



**FOOD
CHAMPION
AWARDS**

Celebrating Local Authority
Good Practice



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The Food Champions

In October 2007, the Agency launched the Food Champion Awards to acknowledge the tremendous work being carried out by local authorities in improving consumer protection in relation to food. No one is better placed to make food safer and healthy eating easier in local communities than the food professionals in local government.

The Food Champion Awards recognise that local authorities are increasingly raising their standards of performance in this area, finding new and inspiring ways of helping people in their communities eat more safely and healthily.

The awards, which complement existing local government awards, including the Beacon Scheme, were developed with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Trading Standards Institute, the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services and the Improvement and Development Agency. All of these bodies were represented on the assessment panel choosing the award winners.

In this first year of the Food Champion Awards, applications were invited from local authorities in England and Wales for work on two themes:

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- Improving local food safety and food standards, and
 - Improving community diet and nutrition.
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Although all award winners will have demonstrated excellence and innovation in delivering positive outcomes for their communities, being a Food Champion doesn't stop with the award itself. Winners will be working with the Agency and other organisations in the coming year to champion their approach and learning to encourage and share good practice.

Winning a Food Champion Award is a major achievement and a clear recognition of the outstanding work done by local authorities in improving food safety and community diet and nutrition in their area. As a Food Champion they will have demonstrated good practice and shown outstanding commitment to making their local community a better place to live.

Examples of the work carried out by the winning local authorities can be found in the following pages.



Food Champion Winner for Food Safety and Food Standards

Westminster City Council

Chinese Business Community Food Projects

The panel was particularly impressed with Westminster's Food Team's collaborative work with the Chinese business community.

Through local partnerships and using the media to highlight good practice, the authority has resolved some long-standing concerns it had with premises in the Chinese sector, in particular in the Chinatown area, the largest Chinatown in Europe. A solution to these problems had not been found through traditional inspection and enforcement approaches.

One successful project was the Chinese Masterchef Competition, launched in 2004 and run annually in partnership with the Chinese Association with sponsorship from several commercial companies.

The community relations developed through Chinese Masterchef have been used to support the Chinatown Hygiene in Partnership (CHiP) project, launched in April 2005 to tackle problem premises. Through a process of consultation and collaboration, Westminster's Food Team identified the practical barriers to compliance for these businesses and tailored their approach to remove these barriers. This initiative has resulted in reduced complaints about Chinatown premises, less enforcement and a reduction in category A (High Risk) premises by 78% by November 2006.

Leslie Ng, Chair and Vice President of London Chinese Chinatown Association, said:

'Westminster City Council Food Team has worked very hard to make these projects a success. Restaurant owners and chefs respect them much more, and barriers have been removed. We can now do so much more in the future by working closer together.'

Food Champion Winner for Food Safety and Food Standards

Birmingham City Council

Food Incident Investigations

As a result of a number of different investigations into food fraud and subsequent complex prosecution cases, officers in the Birmingham City Council Food Safety Team have developed considerable investigative expertise and skills. This was certainly put to the test when contamination of chocolate products manufactured in Birmingham led to a major outbreak of *Salmonella montevideo* food poisoning that resulted in 42 confirmed cases across the UK.

To respond effectively, Birmingham recognised early on that a great deal of information had to be collected and collated urgently to bring the outbreak under control and prevent further cases of illness.

The subsequent investigation was seen by the panel as an excellent example of working effectively with other agencies. This work needed to manage the recall of affected product, prevent further distribution, identify the circumstances leading up to the incident, ensure that appropriate control measures were put in place for the future, contact tracing to identify possible or confirmed cases as well as determining appropriate enforcement action. This all took place against a backdrop of intense media and public interest.

The development of the outbreak is now well documented and resulted in a £1 million fine imposed on the company as a result of the prosecution cases taken by Birmingham and Hereford. Importantly, the handling of the incident and the diligent and systematic way in which officers dealt with the investigation, was seen by the panel as providing good learning points for other local authorities.

Food Champion Winner for Food Safety and Food Standards

Cambridgeshire County Council

EATING Project (Everybody's Access to International Groceries)

Trading standards services are responsible for ensuring businesses comply with labelling legislation, and this can present interesting challenges in shops set up by migrant workers catering predominantly to other migrant workers from the same country.

The EATING project (Everybody's Access To INternational Groceries) is an innovative approach to tackle the issue of poor labelling of food in shops owned and run by migrant workers to fulfil a need among a growing local influx of migrant labour from the EU.

The aim of the project was to ensure compliance with labelling legislation, without adding an unwanted burden to the businesses concerned. The EATING approach uses marketing techniques to enhance business performance, with the ethnic shops being encouraged to target local indigenous people with a marketing strategy. This led to better labelling by default. The project has helped migrant-operated shops to grow beyond their niche market, providing security and prosperity to the businesses. Every shop approached with the EATING concept now has better levels of compliance with food labelling and pricing legislation.

The approach also brought valuable additional community benefits, encouraging local people from different cultural backgrounds to mix in a positive environment helping improve social cohesion. The owners of the businesses receive business marketing training, increasing their skills, and they and the users of the shops are exposed to spoken and written English through the new customers and improved English labelling. The panel was impressed with the way regulators engaged with shop owners in a collaborative way, which led to demonstrably improved outcomes for both parties.

Food Champion Winner for Food Safety and Food Standards

London Borough of Islington

Food Business Action Zones

Islington is a busy and diverse inner London borough. A total of 1884 food businesses fight for space in just under six square miles. More than 15 different languages are spoken by its business owners, and business turnover is extremely rapid. As such the straightforward inspection route was not seen by the authority as appropriate to engage local businesses and assist them in achieving compliance with food-safety legislation.

As a result, Islington has developed a range of targeted strategies for dealing with businesses through the authority's Food Ideas Group, with an emphasis on continuous improvement and ongoing evaluation.

One of the projects focused on by the panel was Islington's Food Action Zone, developed initially in response to a cluster of food poisoning outbreaks in an area of the borough.

The initiative specifically looked at:

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- the robustness of catering businesses' food safety management systems during peak service
 - changing the style of inspections to maximise the observation of practices during peak service
 - determining whether practices adequately controlled food-safety risk.
 - comparing the efficacy of the approach with traditional inspection protocols
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This approach was one of a number of enforcement and education initiatives which resulted in improved levels of compliance in the borough.

Food Champion Winner for Food Safety and Food Standards

London Food Co-ordinating Group on behalf of all London Boroughs

London borough's Safer food, better business / Scores on the Doors projects

The decision to make the London Boroughs' Consortium a Food Champion recognised the way they had successfully co-ordinated and delivered two high-profile projects across London since 2005.

The Safer food, better business (SFBB) initiative involved 28 London authorities and resulted in over 3,000 food businesses receiving face-to-face support and coaching to help improve their food-safety management arrangements.

The success of the SFBB project led to the London Scores on the Doors scheme, involving 30 authorities, which was also supported by the FSA as a Scores on the Doors pilot project.

This scheme, launched in October 2007, uses a website to display food hygiene information for public consumption. More than 80,000 businesses are covered by the scheme, making it the largest single scheme in England. The site has received over 700,000 page views since its launch.

Both of these projects needed close partnership working, including training for relevant staff across the participating authorities. This has led to a more collaborative and consistent approach across London, benefiting businesses and consumers.

The panel was impressed with the processes in place to secure the consistency needed, as well as the participation of so many London boroughs. The evaluation shows that both projects have helped to focus enforcement activity and resources, resulting in significant improvements in business compliance and understanding of food law.

Food Champion Winner for Improving Community Diet and Nutrition

Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council

Food Access Project

This joint project identified areas in the county where residents had problems accessing affordable and nutritious foods. By mapping data held by the council and other bodies – such as information on local transport routes, food retailers, car ownership, and levels of income – the project was able to identify areas with possible food access problems. By combining this with visits to community groups, questionnaires and food diaries, the project was able to build up a good picture of food access issues faced by certain people in the county.

The project showed good collaborative working and analysis to identify real community needs and also was a model easy to update and replicate in other areas. It has not only met specific community needs in relation to food, such as providing dedicated shopping buses, it has also helped address wider social exclusion issues, empowering older people to remain in their homes for longer.

Audrey Skeets, a Cutteslowe resident and wheelchair user and somebody who has benefitted from this approach, said she finds using the 'Red Cross bus' a lifeline as it allows her to visit a large supermarket where she has a wide choice of healthy food, good value and can buy everything under one roof. 'I would really struggle and would find shopping impossible without the Red Cross bus,' she said.

Food Champion Winner for Improving Community Diet and Nutrition

Bristol City Council

Community Food Projects

Bristol City Council won the Food Champion Award for a range of community food projects built into an exciting food strategy. Projects were targeted using robust local evidence to identify areas of need.

Working in partnership with Bristol Primary Care Trust, and others, the council developed local projects including vegetable box schemes, lunch clubs for the over 60s, breakfast clubs and other school initiatives.

One of these projects was Cooking from Scratch, which has been running since 2006 and, because of its success, extended across the city.

Cooking from Scratch is a practical course that teaches and encourages participants to plan, prepare and cook balanced, simple, interesting and affordable meals that they can then repeat at home. The course (six sessions in total), also develops awareness of a balanced diet, food labelling and food hygiene.

Courses have been targeted at areas of the city with the highest health inequalities, and participants are typically teenage groups or young parents. So far, more than 80 have attended a Cooking from Scratch course. Each course has concluded with the participants celebrating their cooking achievements with an event held in the community.

To enable more people to benefit from the courses, Bristol is now offering 'Key Worker Training Courses' in four disadvantaged areas of the city. The aim is to equip at least 50 workers with the necessary skills and resources to run cooking skills and healthy eating sessions / workshops among their own client groups, for example older people, young people, young parents, widowed men, mental health and minority ethnic groups.

Food Champion Winner for Improving Community Diet and Nutrition

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Health Strategy

Rushcliffe's council has worked with its local primary care trust (PCT) to champion healthy eating messages across the district while also targeting health-need hotspots with a range of specific community projects.

One project, 'Rush 4 health', is spearheaded by Rushcliffe Borough Council and Nottingham County teaching PCT to encourage people to follow a balanced diet and get fit. The programme targets schools, kids, businesses and residents, and links also to the routine work by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).

Six schools and 300 pupils have completed Rushcliffe's Mission Possible programme, which the council boasts is an improved version of the original FSA toolkit.

Kids became food safety investigators: swabbing surfaces, checking fridge temperatures, learning about labelling and storage. But, the Agency's Mission Possible was improved locally by Rushcliffe staff with pedometer challenges, analysing lunchboxes, learning about food content, and aiming to change parents' attitudes.

An 'Adopt a Chef' programme brought kids, parents and teachers together with a top chef who demonstrated how to prepare fast, tasty, fresh food. Evaluation shows parents were even inspired to go to college to learn more, changing their and their families eating habits and lifestyles. Rushcliffe is producing a DVD to spread the word to all Rushcliffe schools.

Wendy Saviour, chief executive at Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT said: "This award is a great achievement for our partnership and shows the advantages of working together. There are benefits for everyone in enjoying good food and leading a healthy lifestyle."

Food Champion Winner for Improving Community Diet and Nutrition

Cardiff Council

Food Matters / Bwyd o Bwys project

Cardiff is another council with a range of innovative projects in place to improve knowledge on food and health in its community.

Cardiff's Food Matters / Bwyd o Bwys is one of the projects that has improved the knowledge of food and health and cooking skills, and has helped develop decision-making skills in secondary-school aged children in the city.

It is focused on two disadvantaged areas of Cardiff, Ely and Caerau, with the aim of reducing the risk of heart disease and diet-related cancer in this target group by providing opportunities for young people to access a healthy and affordable diet.

The project began in Summer 2004 following a successful bid for Big Lottery funding facilitated by the Cardiff Health Alliance.

It has adopted a whole school approach to food and nutrition, to encourage pupil involvement in decision making about food in schools.

Its Peer Lead Food and Nutrition Training Programme initiative has already been recognised as a model of good practice in improving knowledge and skills in relation to food and health, and won an AFAL Award (Award for Food Action Locally) in 2006. This programme involved training 13-14 year old students to become food and nutrition peer facilitators who subsequently delivered food and nutrition workshops to students of the same age as well as delivering workshops for year 5 and 6 pupils at the local feeder primary schools.

Food Champion Winner for Improving Community Diet and Nutrition

Manchester City Council

Food Futures

Food Futures was launched in 2004 and is led and managed by Manchester City Council and is the city's response to the need to improve the food eaten in Manchester. Its programme is ambitious and includes partnership activity embracing a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in improving food.

Its goal is to create a culture of good food in the city, based on the shared belief that good food is enjoyable, safe, nutritious, environmentally sustainable, and produced ethically and fairly. It is also based on the view that everyone in Manchester has a right to good food and that no one should have this right denied because of where they live, their income or their background.

The Food Futures strategy embraces a whole food agenda for the city – from improving health, tackling health inequalities and reducing the environmental impact of food, to building sustainable communities and strengthening the local economy.

Manchester Markets is involved by improving access to fresh food in certain parts of the city.

The school catering service has identified health improvement as one of its key priorities, and established nutritional standards well before the Government's recent focus on improving school meals.

Food Futures was seen by the panel as a real force for change in the city.

Food Champion Winner for Improving Community Diet and Nutrition

Huntingdonshire District Council

Hunts for Good Food

The 'Hunts for Good Food' project involves more than two dozen small garden and cookery projects in Huntingdonshire that promote healthy eating by educating local people about food, from soil to plate.

The district is made up of rural and urban areas and developing the community's skills by cooking and writing cookbooks, planting and cultivating healthy produce is seen by the council as a practical way to promote a healthy lifestyle.

The success of the project owes much to the way that Huntingdonshire District Council has worked with other organisations, including community gardeners, local schools, Cambridgeshire ACRE, and Cambridgeshire Community Services (NHS).

Hunts for Good Food has managed to get communities digging, planting, weeding and eating in secondary schools such as Abbey College, Ramsey, and in pre-infant schools such as St John's Little Learners in Huntingdon children's centres in the most deprived areas in the district.

Hunts for Good Food is an excellent example of how the council has been working with the community to improve people's health in relation to food.

For further information or queries in relation to the Award or the local authorities featured in this leaflet, email foodchampion@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

For more information and advice about food, visit the Food Standards Agency website: food.gov.uk

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