



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales



Comisiynydd  
Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol  
Cymru

Future  
Generations  
Commissioner  
for Wales



# Food for Health

Working together for sustainable healthy food systems  
for current and future generations

Event Report Oct 2024

## Foreword by FGO

### Vision

In partnership with the Future Generations Commissioner's office for Wales', we aimed to explore national and local food systems and identify some shared priorities.

### Why this matters

The majority of adults in Wales (61%) are now living with either overweight or obesity at an estimated cost of £3 billion to the economy and services in Wales. The Welsh Government Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Strategy was launched in 2019 to prevent and reduce obesity in Wales. The core focus within the strategy is leadership and enabling change through a systems based approach enabling collaboration, involvement and local action.

People living with overweight or obesity need support from the entire system. Our Whole Systems Approach (WSA) to Healthy Weight (HW) is working to develop a collaborative, integrated approach that will result in environments, communities and organisations that encourage positive lifestyle behaviours that support a healthier weight.... Identify the role of key and wider stakeholders across different parts of the wider system.

The globalised food system that exists today is providing much of our food. However, this system encourages mass production at low costs. Ultra-processed foods now make up over 55% of the average UK diet, and the proportion is higher in young people (66%). There is now a clear relationship between consumption of UPFs and socio-economic disparities. People in areas of deprivation are more likely to have greater access to, and consume more, UPF foods than those in wealthier areas because these foods are seen as cheaper and convenient.

### 1.1 Healthier food

Obesity is a complex problem and there is growing recognition that there are complex inter-relationships between the different aspects in a system that is embedded within our environment.

Good nutritional food is important for energy levels, physical health and cognitive functioning. Ultra-processed foods (UPF) are often high in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and sodium, and lack the essential nutrients that support our growth and development.

However, healthy food is often seen as more expensive than less healthy food; for some there are challenges to accessing healthy food options near where they live or work whether due to transport issues or limited choices. This is resulting in widening health inequalities across our nation, and increasing food insecurities, malnutrition and obesity whilst impacting on our education, and economy, as well as the environment.

## Systems mapping

Systems mapping is a tool within systems working and whole systems approaches, used to gain insights into the wider range of factors that may influence behaviours and also used to identify opportunities for action to influence or change the current complex system.

Factors are linked via arrows to show the relationship of influence between factors. This can be positive or negative in terms of whether the relationships reinforce each other or help to balance out the system.

## Activity

### Food For Health

Around 30 Welsh Government and public health system colleagues came together at a national face to face event in Oct 2024 in Cardiff, to

The event focused on exploring national and local food systems and develop a shared understanding of the range of food system mapping happening across Wales. The aim was to promote discussion and the identify some national and local levers for action.

Following presentations to set the scene from the Future Generations Commissioner's Office and public health, participants were grouped into two large groups.

Using a world café style, the groups reviewed 2 nationally developed causal maps that explored and identified the range of factors that make up our food systems. The processes used to develop the maps were shared and the final maps discussed in terms of the factors identified; whether any items appeared to be missing; and what factors colleagues recognised were currently being taken forward.

These discussions highlighted the different techniques that can be used to produce causal factor maps and the reinforcing and balancing loops within them, plus presented an approach to identifying different levels of power and influence over different factors.

In the afternoon colleagues were taken through a backcasting exercise to identify opportunities for action.

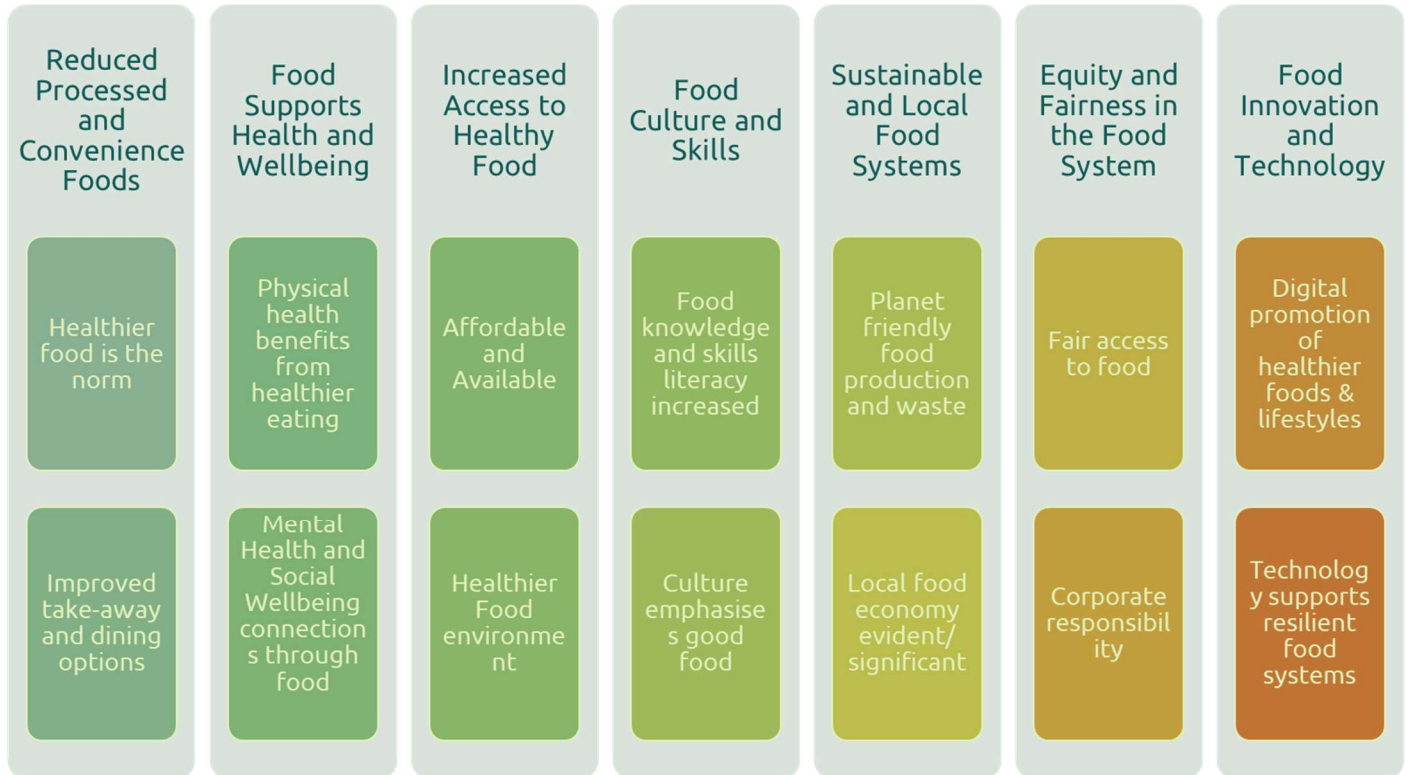
Backcasting is an approach that can be used when addressing a systemic issue. It helps colleagues to identify a normative, preferred future that can also be associated with a set of goals. Although there are several different approaches in the literature, they typically start with the preferred outcomes, in terms of both values and an associated set of goals; come back to the present and look at the initial conditions; then build paths back from the future and forward to an intermediate objective, and then review and align the paths, and also look for leverage points for the whole system across different paths.



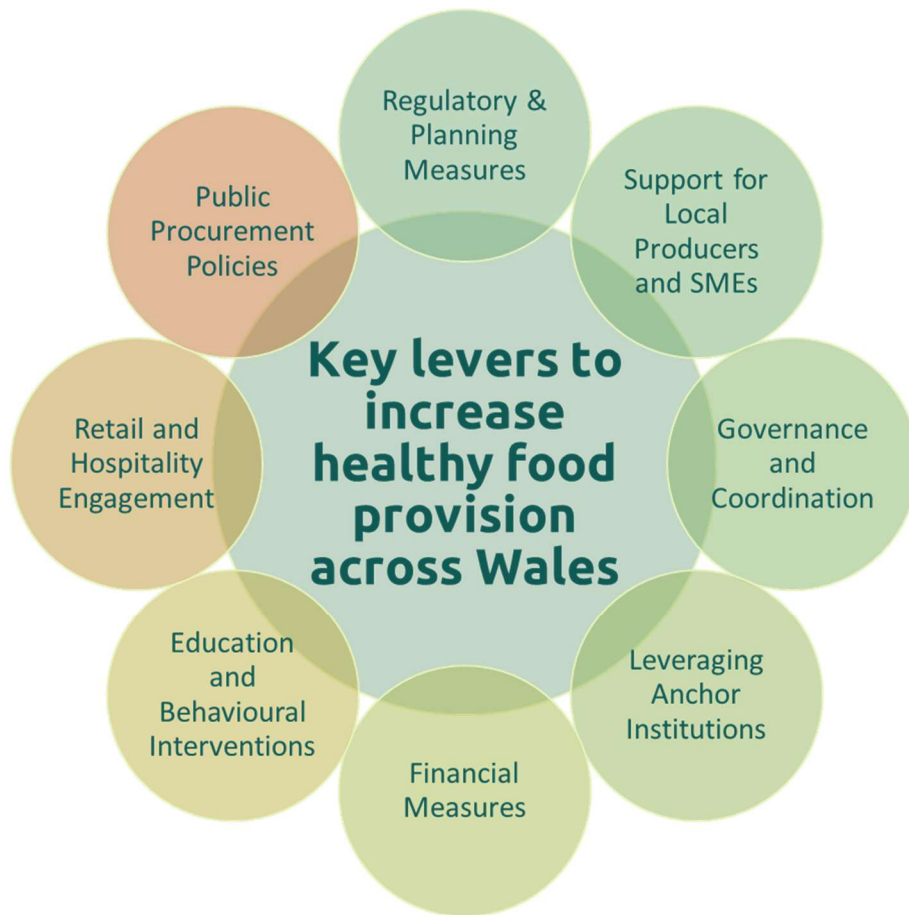
## Outputs Backcasting themes identified

### Vision Themes and Sub-Themes, with associated goals

7 key themes were initially identified through the Backcasting exercise, along with associated goals. These can be seen in more detail in Appendix 2.



Through the backcasting exercise, participants were then able to identify actions needed in the shorter and longer term to enable us to achieve the vision. From this work key system actions or levers were then identified and themed.



## Key Levers to Increase Healthy Food Provision Across Wales

### 1. Public Procurement Policies

- Local Authority and NHS Procurement: Mandate sourcing of healthy, local, and sustainable food in schools, hospitals, and public canteens (e.g., using Welsh Government buying standards for food).
- Food for Life and Similar Standards: Embed healthy eating standards into public sector contracts.
- Short Supply Chains: Prioritise local producers to increase resilience and freshness.

### 2. Regulatory and Planning Measures

- Healthy Food Zoning: Use planning rules to limit the density of fast food outlets, particularly near schools.
- Mandatory Nutritional Standards: Extend standards beyond schools into early years settings, care homes, and workplace canteens.

### 3. Support for Local Producers and SMEs

- Grant Funding and Incentives: Help small and medium producers grow fruit, vegetables, and healthier food options.
- Infrastructure Investment: Invest in distribution hubs, food processing units, and farmers' markets.
- Food Co-ops and Community Growing Projects: Strengthen models that bring

producers closer to consumers.

#### **4. Retail and Hospitality Sector Engagement**

- **Healthy Retail Incentives:** Work with shops, cafes, and restaurants to prioritise healthy options through subsidies or recognition schemes.
- **Voluntary Agreements:** Like the Courtauld Commitment in England — sector-wide pledges on healthier reformulation and promotions.
- **Restriction of Unhealthy Promotions:** Welsh Government could mirror/expand England's upcoming restrictions on high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) promotions.

#### **5. Education and Behavioural Interventions**

- **School Curriculum:** Continue integrating food skills, nutrition, and cooking into education.
- **Community Education:** Run adult cooking and budgeting classes, especially in lower-income areas.
- **Social Marketing Campaigns:** National campaigns to reframe healthy eating as aspirational, affordable, and culturally relevant.

#### **6. Financial Levers**

- **Subsidies on Healthy Foods:** Pilot targeted subsidies for fruit, veg, and other essentials (e.g., via Healthy Start expansion).
- **Taxation on Unhealthy Products:** If powers allow, consider extending sugar tax-style levies on other unhealthy food categories.

#### **7. Governance and Coordination**

- **Food Partnerships:** Support development of Local Food Partnerships (like in Sustainable Food Places network) to coordinate action.
- **National Food Strategy for Wales:** Align all sectors around a food system that is healthy, sustainable, and equitable.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Regular reporting on healthy food availability and consumption at a local and national level.

#### **8. Leveraging Anchor Institutions**

- **Universities, Housing Associations, NHS Trusts:** These big employers and buyers can shift food norms by how they feed and influence people.

Building on the Well-being of Future Generations Act provides an ideal opportunity to support public bodies to work towards some of these levers as part of their long term thinking and planning.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This approach enabled all to identify and share their vision for a healthier food system for all, the current challenges that all experience around the provision of healthy food, and the shorter and longer term opportunities going forward to increase the healthy food offer across Wales.

Through this workshop, a number of levers were identified at national and regional level that system stakeholders can, together, work towards.



## Next steps:

- WG to publish their Food system causal maps and approach used to create them.
- Roll out of technique used to identify opportunities for local action where the power lies locally and the impact of action will be high
- Project plans developed to act collaboratively on levers for change at national and local level
- System engagement to deliver plan
- Evaluation of process and change impact

## Resources:

Chavez-Ugalde, Y et al. [\*Ultra-processed food consumption in UK adolescents: distribution, trends, and sociodemographic correlates using the National Diet and Nutrition Survey 2008/09 to 2018/19\*](#). Eur J Nutr; 17 Jul 2024; DOI: 10.1007/s00394-024-03458-z .

Libuy, N., Church, D., Ploubidis, G., & Fitzsimons, E. (2024). [\*Fast food proximity and weight gain in childhood and adolescence: Evidence from Great Britain\*](#) *Health Economics*, 33(3), 449–465. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.4770>

## Appendices

[Fast food proximity and weight gain in childhood and adolescence: Evidence from Great Britain](#)

## Appendix 1: Food for Health Invitation and Agenda

### Bwyd ar gyfer Iechyd - Cydweithio dros systemau bwyd iach cynaliadwy ar gyfer cenedlaethau'r presennol a'r dyfodol

Mewn partneriaeth â swyddfa Comisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol Cymru, ein nod yw archwilio systemau bwyd cenedlaethol a lleol a nodi rhai blaenoriaethau a rennir.

Erbyn diwedd y sesiwn hon bydd gennym ddealltwriaeth ar y cyd o'r ystod o fapio systemau bwyd sy'n digwydd ledled Cymru. Byddwn wedi nodi rhai ysgogiadau lleol a chenedlaethol ar gyfer gweithredu

### Food For Health - Working together for sustainable healthy food systems for current and future generations

In partnership with the Future Generations Commissioner's office for Wales, we aim to explore national and local food systems and identify some shared priorities.

By the end of this session we will have a shared understanding of the range of food system mapping happening across Wales, and identified some local and national levers for action.

### Agenda

10:00	<i>Cyrraedd, cofrestru, rhwydweithio, lluniaeth</i>	<i>Arrival, registration, networking, refreshments</i>	
10:30	<b>Croeso</b> a Pharatoi'r Olygfa	<b>Welcome</b> and Setting the Scene	Jonathan Tench, FGCO
10:40	<b>Bwyd ar gyfer Iechyd:</b> Yr Achos dros Weithredu	<b>Food for health:</b> The Case for Action	Ilona Johnson, PH
10:55	Caffi'r Byd	World Café	Sophia Bird, PH
11:30	Trafodaeth bwrdd: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yw'r mapiau hyn yn taro deuddeg?</li> <li>Beth sydd ar goll?</li> <li>Beth sydd ar y gweill ar hyn o bryd?</li> </ul>	Table discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do these maps resonate?</li> <li>What is missing?</li> <li>What is currently being worked on?</li> </ul>	Pawb  All
11:50	Egwyl	Break	
12:00	Archwiliad dwfn yn canolbwyntio ar ffactorau achosol ynghylch un rhan o fap er mwyn nodi ysgogiadau ar wahanol lefelau yn y system	Deep Dive focusing on causal factors around one part of a map to identify levers at different levels in the system	Pawb  All
12:45	Cinio	Lunch	
1:30	Datblygu gweledigaeth hirdymor	Long term vision development	Petranka Malcheva, FGCO
2:10	Egwyl	Break	
2:15	Ôl-olygu i nodi cyfleoedd gweithredu	Backcasting to identify opportunities for action	Petranka Malcheva, FGCO
3:20	Myfyrio a'r camau nesaf	Reflection and next steps	Ilona Johnson, PH

## Appendix 2: System vision and subgoals identified

### 1. Health and Wellbeing

- **Physical Health**
    - Reduction in poor health due to unhealthy lifestyle factors.
    - More individuals with a healthy BMI.
    - Diseases lowered through healthy eating (e.g., diabetes, strokes, heart disease).
    - Less chronic ill health and reduced nutritional deficiencies.
  - **Mental Health and Social Wellbeing**
    - More eating together, to reduce loneliness and improve mental health.
    - Food as a communal and cultural connector.
- 

### 2. Access to Healthy Food

- **Affordability and Availability**
    - Increased access to affordable and good food.
    - Healthy options available and visible in public spaces.
    - Equality in food access regardless of location.
    - Fresh food (local or frozen) easily identified and valued.
    - Shops and markets selling local produce in all areas, especially deprived areas.
  - **Food Environment**
    - Reduced availability of HFSS (high-fat, sugar, and salt) products.
    - Nudges towards unhealthy food are eliminated.
    - Varied food choices available on the high street.
- 

### 3. Food Culture and Skills

- **Education and Skills**
    - Everyone equipped with growing, cooking, and preparing skills.
    - All school leavers are food and nutrition literate by age 16.
    - People have the appropriate resources to prepare healthy meals at home or in schools.
  - **Cultural Norms**
    - Healthy eating and cooking from fresh ingredients is normal
    - Society values real food, its origins, and preparation.
    - Our cultural relationship with food emphasizes good food, enjoyment and social connection.
- 

### 4. Sustainable and Local Food Systems

- **Environmental Sustainability**
    - Environmentally friendly food production and sustainable practices are the norm.
-



- There is reduced food waste in businesses and households.
  - It is normal to eating seasonal and plant-based foods within planetary limits.
  - Our food system is resilient to shocks and climate-friendly.
  - **Local Food Economy**
    - Food grown and distributed locally.
    - Locally sourced goods are readily available on high streets and in communities.
    - Revival of traditional shopping practices (e.g., local markets, community settings).
- 

## 5. Equity and Fairness in the Food System

- **Fair Food Access**
    - Everyone can afford a diet that supports health.
    - A fair and just food system that supports community and cultural connections.
  - **Corporate Responsibility**
    - Power has shifted away from large food corporations.
    - Corporate social responsibility for healthy, sustainable choices is promoted.
- 

## 6. Reduced Processed and Convenience Foods

- **Healthy Food as the Norm**
    - Rare use of convenience foods and ultra-processed foods in homes.
    - Cooking and eating fresh, balanced meals encouraged.
    - Healthy snacks (e.g., nuts and fruits) replacing HFSS products.
  - **Improved Takeaway and Dining Options**
    - Healthier takeaway meals.
    - Promotion of home-cooked meals over pre-packaged or fast food.
- 

## 7. Food Innovation and Technology

- **Digital Support**
  - Online platforms promoting healthy food choices and lifestyles.
  - Recipes and global menus encouraging diverse, sustainable food practices.
- **Technological Integration**
  - Food systems supported by resilient and sustainable technology solutions.



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

Gweithio gyda'n gilydd  
i greu Cymru iachach

Working together  
for a healthier Wales