

# Good Food Local: North East Replication Evaluation Brief

April 2025

Sustain has a total budget of up to £20,000 (inclusive of VAT) available to commission an evaluation of our Good Food Local (GFL) programme roll out in the North East region over the last two years.

For over 10 years, Sustain has mapped and reported on Greater London's borough level commitments to healthy and sustainable food through the Good Food for All Londoners annual survey and report. A recent impact evaluation conducted independently by the University of Nottingham suggests it is an effective tool for improving good food practice and policy among councils, by raising awareness of proven good food policies, projects and activities, and providing an incentive for councils to take action.

Twenty-five councils in London participated in the recent impact evaluation, led by the University of Nottingham, which showed the GFL report has helped 80% of responding councils prioritise actions and 70% support advocacy. 72% of councils recognise that the GFL programme has significantly contributed to adopting a systemic approach to food, recognising that GFL offers valuable inspiration, strategic frameworks, and practical tools to drive local food policies—though broader engagement across all departments remains essential.

With funding from Impact on Urban Health, the GFL approach has been rolled out to the North East of England under the umbrella of Good Food Local in 2023, led by the Association of Directors of Public Health North East (ADPH NE). Councils in the North East have completed two rounds of benchmarking and are currently taking part in activities to help take action and therefore improve their scores.

As we look to replicate Good Food Local in other regions, we are commissioning an independent process evaluation to review the roll out process, learn what has worked, how we can improve, review how scalable the model is in advance, input into how we engage other areas in the approach ahead of further roll out.

<https://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-local/>

**Deadline Thursday 8 May, 4pm, to [Hannah.crump@sustainweb.org](mailto:Hannah.crump@sustainweb.org)**

## 1. Project brief

We are seeking a partner to complete an independent process evaluation of the replication of Good Food Local in the North East identifying lessons learnt to help us improve and roll out the approach nationally. This should be a practical and learning-focused evaluation that supports ongoing development and wider replication with the following objectives:

- a) Review the Good Food Local approach in the North East to identify what has worked and why and what has meaningful (impact), identify learning and improvements for further replication, and to assess the suitability of scaling this approach from a cost and resource perspective
- b) Provide a recommendation to help determine which benchmarking\* approach NE councils should take in year three (see below)
- c) Evaluate additional activities (see below) to identify their benefit for councils, and opportunity for commissioning. Some of these findings should be available before the final report.
- d) Support Sustain to understand the benefits and opportunities the NE roll out has presented in order to inform/input the development of external communication messaging\*\*\* to engage more places in replicating the approach e.g. understand what opportunities the surveys present as a way to create change or measure food systems change.
- e) Suggest further research and/or shape further research briefs

### **\*Benchmarking and other data**

In addition, we are also looking for support to determine the most valuable data to collect from local authorities in the North East for a third round of benchmarking. The region has so far completed two different benchmarking surveys – a full survey and a lighter touch report that was designed to support the roll out of the national survey and give councils an opportunity to focus on change activities.

Sustain are seeking support to review the pros and cons of which of the previous approaches (full survey and light touch) to pursue for the third round. We would require the commissioned partner to provide an evaluation perspective on how the different options influence the usefulness and consistency of the evaluation, to help our decision-making.

Suggestions have been made but we are also looking for the commissioned partner to add and refine these ideas on how to undertake this evaluation and which existing data sources will provide the most valuable insight for us to meet our objectives. It could include, for example, qualitative interviews and a light-touch review of the existing benchmarking data gathered in the region. While this is not an impact evaluation, we envisage some assessment of progress to consider to what extent the councils are engaging through a joined-up, and/or systems change approach and how GFL has helped this and what further it can do.

As well as benchmarking data, supporting information already exists within project materials and with the delivery partner in the North East. Example project materials include advisor workshop notes, wider partnership meeting notes, and Steering Group meeting notes.

## **\*\*External messaging**

The evaluation should provide some recommendations to help initial framing of the key messages by identifying the hooks for engagement of councils, in order to support outreach to other areas to engage with the scheme. While we will utilise other providers and internal staff resources, we would welcome input from the evaluators in terms of understanding the motivations for engagement from the NE partners, what is most valued, interesting or novel, which will be gathered through this process evaluation and we would expect the evaluators to contribute towards this discussion to help the targeting of messages.

## **\*\*\*Additional Activities**

In line with our iterative approach, we have started to offer NE councils some additional support to improve their scores. These are currently being planned and are likely to include one-to-one meetings, workshops, and materials that will help the councils prioritise actions and improve their scores.

## **2. Suggested approach**

An impact evaluation (as opposed to process-focused) of Good Food Local in London was commissioned last year from the University of Nottingham, with findings due imminently. Preliminary results suggest positive findings of the impact of the benchmarking in London. This evaluation will therefore focus on process and will not need to replicate research conducted which includes a literature review on food policy measures, and an impact evaluation based on a survey completed by 25 London councils.

For this work we would like the provider to:

- Review our benchmarking approach in the NE and advise and suggest options for the final round (May/June)
- Support on evaluation of the additional activities and workshops and identify as far as possible how these impact on progress/ scores (May – July '25, due to timelines this could be a short meeting to advise in May)
- Identify gaps or opportunities for further evaluation or analysis following the publication of the Nottingham evaluation report and potentially start to help develop and fill these research gaps\* (May – July'25)
- Attend meetings with the Sustain and NE team to adapt the approach accordingly and in line with other findings.
- Understand from the staff and partners in the NE how they have experienced the replication, what has worked, what hasn't and how we could improve our approach both at regional roll out and national benchmarking. This could be a mix of surveys, interviews, meetings, workshops to feed into a summary report.
- The benchmarking data will also be available and may be useful to the evaluation, and/or could be reviewed to understand more about the process and the idea of progress/ impact, and the iterative approach that has been taken.
- Use this information to input to make recommendations to Sustain regarding messaging and comms approach to a national audience\*\*. (Dec – Jan)

\* Additional funding will be sought for research gaps identified

\*\* If this element does not feel appropriate, we are open to removing this from the brief and exploring and alternative support for this element.

### **London Impact Evaluation Summary**

The University of Nottingham completed an independent impact evaluation of the Good Food Local tool in London, which has been used to benchmark London councils for 13 years. This was an academic evaluation including:

- A literature review to identify relevance and gaps in our 'six key issues' whole food systems approach

- An impact evaluation of the Good Food Local London benchmarking tool, including a survey completed by 25 of the 33 London councils

- Recommendations for improving the tool and considerations to replication in other parts of the country

The final report is due to be published by the end of April.

### 3. Budget and timescales

Sustain has a total budget of up to £20,000 (inclusive of VAT) available to commission this evaluation plus additional £5k available for additional research needs that arise.

We welcome proposals from partners who can acquire match funding and/or who would intend to integrate this within existing projects, but this is not a requirement. We are grateful to Impact on Urban Health for their funding and support to make this work possible.

Our preference is for work to commence as soon possible, to inform the remaining North East timeline for benchmarking (outlined above). Our funded work in the North East is set to close in March 2026, but we are willing to be flexible if limited time is available in May/ June.

#### Provisional timeline

	Sustain led	Evaluation Team
April	Late April – London evaluation published	
May	Additional activities (such as workshops and 121 support) in NE begin National roll out launch (22 May)	Interviews and appointment of partner (by end of May) Inception meeting Review existing information/ data and if possible advice on baseline and data collection
June	Second round of survey results submitted for NE	Evaluation of workshop activity Review existing information/ data Identify useful findings and any gaps for further research
July	Additional activities in NE finish	Evaluation of workshop activity Advise on third round data collection
Autumn – date TBC September or October	Third survey in NE commences	Evaluation of workshop activity complete
Date TBC November /December	Third and final data returned	Evaluation of roll out / replication
Date TBC January	Data finalised for comparison across the three rounds of data collection	Evaluation of roll out / replication Start advising on messaging
March - May 26	Project completion	Final report

## Suggested timeline for evaluation

Our preference is that the partner selected has at least some capacity to start on this work as soon as possible in at least an advisory capacity and to experience key upcoming activities and to inform the remaining Northeast timeline for benchmarking (outlined above).

The project is funded until March 2026 (with the possibility of extension until May 26) so we envisage the bulk of activities to be carried out between now and this point. Most evaluation activities relating to the NE replication are more flexible, while other decisions and activities would need to happen sooner.

We invite you to suggest a timeline as part of your proposal, to be agreed and discussed with confirmation of availability for inception meeting in late May/ early June.

## 4. Proposals and decision process

### Timeline

- Please indicate if you plan to submit by Thursday 1 May 2025, with any clarification questions by emailing [Hannah.crump@sustainweb.org](mailto:Hannah.crump@sustainweb.org) .
- Answers will be shared with all those who express interest where appropriate.
- Full proposal should be sent by Thursday 8 May, 4pm to [Hannah.crump@sustainweb.org](mailto:Hannah.crump@sustainweb.org)
- Interviews will take place between 15 and 20 May

An assessment criterion is provided below, and we will review proposals against this, which must be between 3-5 sides of A4 including:

- The name(s), email address(es) and contact number(s) of lead partners
- An outline of your experience and relevance to this brief
- A research proposal to fit the project brief above
- A budget summary, detailing:
  - Who would be delivering the work, their day rate, and how many days the funding would cover
  - Any additional costs foreseen
  - Any match funding or in-kind contribution that could support this work
  -

Proposals should be sent to Hannah Crump by Thursday 8 May 4pm. After an initial shortlisting stage, you may be invited to attend a call with the Sustain team to discuss your proposal. Following these calls, we will appoint a partner and arrange an initiation call. Please provide possible dates in May for an interview and inception call.

Please direct any questions to Hannah Crump and do get in touch if you'd like to book in a call ahead of the submission date to discuss requirements further.

**Contact: Hannah Crump, Local Policy Coordinator, Sustain.**

[www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)

[www.sustainweb.org/good-food-local](http://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-local)

## 5. Assessment Criteria

### **Relevance and quality of proposed approach**

- Clear understanding of the brief and context
- Feasibility and adaptability of the proposed methodology
- Appropriateness of proposed tools (e.g. interviews, workshops, surveys)

### **Experience and expertise**

- Track record in process evaluation of local/regional programmes
- Familiarity with food systems, public health, or systems change
- Experience working with local authorities or multi-stakeholder initiatives

### **Value for money**

- Realistic budgeting and use of resources
- Clarity on day rates, roles, and any in-kind contributions
- Opportunities for leveraging match funding or integrating with existing projects (desirable)

### **Engagement and collaboration approach**

- Willingness to work adaptively with Sustain and NE partners
- Experience facilitating learning and producing useful insights for practice
- Ability to contribute to message framing or to work with others who can (desirable)

*This work is funded by Impact on Urban Health*