum.

I should take place in schools and be added to the syllabus to make it accessible to all children.

It should also include take home information for parents.

Kids are the future of consumerism. Providing them with education and knowledge has the biggest likelihood of changing future approaches to food purchases.

Take home information for parents.

“ Our first policy is, I think there is a big lacking issue on education for kids on why food is important. I think that going into more depth in a way that they can relate to it encourages the fact that they are the future of consumers of food. So this is providing them with education and knowledge so they have the most likelihood of change for the future and therefore their future food purchasing.

“ One of the problems about the environment is the fact that people aren't educated. So if they're not educated about the environment, they can't help. If they don't know about it, they can't help and they can't make the right choices and it just won't work. So we need people to be educated. A good way to do that is through advertising.



## 4 POLICY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

(continued)



### Invest in cooking skills for both children and adults in schools and communities

Show children how to make simple and healthy meals that are also cheap (e.g. couscous) so they can begin making them and inspiring their peers and parents.

Curate a healthy relationship between families and good food. Teach that cooking is worth taking the time out to do! Positive feedback loop embedded -> emotional memory surrounding good food.

“ We think that it's important that children get a fair education about food. So they can grow up with it and so they know exactly how to act with food.

“ I think it's great that we teach kids Pythagoras and things like that but let's start teaching serious subjects like health and nutrition, being able to make grown up choices, finances, etc

Educate kids on the importance of healthy food for long term health and wellbeing - that it's a long term health solution!



Create a part of the curriculum to educate about food additions, healthy eating and foods impact on the environment.

Educate throughout school, but increase it as you get older.

Make cookbooks more accessible by using words that people can understand, rather than using professional terms that only a minority of people use. Also, use simpler diagrams rather than the difficult to understand graphics that are used within recipes.

“ This kind of food education could be incorporated like how we have PSHE now. So, it could be consistent throughout the entire school experience, but intensify in terms of content as you grow older.

“ I think it's extremely important for those in sixth form leaving school going into post-18 education where they'd have to cook for themselves. I feel it's very easy for us to choose an easier alternative - junk food or ordering from out - as opposed to making a more time consuming but healthier meal.

“ I think in general, education on healthy foods can cover so many different aspects, it can be consistent and it has potential to be so effective. Despite being small scale, it can have a large-scale effect if carried out correctly and efficiently.

## 4 POLICY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

(continued)



### Food Security & Insecurity

Decrease the price of healthy food and increase the price of unhealthy food.

Idea: A card to allow people with low incomes afford healthy foods (e.g. the card will give them a discount)

Healthy food prices are too high for parents to buy.

“I had the idea of a card which will allow people with a lower income to afford healthy food. So, it might, for example, give them a discount or something along those lines, to encourage them. For it to be effective across all types of backgrounds of people, including people who already have a liveable wage, they might have to spend a certain amount and then they get a discount the next time they spend on healthy food. So then it can be effective through all types of people.”

“Especially in times of coronavirus, people are being paid less and being put on furlough so they can't provide what's best for their kids. So it's better to provide vouchers so people can pay for healthy food instead of going for the cheapest option.”

“I think rich and wealthier people tend to eat healthier food, especially because it's more expensive. So, in this case, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. We have to make sure that children especially have enough food for the future.”

Prices are very important to me as it affects me and many other people. If they are too high people will go for the cheapest option as they will firstly think about their money problems. But if there was vouchers for people on minimum wage or on benefits which would go to healthy food it will help people to eat more healthily. We could ask local MP's who are in charge of deprived areas to help run these schemes.



### Tax on imported food

So that people are aware of the distance their food has travelled, each imported product will show the miles of transport on the packaging so people are aware of imports.

Taxing on the miles a product has travelled

Also, not standing for cheap labour in other countries.

“As a group we decided that importation is a massive problem. We think that this is an important issue as food miles are a massive contributor to our carbon footprint that not many people really notice. If we tax the miles a product has travelled, people are less likely to buy imported foods, meaning more produce is needed from UK businesses and farms, etc. which also means more jobs are created, improving the economy. Also, there is less pollution from transportation.”

“The taxes then could then be spent on creating more sustainable food production in the UK, decreasing our carbon emissions further as well as making the UK self-sufficient.”

“If people are importing from other countries and it is cheaper, even though it has come a further distance, it means that people are not getting paid enough in that foreign country. By not contributing as much to imported produce, it shows we will not stand for cheap and unjust labour.”

“I never really thought until yesterday how far food had travelled.”

## 4 POLICY PROPOSALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

(continued)



### Reduce chemicals in food and drink

If you gave someone a glass of a chemicals they wouldn't drink it. So, why is this ok to put it to them inside a drink?

We don't have enough scientific evidence to prove how they may affect the body long-term. What we do know is they are unnatural & manmade.

“I think we should be reducing the chemicals in foods and especially drinks. If you can't say the name of something, you're not really going to want to ingest it. So why is it OK to put that inside a drink? There are long term effects that it will have on your body that we're just not made aware of. And people don't know that it can actually be more harmful to your body than sugar. So if you're making a sugar-free drink taste the same by adding chemicals, it's not necessarily the answer because it can be just as harmful.”



### Sustainable Food Production

Encourage manufacturers to become more sustainable - eg. pollution permits, reusing seeds, wonky vegetables, tax benefits etc.

Need to incentivise farmers to grow a greater diversity of crops not just one crop as this has a really bad impact on the environment.

Encourage producers to use part of their crop for seeds the next year. If they do this, they get a tax cut.

“We should encourage producers and manufacturers to become more sustainable. For example, they could take a percentage of their crop aside and plant it the next year rather than to get seeds or shoots from elsewhere, which would save them money and create a more of a circular food system rather than a linear one.”

“I feel like in general, you should be as eco-friendly as possible. Make sure you have a good amount of fields and also a meadow and some woodlands as well, not just fields, fields, fields.”

#### Sharon Hodgson MP, Member of Parliament for Washington and Sunderland West said:

“It is always a pleasure to hear directly from young people about their experiences and ideas to improve the lives of themselves and their peers. Afterall, they know best what it is like growing up now. Decision makers have a lot to learn from young people and we should listen to them more often.”

#### Kerry McCarthy MP, Member of Parliament for Bristol East said:

“I thought the quality of the presentations from the young people and the discussion afterwards was

exceptionally good; I'm so pleased they're engaging with these issues, and I hope that their collective voices are listened to by decision makers when it comes to making policy in future.”

#### Jo Gideon MP, Member of Parliament for Stoke on Trent Central

“I was really impressed with the level of engagement and range of topics addressed by the young people at the Youth Event. The National Food Strategy needs to reflect the issues highlighted by young people as they are tomorrow's leaders who will be responsible for delivering the

improvements we all wish to see in our food system, and who will be most affected if we fail to tackle the systemic problems that impact our health and our environment.”

#### Henry Dimbleby – lead author of the National Food Strategy

“Thank you for this fantastic discussion. Your points and your ideas are absolutely fantastic, really sensible economic and political ideas. And really every single thing in the world is changed by a person, not a policy. So get out there, take this energy and change your world and that in the end will lead to change in the world more broadly.”



# 5 CONCLUSIONS

## Education, environment & equality

**T**he clearest call that has emerged from the youth voice is for education. There is strong recognition of the need for empowerment through knowledge. They want to see holistic education on food, including nutrition, environmental impact, provenance, production and healthy cooking skills in schools. This should be embedded in the curriculum from an early age and continued throughout their school career.

This education and empowerment through knowledge should extend beyond school, with information and learning opportunities more widely available to encourage behaviour change in the wider population.

Similarly, they call for more transparency from producers and retailers on the health and environmental impacts of their products to allow the public to make more informed decisions.



Whilst they see education on the environmental impacts of food choices, particularly concerning meat and localised, seasonal diets, as playing a key role in the shift towards sustainable diets, they also want to see decisive action from government bodies and producers to shift to an agricultural system that protects nature and the climate. They see this being achieved through a combination of legislation and financial incentives and disincentives. There is a recognition that these changes must be financially rewarding for the producers.

They also want to see producers, retailers and food outlets enable more environmentally friendly and healthy diets by increasing the options available and doing so at accessible prices.

Equality and food justice are at the heart of the priorities of our young people. They want a healthy diet to be accessible to all. The complexity of achieving this did not go unacknowledged; while some called for healthy food to be cheaper, others appreciated the ramifications this would have on farmers and producers; while some suggested making unhealthy food more expensive, others identified that this would impact low-income communities worse and would likely increase diet inequality and food insecurity. They also recognise the economic drivers behind the proliferation of cheap, unhealthy foods, high in sugar, fat and salt. They call on businesses, >>

“If people are educated from a young age about it and the benefits that it will have, then they're more likely to continue those habits to a later age

“Before this workshop I wasn't really that educated. I knew about it but I didn't think about it regularly. When someone is speaking to you about it, you think about it and what could be changed. We are a young generation and I feel like we have a voice. Not everyone is going to want to change, but there are people who will. We could educate more people.

“If people had more information on how to use waste, how to make healthier food, where they can get healthier food from and the effect it's having on the planet, that would reduce negative effects on the planet. It would, on a large scale, influence everyone's health if they all worked together and had education on food and the environment.

“I think the environment is the most important, because you can work towards whatever you want to work towards, but that will all be over if you do not protect the planet. There's no point of doing things that are going to be destroyed.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

(continued)

governments and local authorities to address the overwhelming availability of unhealthy food in income-deprived communities and find mechanisms to increase the availability and affordability of healthy food.

They called for government funded schemes to allow those most in need of support to access healthier diets, such as young people and low-income families. They again recognised the need for better education to enable people to know how to unlock a healthier diet, even on a tight budget. These proposals would allow young parents to meet their children's nutritional needs and allow them the best chance to learn and thrive.



Ultimately, they want to see a more just society, with wealth inequality addressed. They call for a society in which wages and welfare payments are enough for a person to access a sufficient, healthy diet and highlight the far-reaching impacts that could have for society and the planet. They call for a nation that prioritises the health of people and the planet over profit.

“I think healthier food should be made cheaper because then it will be more accessible for people with lower incomes.

“It's all about the wages. People might be able to afford healthier food and become more healthy. This might be able to be better for the planet as well.

“I think one of the problems is the system. The system is built to make money and not to be healthy or environmentally friendly. It's just built for economic growth.

“Realistically where we are right now, if I decide to change for example, along with my neighbor to the left or my neighbour to the right, that won't really have the necessary effect. Anything's possible. If the entire city of Birmingham decides, "For now we're going to eat carrots, rice, and eat healthily" then yeah, I think that'll definitely change. But it will be quite a lengthy period of time before we actually start to see change that we need. I think cooperation, a multi-agency, multi-organisational cooperation would be needed for this.

So, you've got the education from a young age, you've got slowly phasing out the bad practices, slowly implementing and getting people used to good practices, etc. A list of these practices would only come from research. So, for example, what you're doing with us right now; so, what young people know already, what they don't know, what the priorities are. If any of those priorities need to be changed or shifted or adjusted slightly. Then it can happen.

## Towards a better future, together

Today's young people have arguably done more for the environmental movement in the last few years than anyone else has achieved in the last few decades. Young people are due to inherit a planet that could be over four degrees warmer, threatening the availability and nutritional quality of what we eat, the air we breathe and the communities we live in.

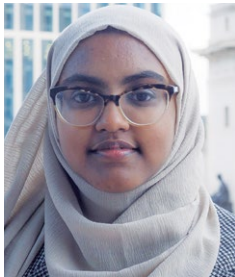
Politically active young people are often infantilised by their elders and their opinions are dismissed as blind optimism. They are often not disengaged with

political issues; but rather disconnected from the system. Often disregarded from decision-making processes, it is unsurprising that young people want to make their voice heard on issues that affect them. A reframing of the political landscape is necessary to take young people seriously and make it easier for them to be more involved in the conversation going forward.

Their voices are powerful and paramount in building a better food future. They deserve to be heard and they deserve change.

“I'd like to tell all of the decision-makers here, that in the coming months, I would really like to see on the news that there has been some change, that you haven't just come along to this session to listen to our ideas. I know that all of you will bring them up in your respective areas, but I would really like you to push for them and make some sort of change that will reach the news.

# CLOSING YOUTH STATEMENTS



**Yumna Hussien**

**16, Chair of the Birmingham Aspiring Youth Council and Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Birmingham**

To change the world, one must change oneself, and in this way, realise we are but the stepping stone of what we are to become.

As I have realised over the past few years, the discussion on social justice spans the food system, the climate crisis, the education system, healthcare system and the systemic racism that still persists today.

The education system does not currently equip us with the skills to live sustainably, despite the fact that the current generation will grow up in a world that is greatly affected by issues such as the

climate crisis, the broken food system and the health system. Depending on demographic factors such as ethnicity, gender, income and class, the negative and positive aspects of the environment are experienced differently. Environmental justice is receiving increasing attention in policy, politics and academia and as young people, we are connected to this fight for an inclusive education system more than ever before.

Food is an essential environmental resource we need to survive. It is intricately connected to health and the environment in many ways. Young people need to be taught more about issues like food insecurity and how we can combat it. We need to be educated on how by transforming

the food system, we will be able to reduce childhood obesity and the health inequalities that exist.

Food injustice is a structural problem that has been cultivated over a number of years. It is about corporate consolidation of power that has monopolised the agriculture industry and encroached on our food consumption. Due to the toxic culture and environment that has been created by fast food companies, our bodies crave food comprised of additives, preservatives, salts and sugars. This then allows these large companies to stay at the top of this power chain, generating even more profit, thus luring in more consumers.

What is stopping us from disrupting the broken systems that are not equipped to serve us?

In the absence of strong leadership, we as young people, have risen up to the challenge.

This is not about 'inspiring the next generation of leaders'-this is about inspiring real change in our youth and building leaders to make a real impact in our communities today. Change can only be achieved by building a community that gives a sense of belonging to all those who feel marginalised.

I am calling on decision makers to listen to our plea, break conventional ideas and bringing radical solutions to problems that exist today.

We are all in this together, fighting for a sustainable world.



**Izzy Phipps**

**13, student and food advocate in County Durham**

Everyone should have access to a balanced diet, but unfortunately that is not the case. Some people can barely afford food at all, and often have to make the decision: Do I eat, or pay the rent this week? No one should have to make this choice.

We are also facing a climate disaster. We are beginning to reach the point of no return. Unfortunately, how and what we eat is a huge factor in us reaching this point. Our systems are outdated and unsustainable. This must be fixed.

biggest killers as well as increasing our risk of being seriously ill from COVID-19. This is also a problem stemming from our diets.

These three issues – money, environment and health – are what this report addresses. The potential policies made by the young people of the nation propose realistic and doable solutions that could revolutionise our (severely outdated) food policy. It hasn't been reviewed since after the war – no wonder it's broken!

However, you have the power to change this. Everyone can make changes to fix these issues, no matter what. On behalf of my generation, I urge all decision makers to listen to us, and hear our voices. One day, we will inherit the world, and every problem it has. So please, take every possible step to create a better world for us and our future, and don't underestimate the power that the National Food Strategy can have.

The third and final issue that faces us is our health. In the UK, there is a colossal obesity problem, and it is now one of the



# APPENDIX

## Methodology for selection of participants

We aimed to engage 500 young people across England. We split the country geographically into five regions: North West, North East, Midlands, South West and South East, aiming to speak with 100 people in each region, across three schools and one youth group.

To ensure a representative sample set we aimed to reflect the demographics of the English population based on the following demographics:

- \* Proportion of the population living in income deprivation<sup>21</sup>
  - ▮ Extrapolated by calculating the percentage of individuals living within each Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- \* Proportion of school children that qualify for Free School Meals<sup>22</sup>
- \* Proportion of the population living in urban and rural settings<sup>23</sup>
- \* Proportion of the population made up of ethnic minorities<sup>24</sup>

These figures were taken from data from the Office for National Statistics and statistics from the Department of Education.

Based on these national figures we identified 15 schools that aligned with our criteria. These were selected from a list of 3447 state-funded secondary schools compiled by PLMR.

Once we had identified 15 schools, contact was made and the workshops were arranged for March 2020. Before we were able to deliver the workshops we were prevented from doing so by the outbreak of COVID-19. The schools were sent notifications of postponement.

In September 2020 we began to rearrange the workshops. Due to the added pressures and stresses the pandemic caused for schools, many no longer felt able to participate. We contacted several hundred schools and youth groups, focusing on those that met our criteria. The COVID-19 pandemic imposed significant delays in the scheduling of the initial schools workshops, and in the willingness of the schools and youth groups to schedule extra-curricular activity with external visitors.

It was a particularly difficult time to be approaching schools and asking for them to accommodate visitors and schedule extra-curricular sessions. We offered all groups the option of both an in person or an online workshop. We had a limited number of positive responses from those we contacted and on a number of occasions workshops were cancelled at the last minute.

As the UK entered a phase of local lockdowns in September and October, followed by the national lockdown in November, we delivered more online sessions and adapted the workshop, developing a toolkit and delivery guide, to offer schools the option to deliver the workshops themselves and return the data to us. This also included creating an online form through which young people could directly submit their thoughts, opinions and ideas.

We acknowledge that our final data set has limitations due to the challenges we faced in delivery, that meant we were not able to be as selective to ensure we met our demographic criteria. However, our final sample set was extremely close to the national demographic on most criteria.

### • NOTES ON DEMOGRAPHIC CALCULATIONS

Percentage calculations for Free School Meal entitlement and ethnic minorities were made using the data for the school as a whole (or youth group where available), not using information from each individual. These percentages were applied to

the number of students that took part in the workshop. Where the data was not available, the group was not included in the calculation.

Similarly, the ages of participants were calculated by obtaining an age

range for the group and assuming there was an even spread of ages across individuals.

This approach was taken as obtaining data for each individual would not have been feasible.

### Schools and Youth Groups Workshop

Through our workshop design and delivery, we provided young people with context by way of a short introduction to the concept of food systems, a few key facts and an introduction to each of the themes. We were careful, however, to lead the workshops in such a way that the young people were able to share their thoughts and opinions openly and without the bias of the facilitator as an influence on what they saw as priorities.

To establish what influences the choices young people make when it comes to food, we designed an activity whereby the young people were presented with eleven possible influences. They were then asked to place a red, orange or green sticker against each category to indicate whether it never, sometimes or always influenced their choice.

After a short introduction to food systems and the presentation of a few key facts to give context to the issues we would be discussing, we discussed 🍷 **Food & Health**. The young people were posed the following three questions and asked to place themselves on a line between 0% and 100%. We recorded their responses.

- \* How important is food to good health?
- \* Do you eat healthily?
- \* Would you like to eat more healthily?

We asked them:

- \* If you would like to eat more healthily, what is stopping you?
- \* What do you think is stopping other people in England from having a healthy diet?
- \* What are some potential solutions to remove these barriers?

We then asked them:

- \* Whose responsibility is it to address the problems and implement the solutions? We asked them to consider whether it was down to individuals, the people around them such as their families or their schools, the businesses that make and sell food or the government.

The young people gathered into small groups to discuss these issues.

After considering health, we discussed 🍷 **Food & Our Living Planet**. We choose to use this phrase to capture all elements of food and life on the planet, from the climate to animals raised for agriculture.

We asked the young people if they were concerned about the environment, what sustainability meant to them, and how they felt their food choices impacted the planet.

We repeated the group discussion format as before, focusing on barriers, solutions and responsibilities around sustainable food choices.

The third discussion focused on 🍷 **Food & Money**. We began the conversation by defining what food insecurity means together. The definition shared with the young people was:

Food insecurity = not having reliable access to enough, affordable, nutritious food.

We asked:

- \* Why do you think we have food insecurity in the UK?
- \* What could be done to address food insecurity now?
- \* What could be done to prevent it in the future?
- \* Are these solutions different?
- \* Whose responsibility is it to address food insecurity?

Finally, we asked the groups to identify one or two issues or solutions they had identified in the workshop that they felt were priorities for action.

During the discussions, groups captured the key points of their conversation on paper and they were also recorded using a portable audio recorder. The audio from the conversations was transcribed. They were collated by topic and categorised into themes, from which we drew out the reoccurring issues and solutions. The direct quotes captured in these conversations form the body of this report.



## Online National Event

The second part of our consultation was designed to allow those young people most passionate about the issues discussed in the school workshops to

- \* appreciate the role they play as advocates for food system change
- \* expand their knowledge of concepts already discussed
- \* explore the issues in the context of a complex, interconnected system
- \* identify and develop their priorities for change
- \* present these priorities to decision-makers in industry and governance

The workshop was delivered over a video conferencing platform in two sessions. The sessions content ran as such:

### DAY ONE

- \* Active citizenship and engaging in democratic processes
  - › Consumer vs citizen
    - › What do these words mean to us
    - › Which word do you relate more with? What would you like to be?
  - › Inspiring young change makers
    - › What is advocacy?
    - › Short clips of young food and climate advocates
  - › How can we change things?
    - › Group discussion of advocacy techniques demonstrated in the videos
    - › Share example of bad practice, how not to engage in a debate
  - › Sharing experience
    - › Who has experience of advocacy? What worked?
  - › Your strengths
    - › Independently reflect and list your own strengths to apply to your work as an advocate
- \* Recap from schools & youth group workshops and introduction to food systems
  - › The story so far
    - › How many young people we spoke to etc
    - › Recap what the National Food Strategy is
  - › Food systems
    - › Introducing food system thinking. Food systems as inputs, activities, people and outputs
    - › Draw a food system for one of three given foods. Share and discuss
    - › Power - Start thinking about who has control over a food system and how they exert it

- \* Problems & Causes, Solutions & Benefits: Integrating our priorities with systems thinking

- › Exploring problems and solutions identified in the school workshops
  - › Select a problem from the pile and consider whether it is a money, planet or health issue. Discuss what may have caused that problem to emerge
  - › Select a solution from the pile and consider what problem it addresses. Discuss what the benefits of that solution could be
- › The exercise highlights the interconnectivity of the failures and opportunities within our food system and how solutions and benefits reinforce each other

### DAY TWO

- \* Hot potato – a quick fire debate on divisive food issues
  - › Everyone needs to eat less meat to protect the climate
  - › Unhealthy food should have high taxes to make it more expensive
- \* Group Work
  - › Groups identify policy proposals and create short presentations
- \* Policy proposals
  - › Guests join and introduce themselves
  - › Groups take turns to present their proposals to the guests
- \* Q&A and guest comments
  - › Guests invited to comment and ask questions
  - › Young people invited to question guests

Whilst each group had a facilitator present to assist, the proposals the young people communicated were entirely their own. As in the first workshops, the conversations were recorded, transcribed and presented with only minor grammatical corrections.

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