

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2022/23

## Food Insecurity

### Summary points

- Around 1 in 28 (3.6%) households in Bristol suffered from severe food insecurity in 2022/23, (more than twice the number from the previous year) and 1 in 12 (8.1%) experienced severe or moderate food insecurity. Of approximately 200,000 households in Bristol, nearly 16,200 are estimated to suffer from moderate to severe food insecurity, and more than 7,200 from severe food insecurity. It is estimated that there are more than 3,800 households experiencing occasions when they were unable to buy the food they needed to keep themselves and their family healthy, due to a shortage of resources.
- Hartcliffe and Withywood is the most acutely affected part of the city with 1 in 6 (16.0%) households reporting severe food insecurity and more than 1 in 4 (27.1%) reporting moderate or severe food insecurity.
- Approximately 1 in 15 (6.4%) households in Lockleaze and 1 in 15 (6.3%) households in Lawrence Hill reported having used an emergency food service (such as a food bank) during the same 12-month period due to food insecurity.
- Certain groups were more likely to experience food insecurity and requiring emergency food provision compared to the Bristol average. This includes respondents with a disability, those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, single parents, carers, those who identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) and people aged 16-24.

### Food insecurity – definition and measurement

The terms food poverty and food insecurity are often used interchangeably. There is no universally accepted definition, but it is generally interpreted as being unable to consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food for health, in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.

The causes of food insecurity are complex. These include:

**Financial environment** - Relating to income (amount and consistency), price and affordability of locally available food

**Social environment** - Relating to cultural norms, food and cooking skills, social networks, and the impact of marketing of unhealthy foods

**Physical environment** - Cooking facilities, access to shops and cafes selling affordable healthy food, and/or transport required to access these facilities

Notably, many of the root causes relate to broader social and economic inequality, and in particular poverty and economic disadvantage. This is exemplified in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) '*Family Resources Survey*', which reported on food insecurity figures in

the UK between 2021-22, finding that households receiving Universal Credit and those receiving Income Support were equally the least likely to be food secure, at 69%<sup>1</sup>.

### **National picture**

Measuring food insecurity is difficult as it encompasses such a broad range of causes, circumstances and similarly varied outcomes. The lack of consistent recording and reporting of this data makes meaningful regional or national comparison difficult. In April 2019, the Department for Work and Pensions began a national measurement of household food insecurity. This showed that nationally for 2021-22 'most households were food secure, with high household food security (88%) or marginal household food security (6%). A minority of households were food insecure, with low household food security (3%) or very low household food security (3%)'. This data is only available at regional level and shows food insecurity in the Southwest was reported lower than the national average, with an estimated 2 per cent of households. This regional average may hide significant inequality and variation within the region.

Similarly, it is difficult to get a true measure of impact the COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost of Living Crisis has had nationally on food insecurity. The indications are that it has both exposed and exacerbated underlying food insecurity risks in our society in areas particularly at risk of health inequalities already

The Trussell Trust (who manage more than half of all food banks in the UK) have reported that 'between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, food banks in the Trussell Trust's UK wide network distributed over 2.1 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis. This is an increase of 14% compared to the same period in 2019/20. 832,000 of these parcels went to children'<sup>2</sup>.

### **Food insecurity in Bristol**

In 2018, Bristol City Council included additional questions concerning food poverty into the Quality of Life (QoL) Survey to establish benchmarks for future comparisons and to permit some analysis of variation across the city. These questions are based on the United Nations Food Insecurity Experience Survey module<sup>3</sup> and focus on self-reported food-related behaviours and experiences associated with increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints. It enables a score to be calculated for all responding households that can be used to identify households suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity.

### **Food insecurity and emergency food use by ward**

Based on responses to the 2022/23 Bristol QoL Survey, an estimated 8.1% of households in Bristol have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in the past 12 months (Figure 1), higher than the previous year (4.6%). The percentage of people who have experienced severe food insecurity has doubled, increasing from 1.7% in 2021/22 to 3.6% in 2022/23. However, there is considerable variation across the city, associated largely with income deprivation.

<sup>1</sup> Department of work and Pensions (2023), *Family Resources Survey; financial year 2021 to 2022*. Published online 23/03/23, available at [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2021-to-2022)

<sup>2</sup> The Trussell Trust. End of Year Stats 2022. Available at. [End of Year Stats - The Trussell Trust](https://www.trusselltrust.org/end-of-year-stats-2022/)

<sup>3</sup> The Food Insecurity Experience Scale: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/fies/en/>

The highest percentage of QoL respondents reporting moderate to severe food insecurity was in Hartcliffe and Withywood (27.1%), nearly twice as high as the next highest reporting ward of Lawrence Hill (14.2%). By sub locality, Inner City (11.4%) and South Bristol (10.7%) reported the highest levels of food insecurity and North and West (Inner) the lowest (4.2%). Respondents from all wards experienced some moderate to severe food insecurity.

Hartcliffe & Withywood also reported the highest levels of severe food insecurity (16%), followed by Frome Vale (5.9%), Bedminster (5.7%) and Central (5.7%).

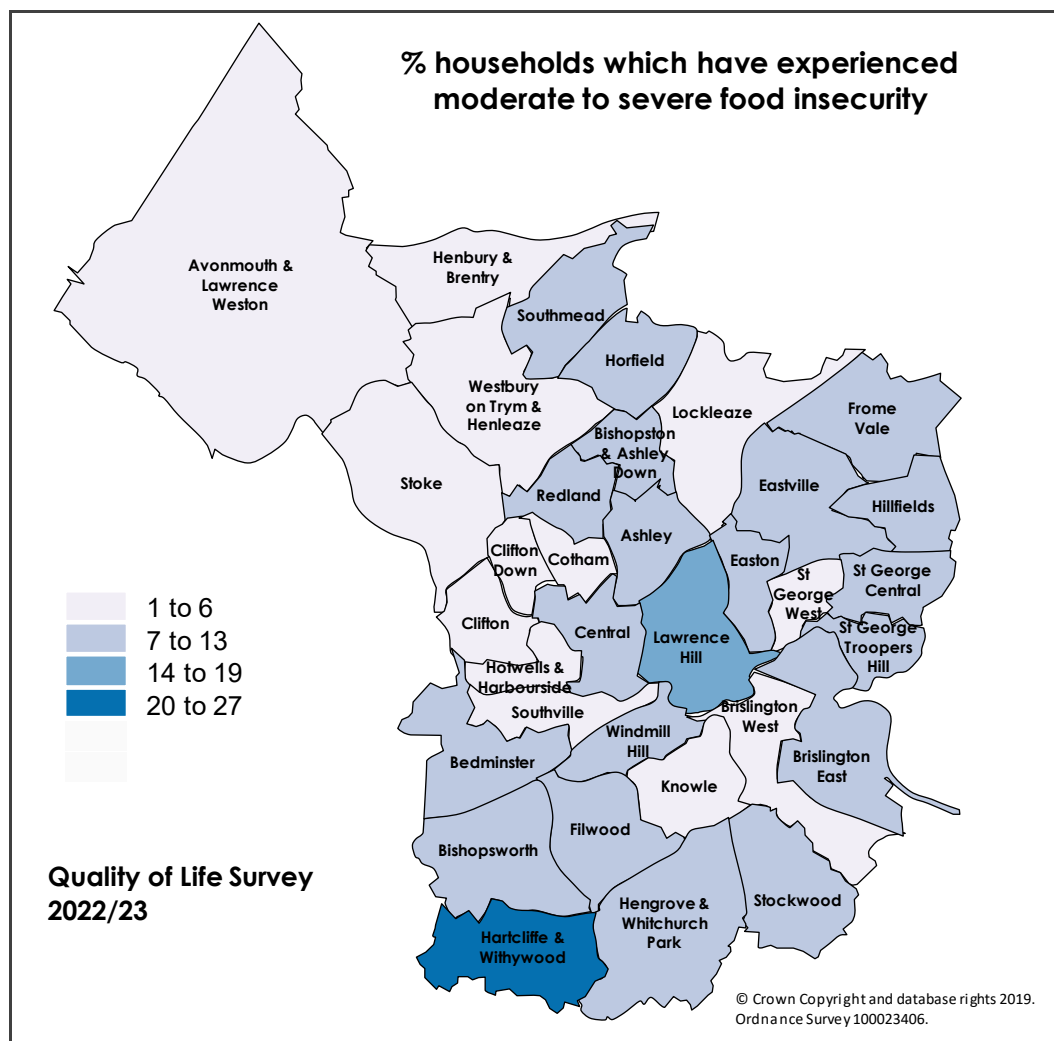


Figure 1: % of households which have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity (QoL survey 2022/23)

Overall, half of Bristol's wards (17) were above the city average of 8.1% experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, and half were below. This is an increase on the previous year when 13 wards were above the city average and 21 wards were below.

As another measure of likely food insecurity, the Bristol QoL Survey includes questions on the use of emergency food services (e.g. food banks). In the 2022/23 survey, 1.9% of Bristol households responded that they had received emergency food and/or groceries within the previous 12 months. This compares to 1.7% in the previous year, 1.8% in 2020/21 and 0.9% in 2019/20. The wards with the highest level of emergency food use in the last 12 months was Lockleaze (6.4%), Lawrence Hill (6.3%) and Hartcliffe & Withywood (5.6%). Respondents in 24 of Bristol's 34 wards reported less use of emergency food services than the Bristol average

which is in keeping with the data above and reinforces the picture of certain areas of the city experiencing higher impacts of food insecurity.

### Food insecurity and emergency food use by deprivation decile

We analysed food insecurity according to deprivation decile of Bristol households. The data indicates that there is an association between deprivation as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score for the lower super output area (LSOA) of residence of the respondent and both the likelihood of reporting severe and moderate/severe food insecurity and accessing emergency food services (Figure 2). The prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity shows a significant deprivation gap between the prevalence in the 10% most deprived areas (16.0%) and the 10% least deprived areas (3.3%).

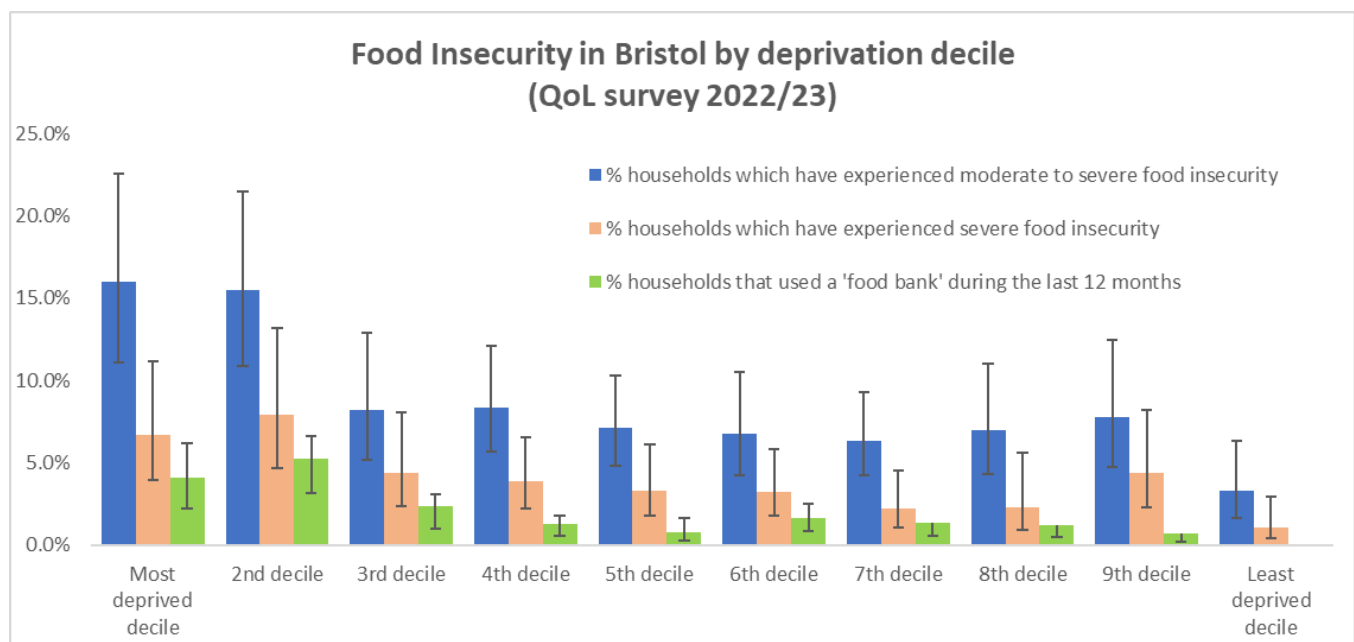


Figure 2: Food insecurity according to deprivation level in Bristol. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals (QoL Survey 2022/23).

Emergency food use was also higher among those living in more deprived areas, with those in the most deprived 10% over twice more likely (4.1%) to receive emergency food services compared to the Bristol average (1.9%).

### Food insecurity, emergency food use and equality

**Single parents** experienced significantly higher rates of food insecurity compared to the Bristol average, with 26.7% of single parent households reporting that they had experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in the last 12 months, compared to the Bristol average of 8.1% (Figure 3). Single parents were also more likely to receive emergency food and groceries, with 6.5% of single parents reporting they had received emergency food and/or groceries during the last 12 months, over three times more than the Bristol average of 1.9%.

**Disabled people** are at significantly higher risk of food insecurity in Bristol, with 22% of disabled people reporting moderate to severe food insecurity in the last 12 months, just under three times higher than the Bristol average of 8.1%. 13% of disabled people reported severe

food insecurity, over three times higher than the Bristol average of 3.65%. Disabled people were more than three times as likely to be in receipt of emergency food and/or groceries than the average Bristol household (5.8% compared to 1.9%).

**People from black and minority ethnic groups (BAME)** were more likely to experience moderate to severe food insecurity than the Bristol average (10.9% v 8.1%) but twice as likely to experience severe food insecurity, with 8.2% of BAME households reporting severe food insecurity compared to the Bristol average of 3.6%. People who identified as BAME were three times more likely to be in receipt of emergency food and/or groceries than the average Bristol household (5.4% compared to 1.9%).

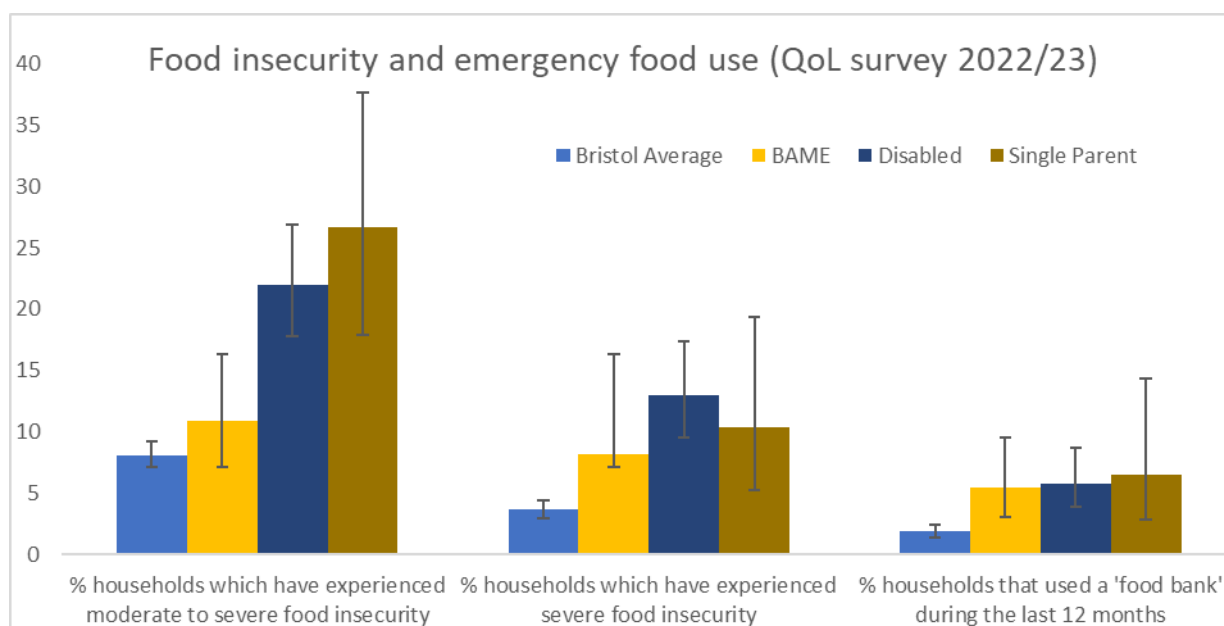


Figure 3: Food insecurity and emergency food use rates among QoL Survey respondents who identified as BAME, disabled or single parents, compared to the Bristol average (QoL survey 2022/23).

**Younger people** are more likely to experience food insecurity than older age groups. People aged 16-24 were at least twice as likely to be affected by food insecurity compared to those aged 50 and above, with 15.1% of people aged 16-24 years reporting that they had experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in the past year, compared to 6.3% of people aged 50 years and older, and 4.0% of people aged 65 and over. A similar trend was seen for usage of emergency food services, with 2.2% of people aged 16-24 reporting they had received emergency food and/or groceries during the last 12 months, compared to 1.5% of people aged 50 and over, and 0.9% of people aged 65 and over (Bristol average: 1.9%).

**Carers** are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than the Bristol average. 11.9% of Carers experienced moderate or severe food insecurity (Bristol average 8.1%) and 4.6% of Carers experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 3.6%). In addition, 3.2% of Carers used emergency food services, nearly twice the Bristol average.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB)** are also significantly more likely to experience food insecurity than the Bristol average. 14.3% of LGB people experienced moderate or severe food insecurity

(Bristol average 8.1%) and 7.2% of LGB people experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 3.6%).

No significant differences in food insecurity and emergency food receipt were observed between the Bristol average and those who identified as male, female and no religion/faith. This does not necessarily mean that differences associated with these characteristics do not exist, but we were unable to determine they do or do not with the results available from the 2022/23 QoL survey.

### Food insecurity and emergency food use: time trends

Levels of food insecurity and emergency food receipt appeared to have been falling, or stabilising, in Bristol between 2018 and 2021, but the latest data from the 2022 QoL survey has shown significant increases in households who have experienced moderate to severe food insecurity and severe food insecurity. Food bank usage has also increased compared with the previous three years (Figure 4). It should be noted that fluctuations in these numbers are to be expected because they are based on small numbers of responses each year, and how truly representative of the Bristol average the survey response is each year, changes also. The surveys from 2020 and 2021 will have captured the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and whilst food insecurity doesn't appear to have increased as might have been expected, the way in which emergency food support was delivered during COVID also means comparison may be difficult. However, it is clear that the cost of living has had a significant impact in the last year.

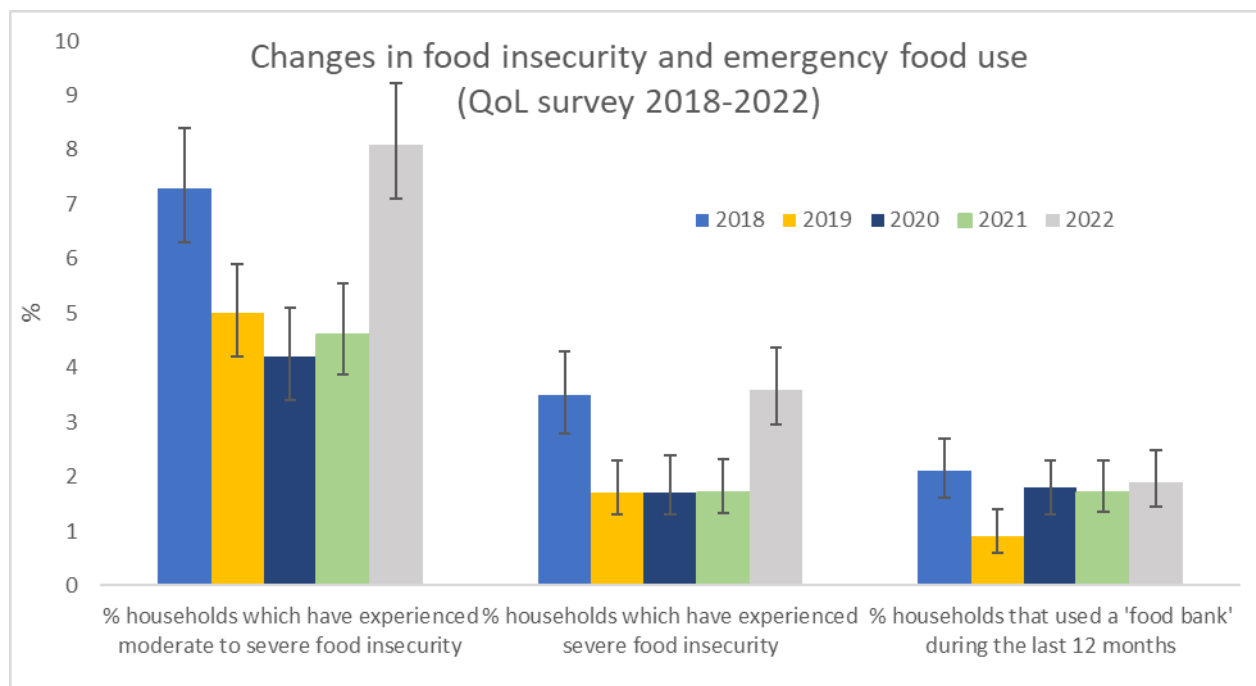


Figure 4: Changes in food poverty between 2018 and 2022. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

### Summary of findings from the Quality of Life survey

Food insecurity in Bristol has increased significantly compared with the previous three years, and is likely to be associated with the current cost of living crisis. The small and fluctuant numbers and representation of respondents to the QoL survey means it needs to be considered alongside other data sources to establish the true picture of food insecurity in the city. The survey does however provide useful insight into stark inequalities experienced by certain

groups. Establishing a method for accurately monitoring food insecurity trends and the impact of our efforts to address this is a key deliverable aim of the Food Equality Strategy (see below).

## How are we addressing Food Insecurity?

### One City Food Equality Strategy for Bristol 2022-2032

Feeding Bristol and the Communities and Public Health Team, in Bristol City Council have worked in collaboration, with input from a wide range of stakeholders, a series of community conversations, and a public consultation to produce a *One City Food Equality Strategy for Bristol*.

The strategy sets the ambitious aim to strive for food equality for all residents in the city of Bristol and was launched in June 2023.

It builds on work and research that has been carried out over the last two decades and aligns with many city priorities and initiatives, including the One City plan 2050, the Bristol Corporate Strategy, Thrive Bristol, the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, and the One Climate Strategy. It also sits contributes to Bristol Good Food 2030 under the Food Justice theme.

The Strategy has a Steering group which reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Its Action Plan is currently being developed and has involved a consultation period which took place Sept - Dec 2022. Nearly 350 participants contributed through an online survey, community conversations, stakeholder workshops and conversations resulting in over 1100 actions logged. A thematic analysis and distilling of data from the consultation is helping to shape the action plan.

A Peer review is planned of the draft action plan before it is finalised and launched in June 2023 during Bristol's Food Justice fortnight.

### Covid-19 impact:

The impact is referred to throughout the report, please see above.

### Further data / links / consultations:

- [One-City-Food-Equality-Strategy-2022-2032.pdf \(bristolonecity.com\)](#)
- [Bristol Food Provision Report 2018](#). Feeding Bristol commissioned research to focus on the most deprived wards of Bristol.
- Feeding Bristol: [Bristol's Covid-19 Community Food Response](#). A high-level summary of the food provided to the economically vulnerable in the first two months of lockdown, published 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020.
- Feeding Bristol [Healthy Holidays : food provision during a pandemic Impact report 2020](#)
- Feeding Bristol [Healthy Holidays Impact report 2019](#)
- JSNA Healthy Eating [JSNA Data Profiles - bristol.gov.uk](#)
- Online interactive map that gives visibility to what food is offered in the city. Map can be viewed here <http://bcc.maps.arcgis.com/>
- Feeding Bristol [Website](#)
- Bristol Good Food 2030 . [Home - Bristol Good Food 2030](#)

- [The National Food Strategy - The Plan](#) – an independent review and plan commissioned by government with recommendations to reshape our food system.
- [Shaping Places for Healthier Lives: about the programme | Local Government Association](#)

**Date updated:** March 2023

**Next update due:** March 2024

**Contact details:** Communities and Public Health Division, Bristol City Council.