GLAINTELLIGENCE

Draft London Food Strategy Public Consultation

Summary report

August 2018

MAYOR OF LONDON

THE DRAFT LONDON FOOD STRATEGY

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD FOR LONDON
DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

MAYOR OF LONDON

Introduction

This report contains summary findings from the public consultation on the draft London Food Strategy. It draws together data from both quantitative and qualitative research conducted throughout the consultation period with members of the public, in addition to relevant findings from recent representative polling conducted prior to the consultation opening. Detailed reports supporting this summary are available from the Greater London Authority Opinion Research and Statistics team and hosted on the London Datastore.

This report does not gather together findings from the stakeholder consultation, which has been reported separately.

This report is structured according as follows, with research findings for each major section of the draft London Food Strategy (some are combined for clarity of findings), as defined below:

1. Proposed ban on adverts for unhealthy food and drink on the Transport for London estate
2. Food at home and eating out
3. Food for children
4. Food growing, community gardens and urban farming
5. Food for the environment

Each themed section includes:

1) Detailed summary of quantitative findings. This includes a London representative survey, a self-selecting consultation survey conducted through Talk London, and a comparison of any major differences in the findings between these two surveys.

2) Detailed summary of qualitative findings, incorporating where relevant:
   - Focus group and interview activity
   - Discussions on Talk London
   - Summary of email/letter correspondence from members of the public

Methodology

The public consultation on the draft London Food Strategy was open from 11 May 2018 and 5 July 2018.

Table 1: Summary of research and consultation methods for the draft London Food Strategy consultation	
Quantitative Research: Surveys were conducted with a representative sample of Londoners and were posted on the Talk London consultation page.	
Representative polling	**Talk London Community**
• Online survey carried out between 8th and 11th May 2018 with a representative sample of 1,020 Londoners aged 18+ years old. Additional representative polling Additionally, findings from recent representative polling conducted prior to the consultation were provided to the policy team, where relevant to sections of the strategy. These include: • Childhood obesity and possible policy interventions, 20th-23rd February 2018, with a representative sample of 1,000 Londoners aged 18+ years old • Food behaviours and perceptions of interventions to improve healthy eating in London, 24th-27th July 2017, with a representative sample of 1,000 Londoners aged 18+ years old.	• Online survey open to all members of the public aged 18+ years old. • Posted on Talk London between 11th May and 5th July 2018. • The survey included the questions asked in representative polling, plus other questions to cover the full scope of London Food Strategy. • 1,519 individuals responded to this survey. • The sample has not been weighted and is therefore not representative of the London population. • The findings from this survey have been compared against the findings from representative polling, and key differences have been highlighted in the consultation reports.
Qualitative Research: Qualitative research was conducted to understand views in more depth in relation to specific topics. The following methods were used to gather qualitative responses to the strategy.	
Qualitative research on Londoners' attitudes and behaviours towards food purchasing and consumption: Four focus groups (30 participants in total). All participants were in C1C2DE[1] social grade. Spread of age, gender and outer vs inner London. Minimum of 3 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicy (BAME) participants per group.	

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[1] ABC1 social grades include senior managers, professional, junior managerial, administrative occupations. C1C2DE social grades include skilled manual, unskilled manual occupations and unemployed. These groupings are typically used by social researchers as measures of socio-economic status

- Group 1: 30-45 years old, female, parents of children under-18, inner London
- Group 2: 30-45 years old, male, parents of children under-18, outer London
- Group 3: 19-25 years old, mixed gender, no children, inner London
- Group 4: 19-25 years old, mixed gender, no children, outer London

Online qualitative research (discussion threads)

Londoners were also invited to take part in discussion threads on Talk London. There were 7 separate discussions, comprising 739 comments, across a variety of topics in the Food Strategy. These were open to all Londoners to participate. They are:

- [Unhealthy food adverts](#) (93 comments)
- [Choosing what to eat](#) (152 comments)
- [Food waste and recycling](#) (237 comments)
- [Growing your own food](#) (43 comments)
- [A healthy workspace](#) (59 comments)
- [Food choices for children](#) (55 comments)
- [Buying food](#) (100 comments)

- Key quotes from these discussions have been included in this report. Fuller analysis is available on the London Datastore.

Email correspondence from individuals

- The GLA received a total of 51 emails or letters from members of the public writing in to express specific feedback on the strategy.
- A total of 592 emails and letters were received by members of the public relating to the proposed ban on advertising junk food on the TfL estate.
- Analysis of this correspondence is included below, in the relevant themed sections.
- Full transcripts of this correspondence have been provided to the Food team.

1. Proposed restrictions on advertising of food and drink that is not healthy on the TfL estate

This section summarises findings in relation to the proposed restrictions on junk food advertising on the Transport for London estate.

Summary of quantitative findings

There is majority support among a representative sample of the population. 52% of Londoners support a ban on all adverts for unhealthy food and drink on the TfL estate. 20% oppose a ban and 29% are undecided.

Highest support comes from older Londoners (60% for those over 60, 64% for those who are retired) and those without children (56%). Remain voters prefer this ban to leave voters, although leave voters do still support overall (42% support to 26% oppose).

Men are slightly more likely to oppose and those under 25 are much more likely to say that they don't know. Tube and bus commuters support this policy as much as all Londoners, and those without children under 18 are slightly more supportive (56%, compared to 52% of all Londoners).

Table 3.10: Comparison between Talk London respondents and representative polling: Ban on advertising unhealthy food and drink on the TfL estate

• Talk London respondents are more supportive of the ban compared to the representative sample of Londoners.
    o 82% in support vs 52% among the representative sample.
    o 9% oppose, compared to 20% of the representative sample.
    o 9% are undecided, compared to 29% among the representative sample.

Summary of views based on qualitative research

Despite overwhelming support for a ban from the quantitative research, focus groups revealed mixed views of the effectiveness of banning advertising of unhealthy food and drink, whether on the Transport for London network or other settings (e.g. sponsorship of events).

> *"At the end of the day, people are still going to go to McDonalds whether they see it on TV or not."* [Focus group participant]

Talk London respondents were more optimistic towards the ban, noting that advertising must influence eating behaviours if food companies are willing to spend so much money on it.

> *"It's a good idea and one that I wholeheartedly support. I get pressure from my children, to buy unhealthy food that they have seen advertised on*

children's channels, so I don't think that it is unreasonable to assume that they are influenced by advertising at tube stations and on buses." [Talk London respondent]

Despite broad anti-food industry sentiment and concerns about the intentions of companies selling and advertising unhealthy food and drink, some participants did however believe that such businesses play an important role in supporting grassroots sport, particularly through sponsorship or other funding. They implied that banning unhealthy food and drink advertising could therefore have adverse impacts on healthy lifestyles.

2. Food at home and eating out

2.1 Summary of quantitative findings

Table X: Talk London survey findings (non-representative) on food at home and eating out
• 46% of Talk London respondents eat ready meals, pre-packaged meals or takeaways at least once a week. • 'Food that is healthy' is the most important consideration when deciding which food to buy, followed by 'how much the food costs. Talk London respondents also think that cheaper healthy food options on London's high streets will have the greatest impact on improving healthy eating in London.

2.2 Summary of qualitative findings

2.2.1 Food at home

Many focus group participants see cooking as a chore and lack the time to cook good meals, especially if work long hours or have children. As such, they prioritise meals that are quick, easy, and convenient. A couple of Talk London respondents think it is only easy to eat healthy if a partner is at home to cook for them.

Younger male participants, in particular, find cooking too much of a hassle and often eat fast food or takeaway. Reasons for this include cheap price and convenience of fast food, and lack of inspiration and skills for preparing food and cooking at home.

Many participants have go-to meals that they eat as a matter of routine, which results in a lack of variety in the food and meal choices. Meals often involve ready-meals, prepared food, or frozen oven food, with few regularly cooking from scratch. The main exception was those brought up with a strong food and cooking culture at home, e.g. BAME women. Female participants are responsible for the majority of food shopping, food budgeting and cooking in their household.

A key challenge for parents (reported primarily from female participants) is cooking meals that the whole family will eat, due to different tastes and dietary restrictions among family members. Some said they have to cook multiple meals for family members but these are often simple meals, ready meals, or oven food as they don't have the time to make something better for each person. As a result, the nutritional value and quality are compromised. The priority among parents is to ensure all of the family are fed, more-so than serving healthy and nutritious food.

2.2.2 Food shopping

Most focus group participants said they buy their food from wherever is closest (to home or on the way home), which for many is a convenience store which can have a limited selection of healthy and fresh food. Participants acknowledge that supermarkets have a greater selection and think they can also be cheaper than shopping at convenience stores, but use of supermarkets is limited to those participants who live close to one or have a car.

Some prefer buying their food from local markets, greengrocers, fishmonger or butchers, with the benefits being that food is better quality and in some cases cheaper. Many would like to be able to shop more at these places but lack of time and busy daily routine means these are not convenient as the preference is to do all the shopping at one place. In the case of greengrocers, some think there has been a decline in the number of these which means they are no longer an option for them. Talk London respondents also talked about shopping at greengrocers and said that some of those that have remained near them have had to increase their prices to compete with supermarkets and are now too expensive.

Some focus group participants had tried online food shopping for convenience, but a few have stopped this as items are not as fresh (e.g. given items that are close to use-by dates) and this method of shopping is less reliable (e.g. late deliveries or items being substituted).

2.2.3 Cost and availability of good food

Focus groups revealed that cost is one of the most important factors when buying food and a barrier to eating healthy. There was agreement that eating healthy is more expensive, with a big difference between the price of healthy vs. less healthy food, especially fresh fruit, veg and fish. Participants want there to be more affordable healthy food options for Londoners, including healthy fast food. This was also shared by many Talk London respondents.

> *"The prices are always going up, especially for fresh food. The healthiest seems to cost more I find." [Focus group participant]*

Others believed it is possible to eat cheap healthy food, though this requires more motivation and time for preparation and cooking.

Younger participants in particular appeared more price-sensitive, whereas more of the older participants parents appeared to be more willing to pay for better quality (and sometimes healthier) food e.g. organic chicken vs. chicken 'filled with water'.

Many participants try to cut down on food costs through a variety of measures including meal planning, buying frozen food, looking out for offers, buying in bulk, doing large (weekly/ fortnightly) shops, or avoiding supermarkets and buying cheaper items from markets, butchers or grocers. However, there are barriers to these including time and convenience and practical barriers (e.g. not having a car, freezer, or storage space at home).

2.2.4 Access to bad food

Although some focus group participants said that it can be harder to access healthy food, most think it is accessible near them – participants do not think they are necessarily living in 'food deserts'. Some respondents went as far to say there is lots of healthy food near them and that it is easier to find good food in London than other parts of the country.

A key insight from the focus groups was that the main issue isn't that it is too hard to access good food – it is that it is too easy to access bad food. Many participants think there is an abundance of convenient and cheap fast food in shops and on high streets, and that the biggest challenge is overcoming the bad food before getting to the good food. Some attributed this to

the decline in greengrocers and growth of convenience stores meaning that most people shop where there is some healthy food but also plenty of bad food.

"If only there was more quick ways to get healthy food. I feel like there's so many options for bad food, but no healthy fast food." [Focus group participant]

2.2.5 Eating in the workplace

Most focus group participants reported that lunch is a less healthy meal for them. Some participants bring in food from home (which is usually healthier and cheaper) but most buy food out during the work day. As many said they have short lunch breaks or have to eat their lunch on-the-go, the priority here is a quick and cheap lunch which is often fast food or sandwiches. Some said they often buy meal deals as they are good value for money, but they also include an unhealthy snack and drink.

"When I bring my own food, I think it's healthy because it's cooked food from the night before. Other than that, I get a sandwich but if I get a sandwich I'll have crisps and probably a fizzy drink or sugary drink so I know that it's not great." [Focus group participant]

2.2.6 Eating out

Most focus group participants reported that it is harder to eat healthy when they are out compared to when they are at home. Although there is a lot of variety in terms of cuisines, there are few affordable healthy places to eat out. Many participants are instead limited to fast food as this is usually the only affordable and most dominant option near to where they live. These views were raised by many Talk London respondents as well.

"If you're out and you're hungry, you're like, what am I going to eat that's healthy?" [Focus group participant]

Many participants try to eat healthily at home during the week (Monday to Thursday), and then indulge on the weekend as a treat (for themselves or family) or to meet friends. Some of these participants said they are therefore influenced or constrained by what their families or friends want. Eating out is particularly expensive for families, so participants with children said they often choose places that are cheap or have deals for children. Participants who said they eat out with friend like going to places that are lively. In both cases, participants reported that they are usually restricted to less healthy food.

3. Food for children

3.1 Summary of quantitative findings

There is majority support for giving local authorities the power to prevent new hot food takeaways from opening near schools, among a representative sample of the population. 56% of Londoners support this, 14% oppose, and 30% either don't know or neither support nor oppose. Highest support comes from older Londoners (61% for those who are 50-64 and 60% for those who are over 60, compared to 43% of those who are 18-24). Higher social grade Londoners are also more likely to support this (59% of ABC1 Londoners, compared to 52% of C2DE Londoners).

Table X: Comparison between Talk London respondents and representative polling on topics relating to food and children:
'Good food in public places like schools, hospitals, leisure centres and in other community spaces' was listed as the 2nd out of 6 most important theme in the draft London Food Strategy.   - Respondents to the Talk London survey were asked who they think is mainly responsible for tackling childhood obesity in London. The most common selection was the food and drinks industry (24%), followed by the government (20%) and schools and nurseries (13%). Only 5% thinks the Mayor of London is mostly responsible.   - There is more support for giving local authorities the power to prevent new hot food takeaways from opening near schools among Talk London respondents (75% compared to 56% of the representative London sample).   - However, there are equal proportions of respondents who oppose (12% Talk London compared to 14% of the representative sample)

3.2   Summary of qualitative findings

3.2.1 Food in schools

Many focus groups participants talked about the quality of provision of food at schools. Whereas some older focus group participants think the quality of meals has improved, most participants think there is too much unhealthy food and want schools to stop serving junk food and sugary drinks. Respondents also questioned why schools serve dessert at lunch, preferring that they serve fruit or yoghurt instead.

Other issues raised include banning cake sales in schools and concerns about the level of pesticides and chemicals in school food. Some also want schools to serve a greater variety of food including fermented foods. A few compared school meals in London/UK with those served in France and other countries, which are seen to be healthier and better quality.

Many focus groups participants want better and updated education about food and healthy eating at school, including more education on food types and ingredients so children are better able to understand what they are eating as well as more education on the impact of food on physical health, mental health, mood, sleep, and the environment. However, reiterating previous

points, some focus group participants see no point educating children about food at school if they are then able to buy unhealthy food at the canteen or in vending machines.

3.2.2 Fast food near schools

Participants in all focus groups were concerned about the availability and consumption of fast food among schoolchildren and were concerned about the number of fast food outlets near schools. There was strong support for the ban of new fast food outlets opening within 400m of schools. Some Talk London respondents also suggested a ban of food fast food outlets near playgrounds, as well as a ban on ice cream vans outside schools and playgrounds.

However, after reflection, focus groups participants did not think banning new fast food outlets from opening up near schools will solve the problem and stop schoolchildren eating fast food as there are already too many near schools – this intervention is seen as 'too little too late'.

Instead, some thought the objective should be to dissuade schoolchildren from buying fast food in the first place or restrict those outlets that are already operating. However, some participants acknowledged that fast food is the only affordable option for children from poor families and that there needs to be more healthy alternatives for children, not impose bans on existing food.

3.2.3 Responsibility of parents

In addition to schools, many respondents think parents are responsible for the diet of their children and should be targeted as well as schools – they think the problem should be tackled at both school and home, and that for children to eat healthy parents need to eat healthy as well and set an example. Many parents said they are strict with what they allow their children to eat and drink, avoiding fast food or sweetened food/drinks (which are only given on special occasions or one-off) and instead substituting bad food for good food (e.g. water instead of juice or fruit instead of sweets).

Some respondents blamed parents for taking their children to fast food places or serving junk food at home, and not being strict enough with their children's diets. Others defended parents who are working long hours and are low-paid so have to rely on bad food, and think it is easier for parents to eat healthy and make their children eat healthy if they are affluent. A couple of respondents want schools to discourage parents from bringing in unhealthy food for children when collecting them from school.

4. Food growing, community gardens and urban farming

5.1 Summary of quantitative findings

Table X: Talk London survey findings (non-representative) related to food growing, community gardens and urban farming
'Good food growing, community gardens and urban farming' was ranked the least important of the 6 themes in the draft London Food Strategy.   27% of Talk London respondents grow their own food, and a further 19% plan to do so. 5% are in a local community food growing project, and a further 10% plan to do this.

5.2 Summary of qualitative findings

Respondents reported growing a diverse range of food themselves: tomatoes, beans, courgettes, spinach, herbs, strawberries, cherries, rhubarb, potatoes, berries, plums and apple trees. None reported rearing animals for meat or eggs. Some respondents highlighted benefits of urban growing and community growing, e.g. impact on healthy and benefits for communities. One respondent runs a community growing project on their estate, organising corporate days to generate income through a local charity broker.

> *"I like the idea of urban garden spaces where residents can work together growing & using/selling their produce. Would encourage people to think with a 'more healthy' hat on & possibly take responsibility themselves to eat better." [Talk London respondent]*

However, some barriers existing for Londoners to grow their own food at home. A key barrier is lack of space, for those respondents without gardens. However, for other respondents it is still possible to grow in window boxes and balconies. Time was mentioned as another barrier, as respondents said that growing food at home and maintaining a garden is a considerable time commitment that many Londoners cannot meet. Growing and using one's own food was described as a whole way of life, organising holidays and free time around seasons and micro-management of vegetable beds to prevent invasion by birds/foxes. Physical capability and disability was also mentioned as a limiting factor for growing at home.

> *"Gardening is time-consuming and hard work. I am sad to see so many of my neighbours paving over their gardens. A young couple moved in next door and they both work so I offered to cut their back lawn, mainly because I was worried they would pave it. Working hours are very long these days and young people with jobs and children don't have time for vegetable growing." [Talk London respondent]*

The availability of allotments is a concern for respondents, specifically long waiting lists to apply and concerns that they are threatened by closure. There is also a perception among some that the allocation process is not transparent. Those that have allotments would like to see more allotments in London or at the very least protect the ones that exist already, either in the London Plan or otherwise. One suggested solution included outer London boroughs accepting more tenants from inner London areas where provision is most stretched. A website called Lend & Tend was also mentioned, which links people who have gardens and can't manage them with people who want a space to grow their own produce and flowers. Lastly, schools were identified as a means through which growing your own food could be encouraged.

5. Food for the environment

5.1 Summary of quantitative findings

<table>
<tr><td>Table X: Talk London survey findings (non-representative) related to food and the environment</td></tr>
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- 'Good food for the environment – ensuring the food industry has a positive environmental impact' was listed as the 3rd out of 6 most important theme in the draft London Food Strategy.
- 'Impact on the environment', 'food from ethical sources', and 'food from local sources' were selected as the 3rd, 4th and 5th most important considerations respectively when deciding which food to buy from shops or supermarkets. 'Food that is healthy' is the most important consideration, with 75% of respondents to the Talk London survey selecting this.
- 78% of Talk London respondents currently try to reduce and recycle their food waste.

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5.2 Summary of qualitative findings

Focus groups explored Londoners' views on environmentally-friendly and sustainable food (e.g. organic, free range, Fair-Trade food). Participants saw benefits in buying and eating environmentally-friendly and sustainable food, with the key ones being that they have better taste, quality, and health benefits (though there was some debate as to how much healthier sustainable food is). This was mostly raised when discussing organic food. Some respondents were concerned with the level of pesticides in food, which is an additional reason why they choose organic food.

> *"I try to eat organic non- genetically modified food and drinks, less dairy, little meat, mainly veg, fruit, fish, grains, cereal…. I choose organic food and milk because I believe it is healthier to eat products that have not been sprayed with pesticides." [Talk London respondent]*

However, from discussions focus group participants generally appeared to care more about the health impacts of food and less about the environmental impacts. For example, in focus groups, people talked about the use of pesticides but mostly mentioned the negative impact of pesticides on human health, not the consequences of pesticides entering rivers and damaging wildlife. A few mentioned other environmental concerns, including the carbon footprint of transporting food and deforestation to produce meat.

While some respondents care about animal welfare and how ethical food is (for example whether it is Fair Trade or free range), focus group participants overall do not think about this much when buying food. Even so, some do associate free range as being better quality and healthier. Focus group participants were not that concerned about whether food is sourced in the UK or not, though they associate more local food as being fresher and therefore better. There were some concerns about non-EU food, particularly if it is cheap, mostly around distrust towards food content and labelling.

5.2.1 Plastic packaging

The main environmental concern among focus group participants was the use of plastics and the impact plastic has on the environment and wildlife (especially oceans, which some said they have become more aware of recently). As mentioned, this was a key consideration when buying food and a key complaint about using supermarkets. Reducing the use of plastics and buying items with less packaging appeared more common among focus group participants than other sustainable behaviours (e.g. buying organic or Fairtrade food).

"Recently there's a lot of stuff around the plastic in the sea and that really is disturbing." [Focus group participant]

Supermarkets and fast food restaurants are seen as the culprits when it comes to plastic waste. Many respondents think that supermarkets and fast-food outlets should reduce or eliminate all non-recyclable packaging on their products. Some also want facilities within supermarkets where customers can remove excess packaging, return plastic for reuse or bring re-usable containers to stock up on certain items (e.g. cereals, rice, pasta).

5.2.2 Barriers to buying sustainable food

While some respondents care about buying sustainable food, with many actively buying and prioritising sustainable food, this was not a priority among focus group participants overall. Whilst they see the benefits, they highlighted barriers to buying sustainable food. The main barrier is price, with many participants unable to afford more sustainable food or not thinking it is worth the extra cost. Availability, especially in convenience stores where organic ranges for examples can be limited, was also raised as a barrier. Lastly, some mentioned that organic food has shorter shelve lives which leads to more domestic food waste.

"I've got no problem with buying organic or fair trade or sustainable food if the price is right." [Focus group participant]

5.2.3 Food waste and recycling

Londoners think about the environment or try to do their best when making food choices, with most recycling packaging or food waste where possible. Others buy loose fruit or veg from local supermarkets to stay away from purchasing food in non-recyclable packaging. When it comes to food waste, some keep leftover food to be used the next day, whereas others put it in the food waste bin to be collected.

Many respondents believe that there should be a city-wide composting scheme available. It was noted that some boroughs do not have a compost service in-place. It is also difficult for those who live in flats with a shared communal garden. Some have had issues where bins have not been emptied, leaving them smelly, over-flowing and easily accessible to foxes.

There is also a lack of trust that local authorities are recycling waste correctly.