

Local Food Strategies – Do They Matter?

- Yes, they do in a world of strategies, policies and targets. CHD, smoking cessation, literacy, numeracy & jobs.
- Food is competing with health, education and other regeneration projects for attention and scarce resources.
- Devolved budgets of mainstream funding.
- Excellent work on the ground can take place without a formal strategy. Newham.

Devising Local Food Strategies

- Took Ealing 1 year to produce Food Matters.
- “1 person committed in each key organisation able to operate at a strategic level with a remit to make policy”. Bridget Imeson – Greenwich PCT.
- Key organisations and people - PCT, EH & TS, Regeneration, Neighbourhood Renewal, Local Councillors, LSP.
- Joint Policies – City & Hackney, Newham & TH.
- Share Policies – MSW with Croydon.

Content of Local Food Strategies

- Well written and a good summary of the issues.
- Do take into account the needs of ethnic groups.
- Offers a range of solutions on all issues.
- Mapped what is happening on the ground.
- Implementation plan – wishes or actions?
- Little evidence of setting priorities for action.
- Patchy evidence of co-ordinated delivery - schools, primary care, community & business.

Set Priorities – Focus Actions

- We can do a bit of everything.
- Are the interventions addressing the needs of a few or the many?
- Are the interventions capable of making fundamental, long-term improvements?
- What resources are available locally?
- Precise outcomes needed to evaluate effectiveness and value for money.

Funding of Local Food Projects

- Short-term contracts- insufficient time to get things started and then achieve sustainability.
- Many funding bodies with different agendas.
- Applications often bent to suit funding criteria rather than addressing needs. Patchwork jobs because posts funded by several providers.
- Mainstream posts but no money for projects.
- Carry on a shoestring or fund the area adequately?

Communication and Engagement with Ethnic Minority Groups

- BME groups (29%), all minority groups (40%) of London's population. 160 food cultures.
- Successful interventions rely upon understanding of culture, shared experience and aspirations.
- Literacy levels, English as a second language of hard to reach groups & communities most in need.
- Link workers/community workers - at ease in the community and have effective networks.
- Recommend sources of information & advisers.

Information and Advice on Food and Nutrition

- Vast amount of information but seemingly not available from one or two authoritative sources.
- Consumer information of variable quality - which leads to confusing and inconsistent messages.
- Edit this information so everyone can use the best.
- Networks - exchange and learn with peers.
- Nutrition network for health professionals, teachers, community food workers. “Food and Well Being” a Nutrition Strategy for Wales.

Sustainability Issues and Ethnic Minority Groups

- Ethnic cuisines often based on key ingredients grown overseas. Successful import businesses.
- Research needed into which of these ingredients could be grown commercially in the UK.
- Communities that came from rural areas keen to grow vegetables - Bengalis.
- Ethnic minority groups have as positive an attitude towards recycling as other communities.

Public Procurement and Ethnic Minority Groups

- Schools and hospitals with large ethnic catchments have made considerable progress in providing ethnic (Asian & Chinese) foods.
- Less developed supply chains involving West African and Caribbean producers.
- Moslems have growing confidence in authenticity of Halal foods provided by the public sector.
- Size of London's public sector provides farmers with a significant new market opportunity.

Food Access and Ethnic Minority Groups

- Most food co-ops, cook and eat clubs & community cafes satisfy the needs of EMGs.
- Many projects are led by members of the EMGs.
- Many community food workers, community nutrition assistants are from the EMGs.
- Training and work experience gives transferable skills leading to employment outside the projects.
- Wider benefits include reducing loneliness and anxiety. Improving community cohesion.

Issues Facing Ethnic Minority Businesses

- Problems getting finance for start-up & expansion.
- Difficulties in expanding into mainstream markets. Stuck in very competitive ethnic markets.
- Lack of networking opportunities with potential customers, suppliers and investors.
- Lack of business advisers from the EMGs.
- Lack of formal chef training in ethnic cuisines.
- Poor understanding of legislation. Skills deficit of owner/managers. Workers stuck in low paid jobs.

Focus on Schools – Concerted Action

- Broad consensus that improving the food knowledge and life skills of children is crucial and more effective than other interventions.
- Knowledge and skills to catering staff, teachers and parents.
- Schools are stable hubs in the community - venues for food co-ops and cook & eat clubs.
- Food School Policy as part of OFSTED.