



Evaluation of Food for Life

2013-15

Summary and Synthesis Report

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Executive Summary

This is the final report of the phase two evaluation of Food for Life undertaken by the University of the West of England, Bristol 2013-15.

The research encompassed five workstreams:

- 1. Long term impacts and durability** - understanding how and why the Food for Life approach is embedded in schools for the medium to long-term.
- 2. Review of local commissions** - understanding strategic support for Food for Life, and recommending monitoring and evaluation systems.
- 3. Cross sectional study of pupils' diets in Food for Life local commissions** - evaluating Food for Life's impact on healthy eating behaviours in schools in local commission areas.
- 4. New settings** - exploring innovative approaches to extending the Food for Life whole setting approach beyond schools.
- 5. Social value of Food for Life in local authority commissions** – understanding the social, health, economic and environmental value of Food for Life commissions.

The report presents summaries of the findings of each workstream, discusses themes emerging across the research, and sets out recommendations for Food for Life and associated evaluation activity.

Further details of the research findings and methodologies are available in the full reports for each workstream (see Appendix 1).

Key Terminology:

Food for Life refers to the whole family of activity associated with this brand, including programme and awards in all settings and the Catering Mark.

Food for Life principles refer to the over-arching ethos and approach of work under the banner 'Food for Life', centred on the aim to transform food environments and food culture in settings across the life course.

Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) refers to the organisations and activity related to whole setting approaches in schools and communities between 2007 and early 2015. Since mid-2015 this settings based work is referred to more simply as **Food for Life**.

Food for Life Catering Mark (FFLCM) refers to the specific activity, associated infrastructure and award focused on catering quality.

FFL (whole settings) frameworks refer to multi-component visions for a whole setting approach underpinned by Food for Life principles. Catering quality is one aspect of this.

Evaluation Highlights

Food for Life Phase 2

1. Food for Life continues to have a positive impact on food cultures within and beyond schools. It is becoming embedded in a range of sectors, gaining recognition within a range of local and national policies and organisations.
2. Food for Life (FFL) has demonstrated that its whole setting approach can bring healthy, sustainable food to varied communities, and is appreciated as a mechanism facilitating change.
3. This evaluation provides evidence that Food for Life has made good progress in ensuring 'good food for all' by enabling change in more places and organisations.
4. This has been achieved through:
 - a continuing contribution to school and hospital food policy and practice;
 - a reputation for reliability, forward thinking and cutting edge practice in relation to healthy, sustainable food cultures;
 - a nationally recognised standard for quality in catering;
 - innovation which has tested approaches for working with institutions and local commissioners; and
 - stimulating and informing high-level debates about food sustainability and health.
5. Activity during Phase 2 represents a considerable development in terms of scaling up and out, taking Food for Life beyond its original niche of school food. Work with local commissions and in new settings are complementary strategies which can be effectively connected and combined, with potential for positive synergies and further scaling.
6. The programme has succeeded in taking good food to more communities through a combination of:
 - greater geographic coverage of its core programme,
 - diversifying opportunities for participation across multiple settings, and
 - influencing strategic drivers for standard practice around food.Central to these are its ability to drive ambition, measure progress and evidence impact.

7. Within the context of schools there is evidence of continuing impacts and long-term change beyond the phase of initial engagement. If this experience is replicated in other contexts then there may be enduring outcomes for numerous beneficiaries.
8. Through Food for Life's advocacy and work to influence policy it has shaped the context for school food and hospital food. As a result it is arguable that the principles of Food for Life's whole school approach are becoming the norm for all schools.
9. Food for Life works through multiple routes to achieve change: local area strategies, settings approaches, commissioning and targeting particular sectors. Each approach brings dividends. What is not yet clear is what additional benefits are accrued through combining and connecting them to create a strategic approach capable of driving systemic change. This is the next challenge for Food for Life's ambition to scale up and out, one it is well placed to tackle.

Long term impacts and durability in schools

1. The Food for Life programme remains relevant to schools and for some it has become fully embedded in their life and ethos.
2. There is evidence that Food for Life has long-term impacts in schools, beyond an initial period of intensive support and engagement or the enthusiasm associated with initiating a new project.
3. The Food for Life framework is appropriate to facilitating sustained engagement in school food activities.
4. Leadership commitment, a school food policy, whole school discussions about food, partnership work and parental involvement all contribute to a sustained approach.
5. Some schools struggle to retain momentum with Food for Life related activity and would benefit from tailored support.
6. There are particular challenges associated with engaging secondary schools and maintaining their commitment to food related activity in schools.
7. Although Food for Life can influence a school's level of food related activity, those demonstrating the most sustained impact and progress may be schools with a pre-existing commitment to this food-related priority.

Review of local commissions

- 1.** Commissioners express a high degree of satisfaction with Food for Life and its achievements to date in commissioned areas. The programme is seen as having unique benefits, is well regarded and trusted.
- 2.** Food for Life offers a flexible model with potential for commissioners to adapt it to their objectives. In practice most commissions have been designed to suit the budget available. This places pressure on the capacity of Food for Life to meet levels of need. This is compounded by the challenge of securing commitment to commission beyond an annual grant cycle.
- 3.** Food for Life's local delivery has developed iteratively with each successive commission. The characteristics of later commissions show innovations in terms of scale, duration, structured delivery, collaborations and reporting practices. Nevertheless both commissioners and Food for Life staff emphasise the need to further define the programme as a locally commissionable package of work.
- 4.** A clear theme from discussion with commissioners is that it will become increasingly important to be able to demonstrate the public value of programmes like Food for Life through effective communication and a sound evidence base. This is closely linked to the role of evidence of the impacts of Food for Life in the short, medium and long term.
- 5.** Commissioners emphasised the importance of capturing multiple forms of value, including educational, health, economic and environmental value of the Food for Life programme.
- 6.** Within local authorities strategic approaches to health and wellbeing are not well established, and work on school food is not linked across portfolios. This means opportunities for delivery are being missed, for example linking health and environment, or connecting different aspects of children's lives.
- 7.** The evaluation research has been used to inform work by UWE and Food for Life to develop good practice systems for monitoring and evaluation of local commissions. The resulting Local Commissioning Toolkit provides a standardised framework for monitoring and evaluation informed by good research practice.

Cross sectional study of pupil diets in Food for Life local commissions

- 1.** Pupils in Food for Life (FFL) schools reported consuming almost one third more fruit and vegetables than those in comparison schools.
- 2.** After adjusting for free school meal eligibility (FSME), gender and local authority variation, pupils in schools engaged with the FFL programme were twice as likely to eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day. They were about 60% more likely to eat more than the national average of 2.55 portions per day.
- 3.** For fruit and vegetable intake there was a significant difference between pupils in bronze and silver schools (bronze, mean=1.97; silver, mean=2.18, $p=0.028$). Pupils in silver FFL award schools were over twice as likely to eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables compared to pupils in schools with no FFL award.
- 4.** The proportion of pupils who reported eating no fruit and vegetables in the day prior to the survey was one third lower in FFL schools: 23.4% of pupils in FFL schools, 33.9% of pupils in comparison schools.
- 5.** School meal take up, based upon pupil reported meals in the week prior to the survey, was 56.1% in FFL schools and 49.9% in comparison schools, a 6.2 percentage points difference that was significant ($p=0.045$). In FFL schools, 6.0% more pupils had had at least one school meal in the week prior to the survey (FFL: 70.0%, Comparison: 64.0%, $p=0.008$).
- 6.** School meal take up was associated with higher fruit and vegetable consumption for pupils in FFL schools. By contrast, fruit and vegetable consumption was not associated with school meal take up in the Comparison schools. This could be a reflection of greater provision of fresh fruit and vegetables in school meals in FFL schools than Comparison schools.
- 7.** After adjusting for gender, FSME and local authority differences, pupils in FFL schools were about 40% more likely to 'like' or 'really like' school meals: $OR=1.43$, $p=0.00$, $CI (1.71, 1.75)$. Pupils in FFL schools were also significantly more likely to give a positive rating of school lunchtime in their school ($p = 0.005$).
- 8.** Supplementary dietary analysis was conducted for the local commission C survey sample. The analysis found no difference in the consumption of sweet snacks and savoury (salty) snacks in school or out of school. Pupils in comparison schools

consumed significantly more servings of high energy drinks out of school compared to pupils in FFL schools ($p=0.002$) while differences in consumption of high fat food only just reached significance ($p=0.045$) for pupils in FFL schools.

- 9.** Whilst it is important to recognise possible residual confounding by socio-economic and other factors, the study suggests that schools engaged in the FFL programme provide an important opportunity for 8-10 year olds to consume fruit and vegetables.
- 10.** Fruit and vegetable consumption for pupils in FFL schools was not only higher within school time; it was also higher at home. FFL and commissioners can draw upon this finding to examine the potential 'spill over' of the programme from the school to the home, and the extension of impact into the wider community.
- 11.** The FFL schools award framework is an indicator of fruit and vegetable consumption: progression to a bronze and silver award is linked with higher fruit and vegetable consumption. The Food for Life School Award framework could be used as an indicator for key food related outcomes and can provide a proxy for positive dietary behaviour.
- 12.** The findings indicate that achievement of the FFL Catering Mark is a driver for improving fruit and vegetable consumption.
- 13.** There are differences in specific outcomes at the level of each local commission. These provide a base for valuable learning across commission areas and add to our understanding of how external factors can limit the progress of local commissions.
- 14.** The Day in the Life Questionnaire (DILQ) is a practical tool for assessing fruit and vegetable consumption and has the potential to be used in future evaluation of FFL commissions.

New Settings

- 1.** The case studies demonstrate that there is clear potential for a Food for Life approach to work with people across their life course. The new settings programme has made good progress in establishing this in hospital, care homes, early years nursery and university sectors.
- 2.** All of the organisations involved as pilots and case studies demonstrate that a significant engagement with the Food for Life approach can be generated within the new settings. With the move from schools into new settings, Food for Life has

worked to adapt their programme to suit. This has entailed flexibility to respond to the needs of each sector, whilst retaining commitment to core principles to retain the programme's integrity.

3. Where Food for Life has worked to influence strategic drivers related to food in particular sectors this has clearly facilitated the process of securing commitment to a whole setting approach. In particular, recent changes in policy related to food in hospitals has helped engage actors within the NHS with food issues, and demonstrated the value of using Food for Life's whole setting framework.
4. Each of the case study organisations felt that they had made achievements through their involvement and see potential to make further positive changes with Food for Life's support. Case study organisations suggested that engagement with Food for Life was helping to improve the quality of food served, with associated benefits for recipients (patients, residents and children).
5. Through working as a Food for Life case study organisations became more ambitious about what they might achieve around food and took a more strategic approach. The sector specific frameworks contributed to these processes with all participants finding them valuable for encouraging integration, coordination, and scoping opportunities for action.
6. There is clear evidence that the Food for Life whole settings frameworks, adapted for each sector, facilitated a focus on healthy and sustainable food within the new settings. The frameworks helped organisations to 'pull together' existing activity, and 'push out' with their level of ambition.

Social Value of Food for Life in Local Authority Areas

1. The Social Return on Investment analysis of two Food for Life local commissions found that £4.41 of social value was created for every £1 of investment.
2. The analysis covered a two year period of investment between April 2013 and March 2015 and involved interviews with 47 stakeholders and analysis of 78 written statements. We identified a total investment of £395,697 which comprised of costs to local authorities (Public Health divisions) and local NHS (Clinical Commissioning Groups), the Big Lottery and Department for Education. Small costs were identified for staff time linked to FFL award applications in schools, catering agencies and other organisational settings.

- 3.** The scale and reach of the programme, particularly in schools, in the two local authority areas were notable. Out of a total of 295 schools, 179 had enrolled with Food for Life. This represented over 60,000 children and young people, 2,500 teaching staff and almost 1000 catering staff having potential exposure to the Food for Life programme.
- 4.** The stakeholder consultation stage identified a wide range of outcomes of the local commission programme. These included large scale and long-term impacts on population health, the food procurement system and the natural environment.
- 5.** After accounting for the role of other factors and changes that might have occurred without the commissions, the analysis found a total combined value of £1,743,046 over a three year period for the Food for Life programme in the two case study areas.
- 6.** This value fell to a range of stakeholders and sectors of interest. Consistent with previous research on the Food for Life catering model, a significant share of the value is experienced by local suppliers (farmers, processors and wholesalers), caterers and their employees in the form of new or enhanced business opportunities, business security and work creation.
- 7.** Other stakeholders gained from improvements to the dietary health of primary school children, the role of Food for Life in enhancing the quality of children's educational experiences and readiness for learning and associated benefits to the working practices of teaching and catering staff. The analysis also allocated value to the role of Food for Life in stimulating parental, community and local voluntary sector engagement in schools and other settings.
- 8.** During the evaluation period Food for Life was in the developmental stages of work with hospitals, care homes and early years settings in the two case study areas. The SROI analysis identified value to these agencies through staff training, expert support and change management support.
- 9.** Improvements in reduced food wastage and reduced transportation were the main environmental benefits that we were able to quantify.
- 10.** Using the standard approach in SROI analysis, we tested the result by adjusting or removing factors from the analysis. This assessment produced a lowest value of £2.21 and a highest value of £6.29 for every £1 of investment. The results suggest that even when significant changes are made to the analysis the results still show evidence of social value being created.

11. Food for Life and Age UK's pilot intergenerational project, started towards the end of the SROI study, is likely to add further social value to locally commissions in the form of new partnerships and economies of effort between volunteers, agency staff, caterers and members of the local community.

Ensuring Good Food For All

Food for Life's recent experience demonstrates that there are still numerous barriers which make it difficult to ensure good food for all: **healthy, sustainable food is not the norm in many contexts central to daily life in the UK.** Several challenges have to be addressed in order to achieve further progress with changes required to make it such:

1. **How to ensure that those in most need of good food can access it.** Healthy sustainable food can help tackle health inequalities providing those with the greatest need, including nutritionally vulnerable groups, are able to secure it. But those with the greatest need are often the same people least able to access or afford good food. A settings approach works to address these issues of accessibility.
2. **Good food is not a leading priority for those who lead change.** Too often the will to drive change starts from personal interest or passion around food. Even leaders keen to see a more positive food culture in their organisation can find it difficult to maintain commitment in the face of multiple, competing priorities. The potential for food to contribute to some of these is not always well understood, whilst food does not often feature as a strategic priority in its own right.
3. **Partial delivery of a whole setting approach may prevent wholesale benefit.** The power of a whole setting approach is that it is a holistic model which drives integrated change, and results in benefits beyond the sum of its parts. But it is sometimes interpreted as a list of optional activities, of which only the most desirable or achievable are delivered. There is a risk that the flexibility organisations welcome from programmes like Food for Life results in a 'pick and mix' rather than a truly whole setting approach.
4. **Choosing healthy, sustainable food is not always an option.** Good food is not yet the norm, or always the cheapest option. The choices on offer can be edited but providers are reluctant to move to choice removal. In contexts including commercially driven operations it is particularly difficult to challenge the prevalence of high fat, high sugar, high salt foods. A legacy of catering systems driven by low cost provision leaves an infrastructure inhibiting a switch to freshly cooked local produce.

- 5. Complex problems with complex solutions.** Challenges like health and sustainability are a result of many complex processes; the pathways for tackling these ‘big problems’ are multifaceted and take time. An expectation of immediate, measurable impact can be to the detriment of initiatives with a long-term perspective and/or of complex nature.

In response to these challenges it is important that Food for Life **reaffirms clear, achievable outcomes** to ensure that future activity is appropriately focused and founded on a sound theory of change.

Food for Life should work to **communicate the value of a whole setting approach** to healthy, sustainable food and the importance of a holistic programme. Food for Life should also work to **communicate how good food contributes** to goals which are priorities in target sectors.

There is a clear need for **continued advocacy for food to be a priority** in organisations and sectors responsible for feeding society’s most nutritionally vulnerable people. Food for Life should seek to replicate their success in shaping strategic drivers for hospital food in other sectors.

This should be supported by **continued monitoring and evaluating** to increase understanding of the benefits. There is a need to **investigate the health impacts** of providing good food in settings across the life course to address gaps in the evidence base, and to understand potential for a focus on food to contribute to priorities in various settings.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Since 2007 Food for Life has grown in scale, scope and influence to become a leading England-wide movement for promoting greater access to healthy and more sustainable food. With this ‘good food for all’ message and the support of the Big Lottery, Food for Life launched with a national programme for improving food in schools and to make food a central part of children’s education. Subsequently Food for Life has developed greater depth of collaboration with local authorities and branched into other settings, such as early years nurseries and children’s centres. This report brings together an account of an evaluation led by the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) of the latest phase of the Food for Life programme between 2013 and 2015.

Food for Life is a collaboration between charities, led by the Soil Association together with Focus on Food, Garden Organic, the Health Education Trust and the Royal Society for Public Health. Schools, councils and other agencies are local partners in this greater partnership. The Food for Life Catering Mark (FFLCM) – an award scheme for all caterers – developed out of the Food for Life programme and has become (along with the Food for Life Schools Programme) a leading delivery agency in the School Food Plan and the Universal Infant Free School Meals Programme.

Food for Life uses an awards scheme as a central framework for change when working with partners. First developed with schools it reflects a ‘whole settings approach’, that is, in order to promote good food for all a school needs to make changes in many parts of the institution and to look for opportunities to change people and the environment within and beyond the school gates. Schools work towards Bronze, Silver and Gold Food for Life Awards in a process that actively involves pupils, staff, parents and the wider community in growing and cooking food and linking with farms to learn where their food comes from. To date 1087 Food for Life awards have been achieved by schools.

There are limits to the power of schools to change food cultures and this is where the Food for Life Catering Mark can have particular value. Led by the Soil Association, food procurement experts work closely with in-house and larger school caterers to improve the quality and provenance of meals. Caterers, in a similar manner to school FFL Awards, use the FFLCM as a framework for change and progress from Bronze, Silver to Gold award levels as they meet criteria that cover both ingredients and the wider catering workplace. Synergy between the Catering Mark and the FFL award has rapidly extended the provision of FFLCM accredited school meals. Today over a million FFLCM meals are served each weekday, totalling more than 178 million meals a year. These meals are served in over 7,400 schools and – because the Catering Mark is applicable for most catering settings - in 290 nurseries, over 30 universities, 20 hospitals and 75% of London boroughs.

In 2011 UWE and Cardiff University reported on the phase one evaluation of FFL, having been commissioned by the Soil Association to evaluate the programme (Orme *et al.*, 2011). The evaluation concluded by saying that the FFL Schools Award “can act as a proxy for outcomes across school meal take up, parental engagement, sustainable food attitudes and healthier eating. These outcomes relate to schools in diverse settings, including those with indicators of higher social deprivation or

lacking in infrastructure or staff skills at the outset. Achievement in these circumstances provides a strong case for multi-level and holistic food reform programmes in schools settings” (Orme *et al.*, 2011:15).

In 2013 Food for Life secured funding from the Big Lottery Fund to support two further years of work, or phase 2 of Food for Life, with a focus on developing a whole settings approach into areas beyond schools, and commissioning of schools programmes by local authorities. UWE’s Public Health and Wellbeing Research Group was appointed as independent evaluator for this phase.

This summary report presents findings from the five workstreams comprising the evaluation research between 2013 and 2015. It provides a synthesis discussion that analyses issues across the project. Full reports of each aspect of the evaluation are available and are signposted as appropriate here (Appendix 1).

The phase two evaluation is divided into five workstreams:

1. **Long term impacts and durability** - understanding how and why the Food for Life approach is embedded in schools for the medium to long-term.
2. **Review of local commissions** - understanding strategic support for Food for Life, and recommending monitoring and evaluation systems.
3. **Pupil survey in local commissions**- evaluating Food for Life’s impact on healthy eating behaviours in schools in local commission areas.
4. **New settings** - exploring innovative approaches to extending the Food for Life settings approach beyond schools.
5. **Social Return on Investment of local commissions** – calculating the social, economic and environmental value of Food for Life commissions.

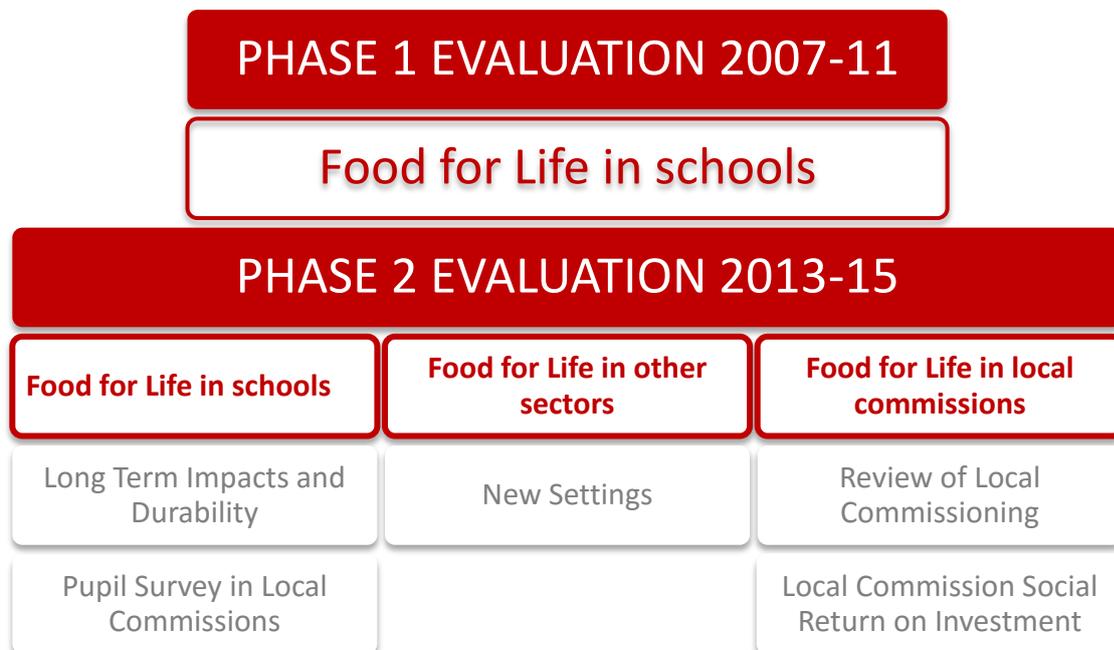


Figure 1 Evaluation of Food for Life

In addition to these work streams, we conducted evaluative research on a pilot intergenerational Food for Life project and SROI analysis of hospital catering delivered under the Food for Life Catering Mark framework. Further details of this work are reported separately.

2. Context

2.1. Food, health and sustainability

The challenges for the global food supply system are multiple and complex as it faces pressure to feed a growing global population without damaging natural resources and systems (Ambler Edwards *et al* 2009). Human health is writ large in this global food transition with rising over-nutrition alongside persistent under-nutrition and micro-nutrient deficiency, or 'hidden hunger' (FAO 2014). In the UK there is continued concern that too many people do not have a healthy diet, with those from disadvantaged communities particularly vulnerable to the negative repercussions of poor diets (Currie *et al* 2008). Governments have responded by promoting healthy lifestyles and wide ranging initiatives tackling the causes of dietary related poor health (Department of Health 2010). Health and sustainability are inextricably linked, with strong healthy communities being one pillar of sustainable development. There are opportunities to combine promotion of public health with sustainability, through taking an ecological approach (Rayner and Lang 2012). In many places around the world action on human wellbeing and environmental sustainability are brought together in local food strategies (Marsden and Sonnino 2012).

In recent years various actors in the UK have responded to these big food challenges in the context of food in schools. Driven by the moral responsibility to provide good food to society's most vulnerable, and the potential to harness the purchasing power of public bodies there has been something of a revolution in school food. The introduction of a national School Food Plan suggests that healthy sustainable food is on the cusp of moving beyond the confines of isolated examples of good practice (Morgan and Sonnino 2010). Children's regular school attendance presents an opportunity to address low levels of fruit and vegetable consumption, high levels of salt, fat and sugar consumption, and high levels of childhood obesity, with the expectation that establishing a healthy diet at this stage will influence habits in later life (Orme *et al* 2011). Ensuring pupils have a healthy lunch is also found to enhance their learning (Public Health England 2014, Storey *et al* 2011). The significant benefits this has for young children led to the introduction of universal infant free school meals in 2014. This formed part of a wholesale plan for better school food across England which seeks to make food education and healthy meals the norm (Department for Education 2013). As such the multi-faceted success of the Food for Life Partnership (Orme *et al.* 2011), can be seen to have influenced the national landscape for food in schools. The introduction of a national School Food Plan (DfE, 2013) suggests that healthy sustainable food is on the cusp of moving beyond the confines of isolated examples of good practice.

Despite this progress which will benefit a key sector of the UK's population, other dimensions of the public plate remain driven by the imperative to provide at low-cost rather than a duty to provide healthy sustainable food (Morgan 2014). Publicly funded mass-catering in institutions such as

prisons and hospitals can lever change through the scale of its investment, and in doing so provide good food to groups who are often nutritionally and socially vulnerable (Allen and Guthman 2006, Morgan and Sonnino 2008). This suggests a need and potential for changes like those achieved in schools in other settings, with the aim of ensuring good food for all.

2.2. Whole settings approach

A focus on settings has been a feature of health promotion for more than 30 years and has become increasingly popular, representing a shift in attention from individuals to systems or organisations as agents of behaviour change (Dooris 2006, Whitelaw *et al* 2001). Whilst there is considerable diversity in what is taken to be a setting, and how a settings approach is delivered there are common characteristics:

- 1) An ecological model of health promotion which recognises that health is determined by environmental, organisational and personal factors which interact in complex ways.
- 2) Recognition that settings are dynamic as inputs, throughputs, outputs and impacts interact in complex ways.
- 3) A focus on introducing change across a whole organisation or system by seeking organisational change (Dooris 2006).

Despite its popularity and perceived benefits, evidence for the effectiveness of settings based approaches is “relatively poorly developed” due to a lack of research into whole-system approaches, and the difficulty of measuring impacts within complex systems (Dooris 2006: 57). The evidence regarding schools is better developed than that in contexts such as workplaces and hospitals (Dooris 2006: 57).

In schools the whole setting approach is represented by the model of a health promoting school, as championed in the UK as the Healthy Schools programme. A recent systematic review of the effectiveness of a whole school approach to health promotion found that it can have a positive influence on certain pupil behaviours, including diet (Langford *et al* 2014). Food for Life’s whole school approach applies the principles of a settings approach, achieving synergies which results in impacts ‘greater than the sum of the parts’ (Orme *et al* 2011). A key factor in achieving this is establishing mechanisms for all school stakeholders to be involved, including a strong pupil voice in relation to food (Orme *et al* 2013).

Looking beyond schools, there is relatively little evidence of initiatives comparable to Food for Life with its focus on whole systems and food culture, as research is dominated by interventions oriented towards individuals with a focus on nutritional and weight outcomes. Dooris (2006) suggests that the weak evidence base is in part due to the complexity of evaluating whole settings approaches which require assessment of how numerous interrelationships interact. To overcome this and in order to fully capture the value of a systemic approach he suggests the need for a theory of change approach. This should consider both processes and outcomes in order to gain an understanding “not only [of] whether something works, but also of why and how it works or does not work in particular situations” (Dooris 2006: 61).

With a focus on achieving cultural change across an institution Food for Life is akin to what Whitelaw *et al* (2001) categorise as the 'organic model' of delivering a settings approach, meaning that achieving an enhanced culture within the setting is equally important as delivering tangible health gains. In such models activity includes efforts to build capacity for participation from the bottom up (*ibid.*). Food for Life's evolution into a programme delivering beyond schools presents an opportunity to understand how this applies in a range of settings, and whether it is successful in taking healthy, sustainable food into more communities. By targeting institutions which feed large numbers of people each day there is potential to make a difference to people at all stages of their life course.

2.3. Scaling up and out

Programmes like Food for Life which take a settings approach to healthy sustainable food have been effective in the contexts where they have been delivered. Food for Life has been described as one of the most inspirational social experiments of our time and needs to be lauded as such because it addresses pressing societal challenges through a sustainable food programme that integrates the multiple goals of public health, ecological integrity and social justice (Morgan 2015). But like other initiatives led by civil society actors such programmes have been relatively niche, achieving change only in select locations or organisations rather than at a systemic level (Marsden and Morley 2014; Marsden and Sonnino 2012). Sustainable healthy food is not available to all. It is suggested that to reverse this requires programmes like Food for Life to scale up and out, to extend their reach beyond local niches to enable more widespread change (Friedmann 2007; Marsden and Morley 2014; Mount, 2012).

The recent growth of Food for Life can be seen as an attempt to scale up and out as it moves into new sectors and locations. The new settings programme can be interpreted as an attempt to scale out from schools into other sectors. As such it involves replication of the programme in new contexts, whilst adapting it to suit the conditions in each specific setting. In turn there will be opportunities to scale up Food for Life's work in each sector so that more organisations of each type engage with the programme. In combination these expansion and diversification strategies seek to ensure good food for all.

2.4. Evaluation aims

The overarching aim of the evaluation is to present a robust and transparent account of the impacts of Food for Life for participants and wider stakeholders, to document how these impacts are achieved and to assess the wider social return on investment created.

The evaluation is intended to meet the needs identified in Food for Life's application for funding and is informed by the Big Lottery's approach to evaluating its wellbeing programme. It draws upon learning from the phase one evaluation of the Food for Life programme (Orme *et al* 2011), building on and extending this successful approach to evaluating a complex intervention. The evaluation provides evidence of the programme's impact, and analyses its delivery processes. It recommends how Food for Life can monitor outputs and evaluate outcomes, and draws lessons to inform future

delivery. This phase of Food for Life activity includes considerable developmental activity, so the evaluation research has evolved to reflect emergent priorities.

2.5. Evaluation Design

The research team took a staged approach to developing the evaluation design, building on dialogue with Food for Life and responding to emerging developments. As noted previously (Orme *et al.* 2011: 35), initiatives like Food for Life present some widely reported challenges for evaluation including:

- Multiple levels of change - at individual, group, organisational and policy levels,
- Longer term outcomes that may be achieved at a point beyond the lifetime of the programme,
- Emergent programmes of delivery and goals that develop in response to changing circumstances,
- Multiple and diverse goals that reflect the range of stakeholders involved in the programme,
- 'Open systems' that promote active partnership and engagement with other initiatives in related fields of activity.

In response to this UWE adopted a 'theory of change' (Connell and Kubisch, 1998) approach informed by 'realistic evaluation' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The advantage of this approach is the potential to estimate a programme's effects on interim and longer-term outcomes, and to provide audiences with information on how and why a programme produces outcomes. This approach provides for capturing interim measures of progress for aspects of Food for Life in a developmental phase, or where impact may not be measurable in the timescale afforded to the evaluation.

The research sets Food for Life in context within the international arena of innovative food and sustainability initiatives. The initial research questions for the whole evaluation programme are:

1. What are the impacts of Food for Life on healthy eating behaviours in a range of settings?
2. How are these impacts achieved?
3. How is the Food for Life approach sustained?
4. What is Food for Life's wider social return on investment?
5. How can Food for Life become embedded in a range of settings?

These are supplemented by specific research questions for each of the four areas of work as outlined in the subsequent research plans.

The theory of change is a methodological 'approach' but does not specify research methods. The research used qualitative and quantitative research methods as appropriate to generate the necessary data, and includes case studies across the work streams.

2.6. Report Content

The next sections (3-4) provide contextual information on the Food for Life programme and achievements from this phase of activity. This is followed by sections (5-10) which summarise in turn the findings of each evaluation workstream. The final section (11) looks across the project to discuss cross-cutting themes, highlight some challenges and potential actions for the future.

Detailed reports are available for each evaluation workstream on request.

The findings of the phase one evaluation are published as *Food for Life partnership evaluation: full report* available at <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/14456/>.

3. Food for Life

3.1. Introducing Food for Life

Food for Life (FFL) is a coalition of five national charities led by the Soil Association, working with Garden Organic, Focus on Food, the Health Education Trust and, since 2013, the Royal Society for Public Health. Food for Life seeks to promote a good food culture through supporting practical delivery and influencing public decision making. For Food for Life a ‘good food culture’ means: re-engaging with where our food comes from, with how we farm, grow, cook and eat. Good food has the power to build healthy, happy communities; it can connect us with family and friends, with the people and places that produce our food, and with the natural world on which we depend. Food for Life works to create meaningful partnerships between schools, nurseries, hospitals, care homes, food providers and the wider community, using food to stimulate whole systems change. A good food culture, which begins by nurturing a simple love for good food, can have a far-reaching impact, supporting local enterprise and sustainability, and having impacts on education, inequalities, and health. Simply put, Food for Life’s ambition is to ensure good food for all.

Food for Life began as a school focused initiative, working to promote a ‘whole school approach’ to healthy sustainable food taking a settings approach to health promotion. The primary focus of FFL is school related work where there are the following four objectives:

- i) To support and facilitate schools, the wider school community and caterers to have the opportunity, confidence and ability to access healthy and sustainable food;
- ii) To provide the skills and knowledge for the school community to make informed food choices leading to healthy and sustainable food behaviours;
- iii) To enable change in food culture within school settings through a whole school approach;
- iv) To enable change in food culture across wider health, education, and school meal systems through influencing stakeholders and strategy at local and national levels to adopt the Food for Life framework and ethos.

These four objectives correspond with an action framework for schools relating to food leadership, food quality, food education, food culture and community involvement. Schools can achieve Bronze, Silver or Gold awards within the Food for Life Schools Award Scheme according to the degree of progress made against these four areas. A parallel award for early years settings was recently introduced.

A distinct but related programme is the Food for Life Catering Mark (FFLCM), an independent audit of caterers. This offers food providers accreditation for:

“taking steps to improve the food they serve, using fresh ingredients which are free from trans fats, harmful additives and GM, and better for animal welfare” (FFL 2015b).

The mark is recognised as a sign of food quality and sustainability (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, Morgan 2010), with three award levels - Bronze, Silver, Gold- promoting continued improvement. Caterers are required to meet the standards set out in the FFLCM criteria, and pay a fee for annual inspection against the standards. FFLCM is operated by a dedicated team within the Soil Association, which frequently interacts with Food for Life staff. The catering mark also links to Food for Life awards as accreditation demonstrates that an organisation meets the award's food quality requirements. The FFLCM is open to any caterer; hence it has worked with organisations in a wide range of sectors. In 2014 FFLCM achieved the landmark of one million meals being served to its standards each day.

Organisations engaged in this research are involved in different ways with parts of the Food for Life family, with many but not all working with both with the Food for Life Catering Mark and the Food for Life settings schemes. This makes it difficult to distinguish impacts of each programme, or to specify the source of support. On occasions stakeholders have not always been clear in their own minds as to the distinction between aspects of the Food for Life family and its various processes.

3.2. Results of the phase 1 evaluation

The phase one evaluation focused on key programme goals between 2007 and 2011:

- increasing school meal take-up
- promoting healthier eating habits amongst pupils
- improving school performance, pupil attainment and behaviour
- improving pupil awareness of food sustainability issues
- influencing food habits at home and parental engagement in school life, and
- developing sustainable food sourcing and school meal provision.

The research found that the programme was having positive impacts on pupils and schools with regard to healthy, sustainable food.¹ There was evidence that participation in the programme resulted in:

- increases in school meal take up above national trends for both paid and free school meals,
- extensive reform in experiential food education, awareness of food, sustainability, and healthy eating,
- positive trends in school performance, pupil attainment and behaviour,
- perceived changes to children's food attitudes and behaviour outside school, and
- commitment to provision of better quality school catering,

In addition, it was concluded that Food for Life's whole school approach produced benefits that would be less evident in a single component programme.

See Appendix 2 for a summary of outputs from the Phase 1 evaluation.

¹ This research focused on 111 schools receiving a model of intensive support from FFL which is no longer offered.

3.3. Developments since 2011 - Phase 2

Since 2012 Food for Life has been operating a commissioning model through which they can support English local authorities to deliver their health and wellbeing priorities. To date 21 areas have commissioned the programme, largely through local authority public health funds, but with some additional investment, for example, through clinical commissioning groups (CCG). Each area operates the commission differently and Food for Life offer flexible delivery. Although centred on schools, some commissioners have requested engagement in other settings such as early years provision and hospitals.

In 2013, the Big Lottery Fund made an additional £40 million available to continue the activities of its wellbeing portfolios. Their overall aim is to continue to support communities in need in order to create healthier lifestyles and improve their wellbeing. The initiative is focused on three areas - mental health, physical activity and healthy eating - with an increased emphasis on enabling access to opportunities to increase and enhance wellbeing, increased social contact, local food growing and children's mental health and physical activity. These are highlighted as a result of emerging, current and increasing need identified by wellbeing portfolio holders and also by national evaluation of this portfolio.

Food for Life secured funding to deliver a further phase of the programme. Alongside a continued focus on transforming food culture in schools, this has supported Food for Life to extend its work beyond schools, piloting a parallel whole setting approach with organisations in 'new settings' such as early years, hospitals, workplaces, care homes and universities. In the context of localised services and programmes for public health and wellbeing, it has also enabled Food for Life to enhance its engagement with local authority commissioning groups and to advocate at national level with, for example, Department for Education and Public Health England (PHE). This involves close cooperation with the FFLCM team, and in some areas, connects with commissioned programmes.

4. Food for Life Phase 2 achievements

4.1. Outputs

Over the course of the phase two Big Lottery funding Food for Life has delivered a broad range of activity across England.² The organisation now has 17 locally based staff (FTE 12.7) and a national team of 30 (FTE 25.2). This team has supported the following key activities and outputs:

- A total of **5208** schools are enrolled with Food for Life.

² All figures in this section based on totals at June 2015.

- Of these **654** are schools newly enrolled during the funded period.
- A total of **1087** schools Awards have been achieved, of which 863 are Bronze, 197 Silver and **27** Gold.
- More than **170** training events have been delivered to teachers, school cooks and other staff.
- A total of **21** local authorities have commissioned [an](#) Food for Life programme, with **13** areas currently operating a commission (see Figure 2).
- A total of **8117** sites serve FFLCM accredited meals, of which **3886** are at Bronze, **2818** Silver and **1413** Gold.
- **7437** schools are serving FFLCM accredited meals.
- **291** early years settings are serving FFLCM accredited meals.
- **126** food outlets within universities are serving FFLCM accredited meals.
- **31** workplaces are serving FFLCM accredited meals.
- **20** hospitals are serving FFLCM accredited meals.
- **2** care home groups are serving FFLCM accredited meals.

4.2. Key strategic developments

In addition to delivering practical activity and support to organisations, Food for Life has worked to influence strategic drivers which influence food in schools and other settings. During the funded period this has resulted in the following key achievements in which Food for Life have played a part:

- School Food Plan published to cross-party backing (July 2013).
- Hospital food CQUIN citing the Food for Life Catering Mark (FFLCM) introduced by the Department for Health (Dec 2013).
- FFLCM cited in Patient Led Assessment of Care Environment indicators for the NHS by Department for Health (Dec 2013).
- Food for Life and FFLCM commended at NHS Sustainability Day by Maya de Souza, Head of Sustainable Procurement and Operations at Defra (March 2014).
- Food for Life and FFLCM cited by UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, as an example of best practice procurement in the UK (May 2014).
- Defra's Plan for Public Procurement cites FFLCM as framework within which to score 'good' or 'excellent' against the plan (June 2014).
- Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy *Becoming a Good Food Nation* cites the FFLCM as "driving real change" (June 2014).
- Hospital Food Standards Panel [cites](#) the FFLCM as rewarding excellence in hospital food (August 2014).
- Hospital Food Standards Panel cite Food for Life pilot with South Warwickshire NHS Trust as exemplar food and drink strategy (August 2014).
- Schools Minister David Laws commends the FFLCM to all schools nationally (Nov 2014).
- New School Food Standards cite Food for Life and FFLCM as independent verification frameworks with call for fresh, local, sustainable food (Jan 2015).
- Additional hospital food CQUIN citing the FFLCM introduced (March 2015).

- New hospital food standards and food and drink strategy mandated through the NHS Standard Contract (April 2015).

A key stream of activity has been involvement in delivery of the School Food Plan (Department for Education 2013). Food for Life's involvement in the steering group and other associated activity has contributed to the following changes:

- Healthy Eating incorporated into Ofsted Guidance (Sept 2013, revised June 2015)
- Cooking introduced to the curriculum for Key Stage 1-3 (Sept 2014)
- Universal Infant Free School Meals introduced for Key Stage 1 (Sept 2014)
- New School Food Standards Introduced (Jan 2015).

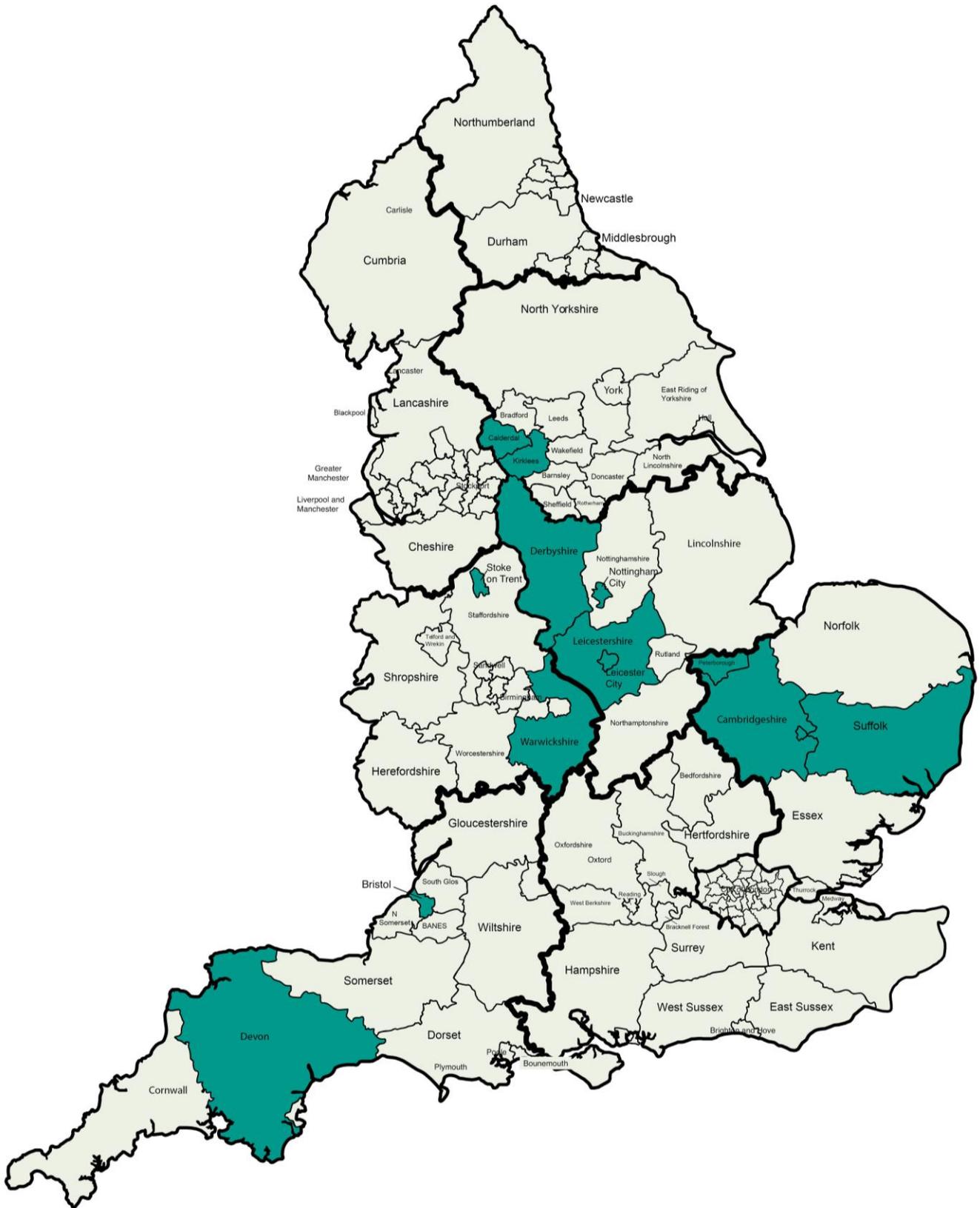


Figure 2 Map of FFL Local Commissions active June 2015

4.3. Future monitoring and evaluation: Local Commissioning Toolkit

Food for Life recognises the need for robust data on its impacts and outcomes, and is required to provide this to funders and partners. Only by understanding the results of its activity can the partnership and its stakeholders ensure that they remain effective and efficient. Throughout the period of the phase two evaluation, the research team at UWE have been liaising with Food for Life to advise on monitoring and evaluation practice. This has culminated in the production of a monitoring and evaluation toolkit for Food for Life's core activity in schools and early years settings, with a focus on commissioned areas.

The *Local Commissioning Toolkit* will support Food for Life by providing a standardised framework for their key operations and liaison with commissioners. It brings together the programme's evidence base, monitoring and evaluation tools, and examples of recommended practice. It draws on on-going evaluation activity, and experience of operating commissions to date to set a framework for monitoring and evaluation informed by good research practice. This will:

- Standardise monitoring and evaluation processes for Food for Life local commissions by providing a recommended approach and minimum expectations.
- Streamline monitoring and evaluation by bringing together existing tools and guidance.
- Guide Development Managers towards good practice and issues to consider when establishing a commission.
- Identify options for various levels of monitoring and evaluation activity according to commission scale and duration.
- Clarify what can be expected by way of evidencing change resulting from a local commission.

The Toolkit does so whilst allowing for the flexibility commissioners have said they appreciate from Food for Life. Adhering to the good practice presented in the Toolkit will also help Food for Life evolve its evidence base through robust, efficient monitoring and evaluation.

5. Summary of evaluation findings

5.1. Long term impacts and durability

Context

The focus of this aspect of the evaluation is to understand how schools' engagement in food related activities change over time. It is a chance to see what has happened in schools which became active in food related activities some time ago, whether school food culture has remained important to them, and whether engagement with Food for Life continues to influence their approach to school food culture. For Food for Life it provides a picture of how they can support schools to remain engaged in work to create a positive school food culture. More broadly, it addresses a lack of research into the long-term effects of school food programmes.

The interim report *Food for Life Partnership Long term impacts on schools: Exploration of context and case study identification*, Pitt, Weitkamp et al. 2014 presented results of a survey of schools engaged with Food for Life for at least 2.5 years. The second report *Food for Life Partnership Long term impacts on schools: Case Study Report*, Weitkamp and Pitt 2015 presented the findings of case study research in schools which have successfully sustained their activity around a whole school approach to food.

Research aims and questions

This aspect of the evaluation has the following aims:

- To analyse how and why the Food for Life approach is embedded and sustained.
- To understand the processes and characteristics involved in sustained Food for Life approaches.
- To identify the wider benefits of the Food for Life approach in schools.

These aims are met through considering the following research questions:

- Which aspects of food related activity in schools are likely to persist over time?
- What enables schools to continue engaging in food related activity over time?
- What prevents schools from continuing to engage in food related activity over time?
- How does school engagement with Food for Life change over time?
- Does the nature of engagement with Food for Life influence whether a school continues to deliver food related activity over time?
- Which benefits of Food for Life engagement persist over time?

Together these questions interrogate the resilience of Food for Life and associated activities in schools, and the factors which influence this.

Research methods

The first stage of the research was a review of relevant literature exploring what is known about the long-term durability of programmes similar to Food for Life and how this has been measured. This was followed by a review of policy changes with an impact on food in schools from 2007 when Food for Life formed to the present.

In order to understand how engagement in food related activities changes over time data available from Food for life on enrolled schools were analysed. This was followed by a survey sent to all schools which had enrolled with Food for Life before 2012; 210 responses were received. The survey was designed for schools to report on their current food related activity, how this has changed over time, reasons for any change, and how they engaged with Food for Life. It was written to allow completion by schools which have ceased to engage with Food for Life and/or food education. Complete survey responses were entered into the statistical software package SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data, with statistical tests used to examine strength of association between variables as appropriate. Text responses were analysed thematically.

Themes for case study research were identified through discussing the survey results with Food for Life, with four priority themes selected. Schools representing these themes were identified from survey responses, with additional candidates proposed by local Food for Life staff. Of the 12 schools invited to participate, 4 responded positively. Data were collected from these by in-depth interviews with key staff, (head teachers, Food for Life leads, catering staff) as appropriate to the school setting. In addition, requests were made for documentary evidence, such as school action plans and meeting minutes.

Summary of findings

The **literature review** identified a lack of research considering whether impacts of school food programmes endure once an intervention ceases, or looking at trends in behaviour change over time, particularly considering impacts as the time post-intervention increases. The review identified no studies looking at how interventions change over time and whether this has an effect on pupil level impacts. The literature also suggests that a period of two or more years is appropriate when questioning the longer-term impact of an intervention.

The **policy review** identified key changes in education policy directed at primary and secondary schools from 2007 to the present time in England that might affect the durability and delivery of Food for Life. Together, changes made between 2007 and 2013 offer a mixture of incentives and disincentives for taking a whole school approach to food.

The **survey of schools** provided information to begin to characterise the kinds of schools in which commitment to Food for Life and its ethos is likely to persist over time. Analysis focused primarily on the effects of different levels of engagement with Food for Life on delivery of aspects of food education relevant to Food for Life. The analysis provided a good basis on which to identify case studies to pursue certain issues in greater depth, and highlighted several issues warranting further investigation.

Key findings from the school survey:

- Broadly speaking the survey suggests that schools which engage with Food for Life show on-going commitment to working to improve school food culture. Many activities promoted by Food for Life persist as part of school life over time, although some are more likely to be sustained than others.

- Differences emerge in the pattern of delivery of food education between primary and secondary schools, with secondary schools less likely to provide extra-curricular cooking activities. Secondary schools are also less likely to offer opportunities for pupils to engage with growing activities. Farm visits are an aspect of the programme which both primary and secondary schools find challenging to deliver.
- Food for Life Flagship schools continue to be distinct from those which have not had such intensive support from the partnership. This reflects the broader pattern that schools which have engaged more with the programme have higher levels of food education delivery. Not surprisingly, more recent contact with Food for Life is linked to the perception that the programme is influencing a school.
- There are some signs of schools becoming disengaged from Food for Life and reducing the intensity of their food related activities. However, in most cases some degree of food education is continuing, and there are signs that once a school has embraced Food for Life's ethos it retains an influence.

The case study research found that:

- Food for Life's programme remains relevant to schools, and for some it has become fully embedded in their life and ethos.
- There is evidence that Food for Life has long-term impacts on schools, beyond an initial period of intensive support and engagement, and the enthusiasm that comes from initiating a new project.
- The Food for Life framework is appropriate to facilitating sustained engagement in school food activities.
- Leadership commitment, a school food policy, whole school discussions about food, partnership work and parental involvement all contribute to a sustained approach.
- Some schools struggle to retain momentum with Food for Life related activity and would benefit from tailored support.
- There are particular challenges to engaging secondary schools and maintaining their commitment to good food in schools.
- Although Food for Life can influence a school's level of food related activity, those demonstrating the most sustained impact and progress may be schools with a pre-existing commitment to this priority.

Evidence from the case studies and the survey suggest that the **Food for Life programme remains relevant to schools**, despite changes in the education landscape. The case studies highlight that **for some schools Food for Life becomes fully embedded and part of their school ethos**. This does not mean that schools do not face continued challenges in relation to school food provision, but it does mean that some schools have so embedded the programme that they no longer feel the need for significant support from Food for Life.

Elements that facilitate on-going involvement with FFL related activity include **staff commitment**, ideally throughout the school. This is best facilitated by **commitment from school leaders** as this enables staff to dedicate time to food activities. Schools that have **embedded the Food for Life ethos** felt that this added to their resilience in the face of staff change. **Maintaining a forum for**

discussing food – such as a School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) – and engaging people from across the school helps maintain a whole school approach and ensures a team approach to delivery.

Partnerships between the school and its wider community, were an important aspect of programme durability. It seems more difficult for **secondary schools** to maintain Food for Life related activity, and they may require distinct modes of support.

From the data available for all Food for Life enrolled schools it is difficult to identify broader trends in long-term engagement with the programme and how contact with training or staff support affects progression through award levels. In order to monitor this, Food for Life might consider whether it can **capture data that better tracks individual school's involvement with the programme.**

Where the Food for Life approach is fully implemented, and where schools commit to the whole school approach it stands a good chance of enduring over time and becoming a long-term feature of a school. This suggests that **the Food for Life framework is appropriate to facilitating a sustained engagement in school food activities.**

Recommendations & looking ahead

For Food for Life to enable schools to retain a long-term commitment to school food activity there are ways it could tailor the support it offers; some specific forms of engagement might be beneficial:

- Supporting a network of **ambassador schools** willing and able to showcase a whole school approach to food, and facilitating exchange of learning between these schools.
- Providing **advice tailored to schools 2-3 years into their engagement** with Food for Life, highlighting challenges which are common at this point (e.g. staff change, loss of initial enthusiasm) and how to respond (e.g. succession planning).
- **Targeting secondary schools** whose feeder primaries have a strong Food for Life ethos to seek engagement or develop follow-on activities for pupils as they transfer between schools.
- **Revisiting schools** which have been active but where progress seems to have stalled (e.g. lapsed awards, those not progressing from Silver to Gold) to maintain a relationship with them and offer targeted support.
- **Highlight the benefits** to schools of a whole school approach to food. All the schools explored as case studies had recognised that the Food for Life approach provided them with unique benefits and helped make them distinctive (and so appealing to some parents).

These recommendations are based on the findings from the case studies research in schools which *have been able* to maintain a long-term commitment to Food for Life. The experience of schools which *have struggled to do so* may also be enlightening, but was not a focus of this research. We therefore **recommend that Food for Life consider additional case study research with schools whose engagement with Food for Life has declined over time** to understand if there are ways they could have been supported to avoid this.

This research and that reported in the interim evaluation report provide **evidence of Food for Life's long-term impacts on schools.** If Food for Life continues to offer the framework and support available at present there is every likelihood that this will be the case for other schools in future. Responding to the lessons highlighted here might help Food for Life support even more schools to achieve an enduring commitment to a whole school approach to good food.

5.2. Review of Local Commissions

Context

Since 2012 Food for Life has been operating a commissioning model through which they can support English local authorities to deliver their health and wellbeing priorities. At the time of review fieldwork (early 2014), 11 areas had commissioned the programme and 10 were active. The core elements of an FFL commission are:

- A dedicated programme manager to liaise with and support school staff, plan a training programme and facilitate a local network of engaged schools.
- A programme of training workshops available to school staff to enable them to lead practical food education and engage the wider community.
- A contribution to national coordination of the Food for Life Award and associated operations.

Although centred on schools, it is also possible for commissioners to request engagement in other settings such as early years provision and hospitals. In the commissions at least half have done so, with most expressing interest in this area of work for the future.

The full review is presented in the report *Local Commissioning of the Food for Life Partnership Programme Review of Current Practice*, Pitt and Jones et al. 2014.

Research aim/questions

The aim of this research was:

- To review current practice in Food for Life commissioning and to draw implications for the development of the programme and its associated evaluation.

The research aim is met through the following objectives:

- To review current practice in Food for Life commissioning to determine what works and why.
- To characterise a successful and sustainable Food for Life commission.
- To assess the strengths and weaknesses of current commissioning practices.
- To identify issues and cases for further research.

Research methods

This review focused on current commissioning practices and the processes involved. It provided an opportunity for key stakeholders to reflect on Food for Life commissioning and its achievements. The review comprised the following activities:

- A review of commission documentation (e.g. annual reports, specifications, monitoring and evaluation tools) to understand the context and background to commissions and how they operate.
- Scoping discussions with Food for Life leads to provide further contextual information and help identify interview topics.

- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (Local Programme Managers, representatives of commissioning bodies) from each commissioned area to explore in detail the nature of the commission, its impacts and operation.
- An analysis of interviews and project documentation to identify key themes, patterns, anomalies, good practice and issues for further research.
- Discussion of findings with Food for Life leads.

Summary of findings

- Commissioners express a **high degree of satisfaction with Food for Life** and its achievements to date in commissioned areas. The programme is seen as having unique benefits, is well regarded and trusted.
- Food for Life **offer a flexible model** with potential for commissioners to adapt it to their objectives. In practice most commissions have been designed to suit the budget available. This places pressure on the capacity of Food for Life to meet levels of need. This is compounded by the challenge of securing commitment to commission beyond an annual grant cycle.
- Food for Life local delivery has developed iteratively with each successive commission. The characteristics of **later commissions show innovations** in terms of scale, duration, structured delivery, collaborations and reporting practices.
- Nevertheless both commissioners and Food for Life staff emphasise the **need to further define Food for Life** as a locally commissionable package of work.
- A clear theme from discussion with commissioners is that it will become increasingly important to be able to **demonstrate the public value of programmes like Food for Life** through effective communication and a sound evidence base. This is closely linked to the need for more **evidence of the impacts of Food for Life in the short, medium and long term** through the development of a **Food for Life local commission evaluation toolkit**.
- Within local authorities **strategic approaches to health and wellbeing are not well established**, and work on school food is not linked across portfolios. This means opportunities for delivery are being missed, for example linking health and environment, or connecting different aspects of children's lives.
- Commissioners emphasised the **importance of capturing multiple forms of value**, including educational, health, economic and environmental value of the Food for Life programme, through the use of methods such as Social Return on Investment.

Recommendations and looking ahead

As the programme diversifies it will be important to retain **clarity of purpose and an agreed theory of change for the programme**. Clearly communicating the programme's aims and how they are achieved would help to promote its benefits whilst ensuring continued focus on core priorities and realistic expectations of their impacts. This should include what outcomes can be expected in the short, medium and long term, as a basis for indicators to monitor progress. Alternative delivery models can then be developed and selected according to their potential to meet the core priorities.

Food for Life should **consider alternative and complementary funding routes and commissioning models** to support local programmes. This will require greater emphasis on the wider benefits of Food for Life such as the role of the programme in promoting a positive learning environment in schools, or local development of the food economy. It will also require new relationships with potential funders beyond the current focus on public health commissioners.

A priority for immediate action is to **generate further evidence of the public benefits** of Food for Life local commissions through the use of Social Return on Investment analysis. This information is sought by commissioners and will help Food for Life to secure support from new funding sources by demonstrating the value of investing in the programme.

Food for Life should consider whether they **need to better understand potential commissioners** who have not engaged with Food for Life and the reasons for this. This could be an area for further research in order to identify how the partnership can secure further commissions.

5.3 Cross sectional study of pupil fruit and vegetable consumption in Food for Life local commissions

Context

This research examined the impact of Food for Life local commissions on the diets of primary school pupils. It focused on fruit and vegetables as national surveys show that children in the UK do not consume the recommended number of portions (Health Survey for England 2013), and daily intake is a well-recognised indicator of healthy diets. In the evaluation of phase 1 of Food for Life, the research found an increase in children's fruit and vegetable consumption in Food for Life flagship schools (Jones *et al* 2012). An important question is whether there is similar evidence of impact with the Food for Life programme as it scales up and further integrates with local strategic work.

The full details of the study are reported in *Pupil Survey in Food for Life Commissioned Areas: Food for Life's impact of primary school children's consumption of fruit and vegetables*, Jones *et al.* 2015.

Research aim/questions

This research was designed to answer the following research question:

Do students eat more fruit and vegetables in schools engaged with Food for Life than students in schools not actively engaged with Food for Life?

Supplementary analysis sought (a) to determine whether the Food for Life programme is associated with other outcomes, including perceptions of food in school and experiences of food preparation (b) to test whether specific elements of the Food for Life programme, such as progressing from the Bronze to Silver Food for Life Award, are predictive of outcomes and (c) to identify outcomes for each locally commissioned area.

Research methods

The research design was a cross sectional study in which schools engaged with Food for Life were compared with schools not engaged in the programme. Food for Life schools and Comparison schools were matched in the same local authority area by Free School Meal Eligibility quintile and size. The survey covered pupils in Years 4 and 5. Pupil diets were measured using the Day in the Life Questionnaire (DILQ), a validated questionnaire specifically designed to measure fruit and vegetable consumption in children in a school setting. DILQ is identified as a suitable tool in Public Health England's Standard Evaluation Framework for Dietary Interventions (PHE, 2013). Additional measures in the questionnaire asked pupils about their perceptions of food in school and related food activities.

The survey took place in five Food for Life Local Commission areas. The survey had a total of 47 schools (FFL schools=24; Comparison schools =23) and 2411 pupils (total FFL pupils =1265; total Comparison pupils=1146). Pupils in the Food for Life and Comparison school groups, showed similar characteristics in terms of age, gender, the total number of children on roll and Free School Meal Eligibility (FSME) at school level.

Summary of findings

- Pupils in Food for Life **schools consumed more portions of fruit and vegetables** than pupils in comparison schools (FFL mean=2.03; comparison mean=1.54; p=0.000). Pupils in Food for Life schools therefore reported **consuming almost one third more** (2.03/1.54) than pupils in Comparison schools.
- Pupils in Food for Life schools ate significantly more fruit and vegetables in school (FFL mean=1.24; comparison mean=0.89; p=0.000). They also ate significantly more fruit and vegetables **at home** (FFL mean=0.79; comparison mean=0.65; p=0.000).
- After adjusting for FSME, gender and local authority variation, pupils in **schools engaged with the Food for Life programme were twice as likely to eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day** OR=2.07, p=0.000, CI (1.54, 2.77), they were also about 60% more likely to eat more than the national average of 2.55 portions per day; OR=1.66, p=0.000, CI (1.37, 2.00).
- Across the whole survey, a **large proportion of pupils reported eating no fruit and vegetables** in the day prior to the survey. However the groups were different: 23.4% of pupils in Food for Life schools and 33.9% of pupils in comparison schools were recorded as eating no fruit and vegetables.
- For fruit and vegetable **intake there was a significant difference between pupils in bronze and silver schools** (bronze, mean=1.97; silver, mean=2.18, p=0.028). Pupils in silver Food for Life award schools were over twice as likely to eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables compared to pupils in schools with no Food for Life award, i.e. both Engaged schools with no award and Comparison schools (15.6% compared to 6.7%).

- School meal take up, based upon pupil reported meals in the week prior to the survey, was 56.1% in FFL schools and 49.9% in comparison schools, a 6.2 percentage points difference that was significant, $p=0.045$. **In Food for Life schools, 6.0% more pupils had had at least one school meal** in the week prior to the survey (FFL: 70.0%, Comparison: 64.0%, $p=0.008$).
- **School meal take up was associated with higher fruit and vegetable consumption for pupils in Food for Life schools.** By contrast, fruit and vegetable consumption was not associated with school meal take up in the Comparison schools. This could be a reflection of greater provision of fresh fruit and vegetables in school meals in Food for Life schools than Comparison schools.
- After adjusting for gender, FSME and local authority differences, pupils in Food for Life schools were about **40% more likely to 'like' or 'really like' school meals:** $OR=1.43$, $p=0.00$, $CI (1.71, 1.75)$. Pupils in FFL schools were also significantly more likely to give a positive rating of school lunchtime in their school ($p = 0.005$).
- Analysis at the level of local commissions showed a **positive impact on the primary study outcome measure** *i.e.* self-reported portions of fruit and vegetables (FV) consumed and related sub-measures **in local commissions C and E. This impact was evident for most of the same measures in local commission B.** Positive outcomes for **local commission D** were found when the analysis focused on the differences between schools that had an Food for Life award and schools with no award. In **local commission A** analysis produced mixed findings with respect to associations of the Food for Life programme with pupil reported school meal take up, perceptions of food in school and experiences of cooking.
- Various factors may explain the inconsistent evidence of positive outcomes at local commission level. While it was not possible to evaluate these three factors appear important; infrastructure based factors; social factors and; resources available to each commission.
- While the DILQ was used in accordance with the author's instructions, it is recognised fruit and vegetable consumption could be under recorded since composite foods are not included. This could be relevant to Food for Life given the focus on including fruit and vegetables as part of composite dishes in school meals. Further research is needed to investigate if an adapted DILQ tool can assess composite dishes and/or have access to recipes used in school meals.
- Supplementary dietary analysis was conducted for the local commission C survey sample. The analysis found no difference in the consumption of sweet snacks and savoury (salty) snacks in school or out of school. Pupils in comparison schools consumed significantly more servings of high energy drinks out of school compared to pupils in FFL schools ($p=0.002$) while differences in consumption of high fat food only just reached significance ($p=0.045$) for pupils in FFL schools.

Conclusions and recommendations

Whilst it is important to recognise possible residual confounding by socio-economic factors, this study found that the mean for daily fruit and vegetable consumption was significantly higher for Year 4 and 5 pupils (aged 8-10) in Food for Life schools compared to pupils in schools not engaged with the programme.

This study suggests that **schools engaged in the Food for Life programme provide an important opportunity for 8-10 year olds to consume fruit and vegetables.**

Fruit and vegetable consumption for pupils in Food for Life schools was not only higher within school time; it was also higher at home. Food for Life and commissioners can draw upon this finding to examine the potential 'spill over' of the programme from the school to the home, and the extension of impact into the wider community.

Progression to a bronze and silver award is linked with higher fruit and vegetable consumption. The Food for Life School Award framework could be used as an indicator for key food related outcomes and can provide a proxy for positive dietary behaviour.

The findings indicate that **achievement of the FFL Catering Mark is a driver for improving fruit and vegetable consumption.**

There are differences in specific outcomes at the level of each local commission. These provide a base for valuable learning across commission areas and add to our understanding of how external factors can limit the progress of local commissions.

The Day in the Life Questionnaire (DILQ) is **a practical tool for assessing fruit and vegetable consumption and has the potential to be used in future evaluation of Food for Life commissions.**

5.4 New Settings

Context

The new settings workstream focused on innovative approaches to extending the Food for Life portfolio, and the programme's development beyond schools into other sectors. This workstream considers Food for Life's work to promote a whole setting approach to good food in sectors in which organisations engage with people across the life course. The research focused on case studies in four sectors:

- early years
- care homes for older people
- hospitals
- universities.

In addition, organisations in each of these sectors were considered as workplaces with potential to promote a good food culture to their staff. Some of the case study research was based upon **pathfinder pilots** – agencies that had agreed to co-develop and test out models for Food for Life practice in these settings.

An interim report presented findings of reviews of relevant literature and policy, together with an outline of the proposed approach for primary research *Evaluating Food for Life in New Settings: First Interim Report, Pitt, Orme et al. 2014*. The Final Report presents the findings of the primary research, including detailed case studies from four sectors which FFL have targeted for development *Evaluating Food for Life in New Settings: Final Report, Gray, Means et al. 2015*.

Research aim/questions

The overarching aim of this research was to understand:

How can a Food for Life approach work with people across their life course?

This aim was addressed through considering the following research questions:

1. What is the process for establishing an Food for Life approach in a new setting?
2. What barriers are encountered in establishing a Food for Life approach in a new setting?
3. What facilitates establishment of a Food for Life approach in a new setting?
4. What is the role of the FFLCM in achieving change in new settings?

These questions are considered within the context of Food for Life as an example of a whole setting approach. Food for Life were also interested in understanding how they might facilitate activity in relation to workplaces.

Research methods

The first stage was a literature review focused on food provision in each of the sectors considered as new settings. This informed the design of the second stage of empirical research which was informed by a theory of change approach (Connell and Kubisch, 1998). This took a case study approach focused on organisations piloting Food for Life's approach in the four sectors listed above. Data were collected from each case study using qualitative methods. The primary method used was semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Interview schedules were prepared to elicit information regarding the process of working with Food for Life, and reflections on perceived outcomes.

Interviews were audio recorded and either transcribed in full, or analysed from the audio recording. Additional data collection was through analysis of relevant documents such as meeting notes, reports and action plans. Data were analysed thematically by members of the research team. Regular discussion between the research team ensured a consistent approach was being applied, and that analysis considered the research aims and theory of change approach.

Summary of findings

The case studies demonstrate that there is clear potential for the Food for Life approach to work with people across their life course. The new settings programme has made good progress in establishing this in the sectors prioritised to date, and learning how best to achieve this. There are, however, barriers to encouraging organisations in these sectors to commit to a whole setting approach to healthy, sustainable food. These barriers often reflect the complexity of contemporary food systems and the wider societal context. The Food for Life approach to change in settings across the life course therefore needs to be recognised as a hugely ambitious undertaking, particularly within the context of the programme's resources over the last two years.

- All of the organisations involved as pilots and case studies demonstrate that **a significant engagement with the Food for Life approach can be generated within the new settings.** With the move from schools into new settings, Food for Life has worked to adapt their programme to suit. This has entailed flexibility to respond to the needs of each sector, whilst retaining commitment to core principles to retain the programme’s integrity.
- Where Food for Life has worked to **influence strategic drivers** related to food in particular sectors this has clearly facilitated the process of securing commitment to a whole setting approach. In particular, recent changes in policy related to food in hospitals has helped engage actors within the NHS with food issues, and demonstrated the value of using Food for Life’s whole setting framework.
- Each of the **Pathfinder Pilots felt that they had made achievements** through their involvement and see potential to make further positive changes with Food for Life’s support. Case study organisations suggested that engagement with Food for Life was helping to improve the quality of food served, with associated benefits for recipients (patients, residents, children).
- Through working as a Food for Life Pathfinder Pilot **organisations became more ambitious** about what they might achieve around food and took a **more strategic approach.** The sector specific frameworks contributed to these processes with a majority of participants finding them valuable for encouraging integration, coordination, and scoping opportunities for action.
- There is clear evidence that the Food for Life whole settings frameworks, adapted for each sector, facilitated a focus on healthy and sustainable food within the new settings. The frameworks **helped organisations to ‘pull together’ existing activity, and ‘push out’ with their level of ambition.**

Early Years

1. Working with Food for Life has undoubtedly enhanced the food cultures of organisations involved in the development project. The case study sites are supportive of the final FFL Early Years (FFLEY) award framework. Managers of the case study sites were positive about Food for Life and its aims, and felt that staff listened to their recommendations about the scheme’s development.
2. At organisations involved in developing the FFLEY award staff gained ideas about how to involve children in food related activities such as cooking and growing.
3. One nursery was able to introduce hot meals through facilitation by Food for Life. Two others made changes to their catering to meet standards for ingredients and suppliers. This resulted in staff and parents being confident that children received quality, healthy meals.

4. At two sites kitchen staff began engaging more with children during meal times, and in cooking sessions. Staff appreciated achieving an FFLEY award, and believed it would be beneficial to promote this to parents and organisations such as Ofsted.
5. For the large private provider the focus of being involved with Food for Life was achieving recognition of its high quality catering through FFLCM accreditation.

Care Homes

1. Both organisational case studies, Milestones Trust and HC-One, underlined that a Food for Life approach can be translated into the 'new setting' of care homes despite the challenges involved. Achieving a FFLCM is a realistic aspiration for many care homes.
2. The case study organisations have shown that there is potential to embed activity around catering quality into a broad 'whole care homes' approach reflecting Food for Life's whole setting framework. Milestones Trust found the framework especially useful as a conceptual model for drawing together different strands and then attempting to enhance their food and food related offer.
3. Both case studies have developed action plans that draw heavily upon the Food for Life whole settings framework in their organisations. Some progress has been made with activity such as involving residents in food growing.
4. Support from Food for Life has provided additional impetus for work on food which has helped drive progress. In particular the FFLCM standards provide a benchmark and common understanding of what quality is, and what standards to aim for. This allows care homes to understand their baseline and how to progress, and provides an objective mechanism for evaluating success. This was felt to be particularly important due to the lack of specific standards and guidance for the care sector.
5. As a result of working with Food for Life and FFLCM, care home staff identified important changes that have been facilitated. These included better understanding of purchasing processes, more efficient procurement, greater control over standardised costs, being able to measure impact across different homes, reducing complaints and knowing what is in the food served.
6. Food now receives extensive attention within the case study organisations so resident's nutritional wellbeing is a clear priority. Care home managers and staff are more committed to Food for Life's principles for good food.
7. Staff felt that changes made to resident meals are making a difference to their satisfaction, with signs that they are also eating more and enjoying meals. At one site staff suggested this had resulted in them no longer needing to provide supplements to treat constipation. Staff also suggested that less food is being wasted as residents find it more appealing.

8. There have also been positive impacts for staff as they have enjoyed learning about food, nutrition and health. Some of this learning has transferred to habits at home. Staff enjoy the process of cooking from scratch and gain satisfaction from the results, and the recognition represented by achieving FFLCM awards.
9. Another outcome has been to demonstrate that the demands of the FFLCM can be met within the care home sector and that 'going for the Catering Mark' can be easily embedded within a broader approach to improved dining along the lines of HC-One's Dignity in Dining. These achievements have included showing that a national care chain can source key foods. It has also shown that a move to fresh sustainable food free from additives does not have to be prohibitively expensive.
10. As a result of achieving the Bronze FFLCM, over 100 HC-One homes were already able to objectively make a series of impressive claims regarding the quality, nutritional standards, freshness and sustainability of the meals they serve at the time of this research. HC-One is confident that the result of this will be improved health and wellbeing for residents. They are already able to point to reduced costs and variability and reduced food complaints from residents and relatives. The process has also resulted in development of a sausage meeting FFLCM standards, available on the Approved Buying List for HC-One homes.

Hospitals

1. On-going work by the Soil Association had helped put hospital food on the agenda, and informed key national drivers such as the establishment of a CQUIN for patient food. A high-profile event at Clarence House inspired key figures to support Food for Life. Through their membership of the Hospital Food Standards Panel, Food for Life were also influential in the introduction of a national requirement for hospital food and drink strategies.
2. Food for Life has provided a useful framework for working on food in hospitals which helped structure activity, identify gaps and provided a model for an integrated approach. It stimulated the establishment of high-level multidisciplinary steering groups, and sign-posted aspects of food in hospitals that might not have been considered otherwise, e.g. growing food on site, finger foods for patients with dementia, healthier vending, and communal ward dining.
3. Food for Life brought experience and knowledge to which NHS Trusts could turn for advice and assistance. Food for Life facilitated contact and exchange with other organisations which allowed them to learn from experience elsewhere and adopt good practice. Being a pilot working with Food for Life led to a wider perspective and opportunities to think differently.
4. Engagement with Food for Life stimulated a review of contracts covering patient, staff and visitor food and has significantly influenced the specifications for future contracts. It has helped to move contract discussions beyond whether the service is being delivered to a more

sophisticated approach to contract monitoring. It has led directly to the specification of Bronze and Silver FFLCM food for staff and visitors in contracts. It has led to the identification of the quality of the vending offer as a key issue for staff food. External expert input into the contract and procurement discussions has been very helpful.

5. Work with catering companies to introduce FFLCM for staff and visitor food has had effects beyond individual Trusts. For example, one catering contractor has committed to all their retail outlets achieving FFLCM Bronze status by the end of 2015 as a result of working with a Food for Life Pathfinder Pilot.
6. A key aim emerging from the hospitals' Food for Life action plans was recreating communal dining areas which had completely disappeared from wards. This has been introduced or is being developed at all three pilot sites.
7. The energy and enthusiasm of Food for Life staff and the introduction of a perspective from outside their own organisation and the NHS was valued. The accessibility, knowledge, polite constructive input and challenge from the Food for Life team were seen as very valuable. On-going support from Food for Life provides useful momentum, drive and challenge, and external scrutiny.

Universities

1. Collaboration with Food for Life has helped Lancaster University progress its whole university approach to healthy and sustainable food. Engagement with Food for Life has ensured that the university's food and drink policy, FFLCM and its Edible Campus initiative continue to drive their commitment to food, health and wellbeing.
2. Food for Life has provided a useful framework for working on food in universities which helped structure activity, identify gaps and provided a model for an integrated approach to healthy and sustainable food. Additional sections have been integrated into the model as a result of the Pathfinder Pilot such as the university as a home.
3. The University established a cross-institution Food for Life steering group which embraced the FFL university framework and has driven forward key initiatives around cooking, growing and sustainability education.
4. The University has developed a detailed action plan drawing heavily upon the Food for Life whole settings framework in the organisation. Some progress has been made to consider staff health and wellbeing as part of the framework.
5. Food for Life brought experience and knowledge to the university and supported its link with the Sustainable Food Cities Network. Consistent support from Food for Life over the period of the Pathfinder Pilot provided useful momentum, drive and challenge. This external scrutiny helped the university to embed their current sustainable food innovations within a

whole university framework and supported the link to health and wellbeing. An excellent relationship was established between the Executive Chef and the FFLCM team which has helped to support further Catering Mark activity, goals and achievements.

6. Lancaster University became part of the UK Healthy Universities Network during the pilot initiative which will facilitate effective dissemination of their experiences and findings to other universities.
7. Food can be a strong part of a sustainability agenda within the university environment but is not often recognised as such. The potential additional health, economic, educational and social benefits include increased onsite meal uptake, increased staff and student engagement and wellbeing, increased knowledge and awareness of food provenance. These can all contribute to a healthier and more sustainable university setting in the longer term.

Recommendations & looking ahead

Food for Life are promoting a whole setting approach to good food, and have developed frameworks to help establish this in new settings. The case studies and findings across the settings suggest several issues for Food for Life to consider if they are to deliver successful programmes in these sectors, and encourage a truly whole setting approach to healthy, sustainable food. Moving from a programme of pilots to long-term delivery, and a financially self-sufficient model requires Food for Life to consider various questions arising from this evaluation.

In each of the sectors organisations have embraced Food for Life in different ways and to different degrees. The learning across the settings is still in development but it is anticipated that the evaluation case study reports will facilitate sharing and transfer of ideas and experience between the settings.

The contemporary food system and societal context present a **hugely challenging context** for Food for Life's efforts to achieve change in settings across the life course. This is an ambitious undertaking, particularly within the resources available for the work to date.

Working with communities

Ensuring access to healthy and sustainable food can be a route to working with the wider community in terms of support for growing, cooking within families, procurement, changing needs through the life course, social and economic benefits. The concept of 'Good Food for All' is underpinned by accessibility to affordable, healthy and sustainable food for whole communities. An **explicit acknowledgement of how Food for Life addresses inequalities** and examples of how this is being achieved needs to be more clearly visible in each of the new settings.

Food for Life and related programmes currently work with communities in their various forms: geographic, of interest, within institutions and professions. Further thought might be devoted to **how work in specific sectors connects with other levels of activity which engage communities** with

food such as Sustainable Food Cities, and local area food strategies. In this way Food for Life might look beyond a whole setting approach to **whole food systems**.

Whole settings, systems and the Food for Life Framework

Food for Life has introduced a whole setting approach to new settings through **comprehensive, sector specific frameworks**. The future role of these frameworks is important to consider. It is suggested that each is re-worked as a result of the evaluation findings and re-presented to key stakeholders. It is also important to ensure that the frameworks' terminology is accessible for everyone within a complex organisation.

To ensure that the Food for Life frameworks are utilised and progressed in each setting requires **clear, accessible guidance and support for each group of stakeholders**. This will help them to understand the **valuable contribution that a whole setting approach** can make to big challenges around healthy, sustainable food, and the benefits of working in this way. To broaden the appeal of the Food for Life whole setting approach across the wider sectors, **clear links need to be made to existing corporate priorities and drivers**. This should acknowledge that **each setting is unique**, whilst keeping a **central vision** of a settings approach.

The feasibility of having a **whole system approach by starting from individual organisations** is difficult to judge over the limited timescale of the evaluation but there are indications that a multi-directional approach is needed. There has not yet been full consideration of **how to link between action in different settings** to develop a full systems approach across an area. Pilot work in this respect has been moving forward with intergenerational projects in two areas in collaboration with Age UK. Food for Life could take the next step in scaling up and out to bring good food to whole communities by moving from intra-setting learning to inter-setting learning, placing greater emphasis on connections between settings, and facilitating a good food culture across a local area.

Engaging more organisations

There is a need for Food for Life to continue working to **promote the significance of better food** in the sectors where it is not currently a priority. They have helped put hospital food on the national and policy agenda; other sectors would benefit from similar activity as they currently lack comparable drivers.

Where food is not a priority within an organisation or sector, there is a need to demonstrate how healthy, sustainable **food contributes to core outcomes** such as patient care or student experience, and to provide evidence of how Food for Life can help deliver these goals.

To establish FFL in new sectors it needs a more visible presence with a **clear offer aligned closely to public understanding of its relationship with the Soil Association**. Communication of the principle 'fresh, local, seasonal and where possible organic' needs to freely percolate to key stakeholders in these sectors.

A self-sustaining programme

Food for Life's desire to **tackle health inequality** has to become compatible with the need to operate a financially sustainable model. A 'scaling up and out' agenda can ensure that healthy and sustainable food is accessible and affordable by increasing take-up and engagement to a level which

represents a financially viable model. **Benefits to the most nutritionally vulnerable** need to be factored into cost-benefit modelling to demonstrate medium and longer-term gain for health service costs.

The cost for some organisations to embark on FFLCM accreditation is prohibitive, or perceived to be. **Alternative payment systems** may be considered which make the scheme affordable, particularly for third sector organisations, and cost-constrained sectors.

For organisations to maintain their engagement and relationships with Food for Life a range of **accessible expertise, bespoke support, communications and networking opportunities** could be offered. This should be mindful of ways of working in each sector, including working cultures which do not easily accommodate time for learning and development.

The **evidence base** for interventions in all these settings should be translated and promoted to engage organisations. This should communicate the **short, medium and long-term gains** in terms of health, wellbeing, sustainability, organisational reputation, responding to public health, economic, social and environmental drivers within organisations.

Issues for the future of Food for Life in new settings

- The Food for Life settings framework would benefit from further development focused on the **interrelationships** between its constituent parts and their relationships to a whole setting. It is this integrated whole setting approach which is challenging in large and complex organisations.
- Food for Life will need to consider how to operate alongside guidance, drivers and programmes established in each of the settings. The **aim should be synergy rather than duplication**, to avoid confusion and frustration within the sectors. It is also important that stakeholders are informed about these synergies and see the benefit of them.
- When working across varied settings it is important that Food for Life and FFLCM continue to take account of their specific characteristics. The level of **diversity and complexity** within and between settings may limit the potential for a consistent and credible offer. Organisations in each setting need to feel that Food for Life is receptive to their needs, and understands their sector.
- There is a **lack of understanding** of the distinction between Food for Life's Catering Mark and its other aspects. For the Pathfinder Pilots catering quality has been the focus of activity and a clear priority, but this is only one aspect of Food for Life's whole setting frameworks. To gain broader commitment to a whole setting approach to food it will be important to articulate what this means and how it can benefit an organisation.
- The appeal of the Food for Life Catering Mark (FFLCM) is evident in many of the new settings, but it is possibly more appealing for providers who see a **financial advantage** in being able to demonstrate the quality of the food offered. Such motivation may not operate

in the same way in the non-profit sector, or for organisations which are less able to make short-term investments in order to secure dividends in the longer-term.

- The case studies and Food for Life's wider experience suggest that following their principles for healthy, sustainable food need not cost an organisation more. However, some perceive that this is the case hence a need for targeted communication addressing this issue. This should acknowledge that the **challenge is one of affordability in its broadest sense**: not just the costs of fees and purchases, but the investment an organisation makes in time and effort.
- Food for Life's work in schools is focussed on supporting them to gain an award as an objective marker of what has been achieved which can be promoted externally. A similar award is available specifically for early years providers. It may prove difficult to 'sell' the whole setting framework rather than a more narrow focus on catering quality unless some equivalent **system of recognition** can be developed and is affordable for other sectors.
- The FFLCM is a developmental model in which one progresses through levels Bronze to Gold. This is fully understood in the school sector and by some hospitality and catering functions in other sectors. However, it is almost certainly relatively unfamiliar to senior managers in some new settings (e.g. the care and higher education sectors). There is a danger of 'Bronze' being seen as little more than a food hygiene rating of three. Targeted publicity might be needed for each sector, **explaining why a Bronze FFLCM award should be a great source of pride**.
- Those involved in the case studies may not be representative of their sectors as a whole. FFL should consider what **additional support** they may need to offer organisations less able to engage with a healthy, sustainable food culture.
- The case study organisations generally had a **high-level champion** with a personal commitment to food. These individuals have to some extent mobilised multi-disciplinary groups to systematically consider food issues across their organisation. In some cases key individuals had to drive change in the absence of a strategic commitment to food within the wider organisation. This raises questions about the extent to which change reliant on individuals can be sustained, or imitated elsewhere.
- Food leadership within some settings (e.g. hospitals, universities) can be steered from different sections (e.g. facilities, HR, Academic) but **senior management buy-in** and drive is essential to achieve a sustainable whole setting approach which engages all parts of the organisation. Governance and management of this endeavour needs to be clear.
- Not all of these sectors are used to **sharing development and learning** between organisations. Food for Life needs to consider how best to develop communication and support systems to spread practice across complex and sometimes fragmented sectors.

- Strategic work to **influence the policy context** has made a significant impact in relation to food in hospitals and schools. Similar high-level attention to food quality and food education in other sectors is currently lacking. Addressing this would help to drive progress and embed good food as a priority.
- Where good food is seen to directly contribute to core functions and corporate priorities, and to meet the needs of priority groups (e.g. patient care and recovery, student wellbeing, children's nutrition) this is a strong driver. To capitalise on this, Food for Life should **align closely with health, wellbeing and sustainability priorities** in strategies for each of the settings. Examples include the sustainability strategy for the NHS, social care and public health sector;³ the Early Years Foundation Framework;⁴ Social Care Institute for Excellence work on embedding sustainability in this sector;⁵ and the HEFCE report on Sustainable Development in Higher Education⁶
- Widespread use of local and organic produce and meals cooked on site is **perceived to be difficult, or even unattainable in hospital catering for patients**. The nature of hospital infrastructure, particularly the lack of on-site kitchens, is seen by stakeholders to be a real barrier to progressing initiatives such as the FFLCM. Food for Life might address this by sharing examples of patient food delivered to FFLCM standards. The model of provision by a large external catering organisation presents a significant challenge for FFL to consider.
- It is likely that organisations in some of the sectors would **welcome continued support** from FFL and FFLCM to enable them to secure contracting arrangements which deliver healthy, sustainable food that is part of an agreed economic model. Staff do not always have the skills to achieve this, particularly given the scale and complexity of the catering systems in hospitals and universities.
- **Communication about food can be overlooked** within an organisation. Innovative promotion of healthier food, food provenance and the variety and accessibility of food is an important part of engagement. Consideration needs to be given to how to promote healthy sustainable food offers to all target audiences within an organisation to ensure provision of an informed choice and to increase uptake of healthy food.
- **Further research** is needed to establish the impact of food related activity in the different sectors. Evaluation is needed to assess what impact different aspects of this work have on the wide range of groups and communities involved in new settings.

³http://www.sduhealth.org.uk/documents/publications/2014%20strategy%20and%20modulesNewFolder/Strategy_FINAL_Jan2014.pdf

⁴<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

⁵<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/reports/report35.pdf>

⁶<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201430/>

5.5 Social Return on Investment of Food for Life Local Commissions

Context

Food for Life offers to deliver a wide range of activities that have a positive and lasting influence on people's lives, our social institutions and the natural environment. Whilst the integrity and principles underpinning Food for Life's whole system approach are well recognised, it is more difficult to draw together and summarise the total impact of the programme. Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a method for systematically creating an account of the resources (or investments) that go into a programme and the outcomes (or social returns) that are plausibly created. SROI is therefore well suited to develop an understanding of the value of Food for Life's locally commissioned programme – and to communicate this learning to a variety of stakeholders.

SROI, both in terms of its application and methods, has been gathering pace in recent years. Much of this development has enhanced the rigour of the approach and established precedents for good practice. In the context of the Food for Life evaluation this workstream builds upon this work and the wider evidence base. Previous SROI research focused on Food for Life procurement practices and similar schemes internationally has identified substantial value to the local economy and the natural environment. Less is documented about the health, wellbeing, educational and wider social 'returns' of Food for Life and related programmes. Our Review of Food for Life Local Commissions (see section 5.2) found that commissioners needed this type of information in order to make a '360 degree' assessment and to have better dialogue with partner agencies about options for service development.

Full details of the study are reported in *The Social Value of Food for Life: an SROI analysis of Food for Life programmes in local authority areas Jones et al, 2016*.

Research aims and questions

The central aim of the research was to examine the social value of the Food for Life locally commissioned programme. This involves addressing a number of key questions:

- What are the multiple forms of investment that stakeholders make in order to deliver the Food for Life programme in local commission areas?
- What do stakeholders perceive to be the outcomes, both positive and negative, of Food for Life local commissions?
- What evidence and financial proxies can be drawn upon to quantify the programme outcomes?
- What is the social value expressed in the form of an SROI ratio?

Research methods

This study followed the SROI methodology as set out by Social Value International. The scope of the work covered two Food for Life local commissions: Kirklees and Calderdale for the financial years of 2013/14 and 2014/15 and the logic model for the local commission programme was developed with Food for Life staff. We interviewed 47 **stakeholders** to provide perspectives on the outcomes of the programme. These individuals included school teaching staff, school cooks, catering managers,

catering suppliers, staff from local food business and producers, hospital staff, programme delivery staff, commissioners and advisors to the programme. Additional sources of information about stakeholders' perceptions of outcomes were available through programme records. A total of **78 written statements were analysed** from training feedback forms, FFL and FFLCM award application forms, pupil survey teacher questionnaires, case study reports and press releases.

Summary of findings

Outputs and evidencing outcomes

Although SROI is not centrally focused on outputs, a notable feature of the programme was the scale and reach of the initiative, particularly in primary and special schools in the two areas. For example, over the 24 month period of the commission:

- in Kirklees 56 schools out of a total of 182 had enrolled with Food for Life or achieved an Food for Life award.
- in Calderdale 27 schools out of a total of 113 had enrolled with Food for Life or achieved an Food for Life award.
- in both areas Food for Life continued to support schools (40 in Kirklees and 43 in Calderdale) that had already enrolled with the programme prior to the period of this research.

These data indicate that **over 60,000 children and young people, 2,500 teaching staff and almost 1000 catering staff were exposed to the FFL programme** for the two areas combined.

Stakeholders reported a wide range of outcomes that we grouped thematically, assessed in terms of supporting evidence and availability of financial proxies to estimate the impact of these perceived outcomes. We used data from a cross-sectional evaluation survey of Key Stage 2 pupils; staff training feedback evaluations; Food for Life programme monitoring and evaluation records; and stakeholder questionnaire responses.

Overall SROI results

The social return is expressed as a ratio of present value divided by value of inputs. Although there are likely to be impacts of the programme over many years, we calculated the value of the impacts only up to three years. This was intended to provide funders with an understanding of the social value of the programme over the shorter term of a local planning cycle.

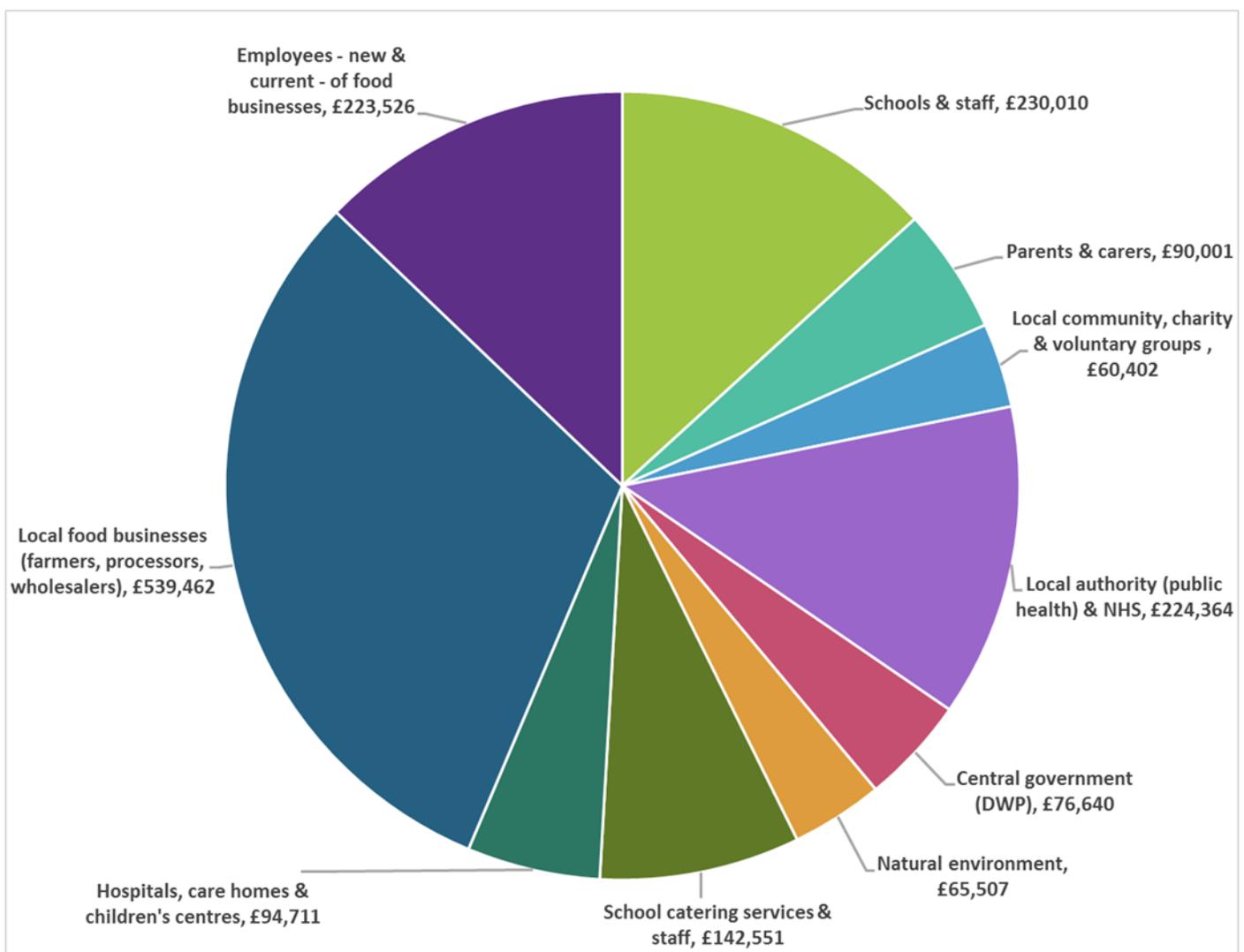
Stakeholders in the two case study areas identified a similar range of outcomes and data sources. This was not surprising given that the commissions had similarities in programme design and delivery. Stakeholders also reported synergy and collaboration between the two local commissions with regard to staff training, food procurement and hospital settings work. We therefore produced a SROI ratio based upon the combined findings of the two case studies.

The total financial value of the inputs for the two case studies was £395,697 and the total present value was £1,743,046. **This provided a SROI ratio of £4.41 of social value created for every £1 of investment.**

Share of value by stakeholders and interest sectors

The value of the programme can be expressed with regard to different stakeholders or sectors of interest. A breakdown is provided in the chart below.

Chart 1: Share of Value by Stakeholders and Interest Sectors



Local suppliers (farmers, processors and wholesalers) retained or gained new sales through contracts with caterers. The stability of large ongoing contracts lent greater business security, contributed towards new local job opportunities, job security and increased sales of goods direct to

the public through farm shops, market events and other outlets. These changes are also beneficial to **central government** in the form of local employment creation, tax revenues and reduced welfare spending.

School catering services benefited from the FFL Catering Mark in terms of business security, retention of contracts, improved staff performance and increased capacity to develop and implement procurement of sustainable foods. Small increases in school meal sales over the 24 month period could be attributed to Food for Life in some schools, although the evidence was mixed in this respect. Cooks and other catering staff benefited from training opportunities, peer networking and improved job satisfaction.

Perhaps one surprising finding was the role of Food for Life in supporting the **working practices of teaching and catering staff**. Some of this took the form of curriculum support, skills development, expert support and networking opportunities. Other outcomes - albeit less tangible - were reported to carry equal weight, including the role of Food for Life in promoting enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment at work. Some senior leaders in schools, catering agencies and other settings felt that the link between positive food culture and staff wellbeing was not a peripheral benefit, rather it underpinned a productive and high performing education workplace.

Local Authority Public Health and the local NHS are likely to have benefited from improvements to the dietary health of children. Research in Kirklees and Calderdale (along with three further local authorities) found that Year 4-5 pupils in schools engaged with Food for Life were twice as likely to eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables compared to pupils in schools not involved in the programme. We used this data to estimate the short term and longer term impact on reduced healthcare use.

Food for Life is a popular programme in schools and other settings and acts as a bridge with local communities. **Parents and carers** benefited through improved relationships with school, and volunteered at FFL school events, which in turn support children's readiness to learn and overall wellbeing. Rather than duplicating the work of other **community and charitable agencies**, Food for Life largely helped stimulate local voluntary activities through, for example, market events and community visits. The proactive approach of the Food for Life programme teams in partnership work with other agencies was a theme running through the stakeholder interviews.

New settings work with **hospitals, care homes and children's centres** were in the early stages during the 24 month research period. The main benefits took the form of staff training and expert support to caterers and senior management in changing organisational practices. Work in hospital settings had advanced quickly, despite major challenges in terms of the organisation scale, and there was some evidence of a positive impact on food waste and patient satisfaction with hospital food.

Improvements in reduced food wastage and reduced transportation were the main environmental benefits that we were able to quantify. As has been reported in other research, other outcomes for the **natural environment** and sustainability were more difficult to evidence at level of a local authority study. A scaled up SROI analysis of the national Food for Life initiative, and particularly the FFLCM, would provide an evidence platform to examine more clearly the impacts of, for example, improved biodiversity from organic food production methods, reduced consumption of meat and dairy products, and higher animal welfare standards.

Towards the end of the SROI study Food for Life and Age UK started a pilot intergenerational project in the case study areas. This was directed at supporting socially isolated older people to help with growing and cooking activity in FFL schools. Although it was too early for us to collect evidence of

impact for this study, it is plausible that the pilot would add further social value to schools and volunteers Food for Life locally commissioned work, arising from new partnerships and economies of effort between volunteers, agency staff, caterers and members of the local community.

The case study areas: similarities and differences

Kirklees and Calderdale case study areas illustrate important features of Food for Life local commissions including the role of grass roots networks, coordinated local food strategies and different catering models. They show how benefits can be created through extending work from schools into other settings such as hospitals, early years and care homes. As adjacent local authorities the two areas also acted as a basis for understanding the social value of Food for Life at a sub-regional level.

The SROI ratio for Calderdale (£1:3.70) was lower than that for Kirklees (£1:5.12). A number of reasons could account for these differences:

1. The pupil and other populations of Kirklees are about twice those of Calderdale. This means that potential reach and scale of the programme in Kirklees was significantly greater than that of Calderdale.
2. The catering systems are very different. The local authority caterer in Kirklees has contracts with nearly all schools in the authority and holds the Silver Food for Life Catering Mark. Large numbers of stakeholders are therefore affected by changes in FFLCM-related practices. By contrast reforms to school catering in Calderdale are more heterogeneous and less systemic across all schools.
3. It is possible that the Calderdale programme creates similar value to the Kirklees programme. However the availability of evidence, suitable indicators and appropriate financial proxies was more difficult to locate in the case of Calderdale than in Kirklees.

These factors show that it is not advisable to make crude comparisons between the two areas, without first taking into account the different local contexts.

Sensitivity analysis: testing the results

Sensitivity analysis is a method for testing the extent to which the SROI results would change if we adjust estimates or removed factors from the analysis. The lowest estimate, based on halving the value of all outcomes, produced a ratio of £1:2.21. The highest estimate, based on reducing drop-off for all outcomes, produced a ratio of £1:6.29. **The majority of sensitivity analyses found SROI ratios between £1:3.06 and £1:4.46.**

Table 1: Sensitivity Analysis

Sensitivity Analysis	Calderdale	Kirklees	Two case studies combined
Findings from analysis	£3.70	£5.12	£4.41
Increasing deadweight to 50%	£2.33	£3.16	£2.75
Increasing displacement to 50%	£2.89	£3.18	£3.04
Increasing attribution to 50%	£3.06	£3.60	£3.33
Changing drop-off to 10% for all outcomes	£6.91	£7.51	£6.29
As above, drop-off 75%	£3.48	£4.03	£3.75
Halving all values of outcomes/ beneficiary numbers	£1.85	£2.56	£2.21
Removing all dietary health-related outcomes	£3.18	£4.56	£3.87

Overall, multiple changes to the estimates of deadweight, attribution and drop-off indicates that substantial changes would have to be made to the assumptions in order for the ratio to change from positive to negative. These calculations show that even when significant changes are made to the analysis the results still show clear evidence of social value being created up to 3 years after the Food for Life intervention.

Subsequent consultation on the SROI results with key stakeholders in the case study areas provided further validation of the results. Notably some stakeholders emphasised that it was important to place value on the wellbeing aspects of the programme for children, young people, families and staff in organisational settings.

Conclusions & looking ahead

This study found that FFL is valued by schools, civil society, local business and wider stakeholders as a locally commissioned programme in local authority areas. The SROI provides a financial measure of this value: that for every £1 spent on Food for Life there is social value of £4.41 created over a three year period. In the analysis, multiple adjustments to the role of different outcomes and other factors shows that the social value is likely to fall between a lowest estimate of £2.21 and a highest estimate of £6.29. The clustering of values around a narrow range of £3 to £4 lends confidence to the validity of the results.

The methods and findings from this research are significant for other Food for Life local commissions, the Food for Life Catering Mark and other area-based food programmes, such as the Sustainable Food Cities initiative, both in the UK and internationally. In many instances, the bottom-up research method places limits on the generalisability of SROI results. However in this study the close correspondence with other SROI studies in terms of methodology and findings suggests that a similar range of outcomes can be anticipated in other areas where a Food for Life programme model is implemented, especially where the programme is directed at schools and public service catering - and engages with other settings such as children's centres and hospitals.

6. Discussion

6.1. Food for Life –good food for all

It is clear that Food for Life continues to have a positive impact on food cultures within and beyond schools. Food for Life is becoming embedded in a range of sectors, and gaining recognition within various local and national policies. Food for Life has demonstrated that its setting approach can bring healthy, sustainable food to varied communities, and is appreciated by institutions as a mechanism facilitating change.

This evaluation provides evidence that Food for Life has made good progress in ensuring 'good food for all' by enabling change in more places and organisations. This has been achieved through:

- a continuing contribution to school food policy and practice;
- a reputation for reliability, forward thinking and cutting edge practice in relation to healthy, sustainable food cultures;

- a nationally recognised standard for quality in catering;
- innovation which has tested approaches for working with institutions and local commissioners; and
- stimulating and informing high-level debates about food sustainability and health.

During phase two, Food for Life has devised frameworks to promote a whole setting approach to healthy, sustainable food in contexts where this had not been a focus. Food for Life has also learned how to meet commissioners' needs for locally focused delivery. Together these workstreams present a **considerable development in terms of scaling up and out**, taking Food for Life beyond its original focus on school communities. There are indications that these two represent complementary strategies which can be effectively connected and combined, with potential for positive synergies.

The phase two evaluation provided an opportunity to assess how benefits secured through engagement with Food for Life extend beyond immediate, short-term effects. Within the context of schools there are **signs of continuing impacts and long-term change** beyond the phase of initial engagement. If this experience is replicated in other contexts then there may be enduring outcomes for numerous beneficiaries.

However, experience within schools suggests that enduring commitment to the principles of a good food culture is not an inevitable result of engagement with Food for Life. It seems that the degree of long-term change depends on the original motivation for engaging with the programme. Motives such as the will to gain an award may be weaker drivers for a commitment to continued delivery of a whole setting approach compared to the role of leadership commitment and an embedded school food policy.

Through its activities Food for Life fulfils various roles with regards to supporting communities to achieve a good food culture. Central to these are its **ability to drive ambition, measure progress and evidence impact**. As a result the programme has succeeded in **scaling up and out, taking good food to more communities** through a combination of:

- greater geographic coverage of its core programme,
- diversifying opportunities for participation, and
- influencing strategic drivers for standard practice around food.

This is supported by **Food for Life's reputation** as a valued partner with a track record for delivering and evidencing success. Through the partnership's advocacy and work to influence policy it has shaped the context for school food in particular, as a result it is arguable that the **principles of Food for Life's whole school approach are becoming the norm for all schools**.

Through its recent activity Food for Life has identified other potential activities and ways of working which it could pursue. Whilst these could present opportunities to further scale up and out, there is a **risk that ambition exceeds capacity to deliver, particularly given the challenging context presented by the current agri-food system**. Further growth and diversification could lead Food for Life to lose sight of its core goals and how they are best achieved, or confuse stakeholders as to the purpose and value of Food for Life.

Food for Life has identified and is working with multiple routes for achieving change: local area food strategies, settings approaches, commissioning models and targeting particular sectors e.g. The

National Pathfinders Group. This evaluation shows that each approach brings dividends. What is not yet clear is **what additional benefits are accrued through combining these forms of engagement**, or whether connecting them creates a strategic approach capable of driving systemic change. As Food for Life continues to scale up and out the partnership might seize opportunities to exchange learning between the communities with which it works, seeking further synergies between its different modes of engagement: **connecting area to area, area to setting, setting to setting**. An organisation like Food for Life which has developed mechanisms for scaling up and out is well placed to facilitate these connections.

6.2. Challenges – why good food is not reaching all

As revealed by this evaluation, Food for Life's recent experience demonstrates that there are still numerous barriers which make it **difficult to ensure good food for all**: healthy, sustainable food is not the norm in many contexts central to daily life in England. Several challenges have to be addressed in order to achieve further progress with changes required to make it, such as:

- i) **How to ensure that those in most need of good food can access it.** Healthy sustainable food can help tackle health inequalities providing those with the greatest need, including nutritionally vulnerable groups, are able to secure it. But those with the greatest need are often the same people least able to access or afford good food. This includes organisations in the public and voluntary sectors which support people in most need of social support and health promotion. These bodies are under considerable financial pressure which limits their ability to invest in programmes like Food for Life, or to incur any costs associated with providing better food.
- ii) **Good food is not a leading priority for those who lead change.** Too often the will to drive change starts from personal interest or passion around food. As a result progress is tied to individuals, making it vulnerable to changes in personnel, whilst resulting in inertia within institutions which lack such a key figure. Even leaders keen to see a more positive food culture in their organisation can find it difficult to maintain commitment in face of multiple, competing priorities. The potential for food to contribute to some of these is not always well understood, whilst food does not often feature as a strategic priority in its own right.
- iii) **Partial delivery of a whole setting approach prevents wholesale benefit.** The power of a whole setting approach is that it is a holistic model which drives integrated change, and results in benefits beyond the sum of its parts. But it is sometimes interpreted as a list of optional activities, of which only the most desirable or achievable are delivered. Yet those aspects which can be more difficult to implement - such as a cross-institution steering group with senior management endorsement - are also those which help to ensure deep seated, long-term change. There is a risk that the flexibility organisations welcome from programmes like Food for Life results in a 'pick and mix' rather than a truly whole setting approach.

- iv) **Choosing healthy, sustainable food is not always an option.** In many contexts where people in the UK consume food, healthy sustainable options are not the easiest or most appealing ones. Good food is not yet the norm, or always the cheapest option. The choices on offer can be edited but providers are reluctant to move to choice removal. In contexts including commercially driven operations it is particularly difficult to challenge the prevalence of high fat, high sugar, high salt foods. A legacy of catering systems driven by low cost provision leaves an infrastructure – most notably in hospitals – which similarly inhibits a switch to models centred on freshly cooked local produce.
- v) **Complex problems with complex solutions.** What a child eats at school is only one of many factors influencing whether their weight is healthy; where a hospital sources milk is only one of many contributors to its environmental footprint. Challenges like health and sustainability are a result of many complex processes, and the pathways for tackling these ‘big problems’ are by necessity multifaceted and take time to achieve visible results. It is difficult therefore, to demonstrate that actions - such as implementing Food for Life in a school - result in positive outcomes which contribute towards the desired change. An expectation of immediate, measurable impact can be to the detriment of initiatives with a long-term perspective and/or of complex nature.

6.3. Looking ahead - Future actions

In light of this evaluation and the challenges identified above there are actions for Food for Life, its partners and wider stakeholders could take to make further progress in ensuring good food for all.

Food for Life:

- Reaffirm **clear, achievable outcomes** to ensure that future activity is appropriately focused and founded on a sound theory of change.
- **Communicate the value of a whole setting approach**, the benefit of harnessing connections between different food related activity and the importance of a holistic programme.
- **Explore potential synergies and differences** of connecting activity in different settings, and between settings and local areas.
- **Continue monitoring and evaluating outcomes** to increase understanding of the benefits of its whole settings approach.
- **Continue to refine the Food for Life programme delivery and framework** based upon understanding which mechanisms and processes are most clearly linked to outcomes.
- **Communicate how good food contributes to goals** which are priorities in target sectors.
- **A focus on ‘healthy care’ is timely and much needed.** Food for Life is in a pivotal position from which to engage with and influence key stakeholders around healthy and sustainable food, in particular the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE). Food for Life input could influence the sector to **see food in its wider holistic context** and not just in terms of (mal)nutrition, hydration and avoiding constipation.

Practitioners and decision makers:

- Programmes and actors that promote good food should consider **how they can address social inequalities**, and seek financial models which ensure that benefits are not restricted to people or organisations able to invest.
- There is a need for continued **advocacy for food to be a priority** in organisations who feed the most nutritionally vulnerable or which act as role models for healthy sustainable food cultures.
- Food can become a higher organisational priority if **healthy sustainable food is embedded in quality indicators** which drive core activity in public bodies including hospitals.
- A complete **update on nutritional and food guidance for older people in care homes** and in receipt of community meals is now needed. The second edition of the Caroline Walker Trust guidelines came out in 2004 as update on work initially completed in 1995. It is now time to help establish a new expert committee.

Further research:

- There is a need to **investigate the health impacts of providing good food in settings across the life course** to address gaps in the evidence base, and to understand potential for a focus on food to contribute to priorities such as reducing constipation for older people in hospitals and care homes.
- There is an opportunity to **co-develop research on the social value of Food for Life's area-based activity** at the city and city-regional levels **and large-scale catering initiatives** with leading national providers. This will need to take place in dialogue with key stakeholders in order to validate methods and to facilitate translation of findings into practice.
- Expanding **activity in early years settings enables new opportunities for research on the educational benefits of Food for Life**. The emphasis on holistic and experiential learning in these environments also applies in school settings and promotes an educational research agenda that is not limited to debate around the links between nutrition and attainment.
- Following pilot work that has shown how Food for Life can link with programmes promoting physical activity and mental wellbeing, the next stage would be to **develop research to run alongside integrated projects**, particularly those that fit well with 0-19 integrated children's service strategies in local authority areas.

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Appendix 1: Phase 2 Final Evaluation Reports

Long term impacts and durability

- *Food for Life's long term impacts on schools: Exploration of context and case study identification, Pitt, Weitkamp et al. 2014*
- *Food for Life's long term impacts on schools: Case Study Report, Weitkamp and Pitt 2015*

Review of local commissions

- *Local Commissioning of the Food for Life Programme Review of Current Practice, Pitt and Jones et al. 2014.*
- *Local Commissioning Toolkit, Food for Life and University of the West of England, Bristol 2015*

Pupil Survey in local commissions

- *Year 4-5 Student Survey in Food for Life Commissioned Areas Final Report, Jones et al. 2015.*

New settings

- *Evaluating the Food for Life in New Settings: First Interim Report, Pitt and Orme et al. 2014.*
- *Evaluating the Food for Life in New Settings: Final Report, Gray and Means et al. 2015.*

Social Return on Investment of local commissions

- *The Social Value of Food for Life: an SROI analysis of Food for Life programmes in local authority areas, Jones et al. 2015*

Appendix 2: Phase 1 Evaluation Outputs

- *Food for Life Partnership Evaluation: Full Report, Orme et al 2011*
<http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/14456/>
- *Food for Life Partnership Evaluation: Summary Report, Orme et al 2011*
<http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/14453/>
- *Growing our Future: Food for Life Partnership Evaluation (FFL): monitoring the impact of the growing skills programme Final Report, Barratt Hacking, B., Scott, W. and Lee, E. 2011*
<http://www.foodforlife.org.uk/~media/files/evaluation%20reports/cree---growing-your-future.pdf>
- *Qualitative Impact Evaluation of the Food for Life Partnership Programme, Teeman et al 2011 National Foundation for Educational Research*
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